Thomas A. Lewis

Religion, Modernity, & Politics in Hegel

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THOMAS A. LEWIS

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For Nikki, Lola, and Isobel

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Abbreviations of Primary Texts

KANT

The standard source for Kant's works is the German Academy edition (Ak.). With the exception of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, I have drawn upon the translations in the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, edited by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, and Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy, edited by Karl Ameriks and Desmond M. Clarke. Because volumes in these series contain the Akademie pagination in the margins, citations are given exclusively to the Akademie pagination (except, again, for the *Critique of Pure Reason*).

Ak.	*Gesammelte Schriften*. Edited by the Königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. 29 vols. Berlin 1902–83; 2nd ed., Berlin: De Gruyter, 1968, for vols. I–IX.
KrV	*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Translated by Norman Kemp Smith. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965. Cited by reference to the pagination of the original editions, with A for the 1781 edition and B for the 1787 edition.
KU	*Kritik der Urteilskraft*. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Translated by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
Prol.	*Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik, die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können*. *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics That Will Be Able to Come Forward as Science: With Selections from the Critique of Pure Reason*. Translated by Gary C. Hatfield. Rev. ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
Religion	*Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*. *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. In *Religion and Rational Theology*, translated by George di Giovanni, 39–215. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
"Aufklärung"	"Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?" "An Answer to the Question What Is Enlightenment?" In *Practical Philosophy*, translated by Mary J. Gregor, 11–22. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

HEGEL

In citing Hegel, I have made use of previously published translations when available yet have modified them in a number of instances. Except in cases of particular significance for the interpretation, I have not noted the alterations.

Unless otherwise noted, texts are cited by the page number in the German text followed by a slash and the page number in the English translation, if available. Within quotations, italics are Hegel's unless otherwise noted.

"BF"	*Werke* 1:45–103. "Berne Fragments." In *Three Essays, 1793-1795*, translated by Peter Fuss and John Dobbins, 59–103. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984. [The translation includes only selections.]
Briefe	*Briefe von und an Hegel*. Edited by Johannes Hoffmeister. 4 vols. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1969. Cited by letter number and page. *Hegel: The Letters*. Translated by Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.
DS	*Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems der Philosophie*. In *Werke* 2:9–138. *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*. Translated by H. S. Harris and Walter Cerf. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977.
Enz.	*Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse (1830). Werke* 8–10. Cited by paragraph (§) number. Remarks are indicated by an "A" [*Anmerkung*], and additions are indicated by a "Z" [*Zusatz*]. *The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze*. Translated by T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991. *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature*. Translated by Michael J. Petry. 3 vols. London and New York: George Allen and Unwin and Humanities Press, 1970. *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind: Being Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences (1830)*. Translated by William Wallace and A. V. Miller. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971. *Hegel's Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*. Translated by Michael J. Petry. 3 vols. Bilingual ed. Dordrecht and Boston: Reidel, 1978.
Enz. (1827)	*Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (1827). *GW* 19.
ETW	*Early Theological Writings*. Translated by T. M. Knox. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948.
"GCS"	"Der Geist des Christentums und sein Schicksal." In *Werke* 1:274–418. "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate." In *ETW*, 182–301.
GuW	*Glauben und Wissen oder Reflexionsphilosophie der Subjektivität in der Vollständigkeit ihrer Formen als*

	Kantische, Jacobische und Fichtesche Philosophie. In *Werke* 2:287–433. *Faith and Knowledge*. Translated by Walter Cerf and H. S. Harris. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977.
GW	*Gesammelte Werke*. Rheinisch-Westfälische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1968.
"Liebe"	"Die Liebe." In *Werke* 1:244–50. "Love." In *ETW* 302-308.
"LJ"	"Das Leben Jesu." In *GW* 1:207–78. "The Life of Jesus." In *Three Essays, 1793–1795*, translated by Peter Fuss and John Dobbins, 104–65. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984.
"PcR"	"Die Positivität der christlichen Religion." In *Werke* 1:104–229 "The Positivity of the Christian Religion." In *ETW* 67–181.
PhG	*Phänomenologie des Geistes*. *Werke* 3. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Translated by A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
PR	*Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*. *Werke* 7. Cited by paragraph (§) number. Remarks are indicated by an "A" [*Anmerkung*], additions by a "Z" [*Zusatz*], and Hegel's marginal notes by an "N." *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Translated by H. B. Nisbet. Edited by Allen Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
Rph III	*Philosophie des Rechts*: *Die Vorlesung von 1819/20 in einer Nachschrift*. Edited by Dieter Henrich. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983.
Rph V	*Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie: 1818–1831*. Edited by Karl-Heinz Ilting. Vol. 3. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Fromann-Holzboog, 1974.
Rph VI	*Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie: 1818–1831*. Edited by Karl-Heinz Ilting. Vol. 4. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Fromann-Holzboog, 1974.
"TE"	*Werke* 1:9–44. "The Tübingen Essay." In *Three Essays, 1793–1795*, translated by Peter Fuss and John Dobbins, 30–58. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984.
VG	*Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*. Vol. 1 of *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*. Edited by Johannes Hoffmeister. 6th ed. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1994. *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction: Reason in History*. Translated by H. B. Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.
"Vorrede"	"Vorrede zu Hinrichs' Religionsphilosophie." In *Werke* 11:42–67.

	"Forward to Hinrichs' *Religion and Its Inner Relation to Science*." In *Miscellaneous Writings of Hegel*, translated by A. V. Miller and edited by Jon Stewart, 332–52. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2002.
VPG	*Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte. Werke* 12. *Philosophy of History*. Translated by J. Sibree. Revised ed. New York: Willey Book Company, 1944.
VPGst	*Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Geistes*. Edited by Franz Hespe and Burkhard Tuschling. Vorlesungen, vol. 13. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1994.
VPR	*Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*. Edited by Walter Jaeschke. Vorlesungen, vols. 3–5. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1983–1985. Cited by the German page number, which is included in the margin of the English translation.
	Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. Translated by R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, and J. M. Stewart. Edited by Peter C. Hodgson. 3 vols. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984–1987.
Werke	*Werke*. Edited by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel. 20 vols. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969–1971.
WL	*Wissenschaft der Logik. Werke* 5–6.
	Hegel's Science of Logic. Translated by A. V. Miller. Atlantic Highlands, N. J.: Humanities Press, 1969.

Introduction

Coming of age during the twilight of the Holy Roman Empire and the upheaval of the French Revolution, Hegel was deeply shaped by a sense of one world coming to an end and the emergence of new, modern society. Shifts in the social function of religion—as well as its conceptualization—were integral to these transformations. Rapid and interrelated changes in intellectual, social, and political life challenged religion's justification, its ethical value, and its role in providing social cohesion. The French Enlightenment, as well as the Revolution, directly attacked Christianity, frequently regarding it as interwoven with the social order that needed to be overthrown. While the German Enlightenment, or *Aufklärung*, was on the whole less strident in its criticisms of religion, it too necessitated developments in the conception of religion that could accommodate Christianity with growing confidence in the power of reason, the beginnings of Biblical "Higher Criticism," and rapidly increasing knowledge of other cultures. These intellectual developments accompanied political and economic transformations that together yielded a widespread sense of social fragmentation. To many of Hegel's generation, it seemed that religion had once held society together but no longer did so in their day.

Despite the specificity of Hegel's historical situation, many of the developments and challenges of his day continue to define the Western intellectual, cultural, and social landscape. Recent public debate has been filled with discussion of religion's appropriate or inappropriate role in public life as well as with concerns about what a society must share in order to cohere. Battles over immigration and talk of culture wars proceed largely along these lines. Many of our liveliest intellectual debates still revolve around conceptions of reason and its relation to history, faith, and power. While these debates have often involved claims that postmodernity has replaced modernity, we can also conceive of "modernity" broadly enough to encompass these most recent developments as well.[1] This inclusive conception of modernity is both

[1] Though the meaning of this term is the subject of lively debate, it refers, minimally, to the interrelated cluster of economic, social, political, and intellectual developments that have

motivated and justified by attending to ways in which challenges to "Enlightenment" and instrumentalist conceptions of modernity have been part and parcel of modernity since its inception. Perhaps most importantly, in Hegel's day as well as our own, arguments about reason and religion have been taken as vital to debates about what can and should hold a society together.

For Hegel and many of his contemporaries, the task was to develop an understanding of religion that would defend and revitalize it in the face of the complex challenges it faced. Specifically, Hegel sought to articulate a distinctly modern conception of Christianity, one that would avoid conflict with growing confidence in the power of reason, historical study of the Bible, increasing awareness of other religious traditions, and emerging forms of social and political life. For Hegel—as for contemporaries such as Immanuel Kant, Moses Mendelssohn, and Friedrich Schleiermacher—defending religion in the face of these modern intellectual and political developments required defining its core or essence accordingly. At stake in these discussions, then, were not merely specific doctrinal matters but the conception of religion itself. Thinkers of this period responded and contributed to the renegotiation of the meaning of the term. They sought to define religion in a manner that rendered its core compatible with, rather than threatened by, the intellectual developments flowing from the Enlightenment.

From his earliest writings onward, Hegel's theorizing of religion was always closely connected to the problem of social cohesion: how to secure effective bonds among members of a society as well as between them and the society's central institutions. Over his lifetime, Hegel occupied various standpoints on the role that religion in general or Christianity in particular could play in holding together complex modern societies. He began in search of a *Volksreligion*, or civil religion, that could provide the social glue he saw as lacking.[2] By the time of his 1827 lectures on the philosophy of religion, toward the end of his life, he had come to believe that Protestantism could play this role.

In considering religion in Hegel's work, perhaps the most fascinating point is its pervasiveness. In his mature thought, he declares religion to have the same object and content as philosophy and in crucial respects equates his conception of spirit with a Christian conception of God. Hegel often uses religious imagery to explicate his account of spirit, and religious language is

characterized the North Atlantic world since the late eighteenth century. I thus want to begin with a rather formal, principally temporal conception and then allow Hegel's account of the needs of the day to fill out his understanding of the defining characteristics of the emerging social and intellectual world. To focus on the North Atlantic world is not to presume that developments in this region were independent of encounters with other parts of the world: as I argue in chapter five, these encounters are fundamental to Hegel's conception of the challenges facing religion in his context.

[2] On my translation of *Volksreligion* as civil religion, see Chapter 1.

frequent in both the *Encyclopaedia* and the *Science of Logic*. Hegel's understanding of religion is, in short, central to his philosophical project as a whole.

To claim that "religion" is integral to his thought, however, in itself tells us remarkably little. Because Hegel wrote at a moment when "religion" itself was being dramatically reconceived, the meaning of the term should in no way be presupposed. It is a gross violation of so much that Hegel stands for to import uncritically our common understandings of such key terms rather than to carefully interpret how Hegel understands them. Consequently, one of the greatest challenges to interpreting Hegel's philosophy of religion lies in carefully interrogating the understandings of "religion," "religious," "God," "Divine," "secular," and so forth that we so often take for granted. Rather than asking how Hegel thinks about some predetermined object, "religion," we need to examine his thought in terms of the conceptualization of religion it offers at a moment in history when the concept of religion itself was very much under dispute. To fail to do so is nothing short of disastrous for the interpretation of Hegel's philosophy of religion.

This book offers a close study of Hegel's theory of religion in its intellectual and historical context. As such, it bears directly on two significant bodies of contemporary scholarship beyond Hegel studies. The first concerns the history of the study and conceptualization of religion—discussions in which Talal Asad, Tomoko Masuzawa, and Hans Kippenberg are prominent voices. The second consists in arguments in religious and philosophical ethics that center on the relation of religion and politics, specifically the role of religion in the public sphere; here, much of the debate has been defined around the work of John Rawls, Alasdair MacIntyre, Stanley Hauerwas, and Jeffrey Stout. For each of these interrelated areas—the Western conceptualization of religion and the role of religion in the public sphere—a nuanced study of Hegel will both provide a better account of our history and make substantive contributions to contemporary theoretical reflection. A brief sketch of the issues at stake in these literatures will both set up the study of Hegel and orient our thinking about Hegel's contemporary significance.

CONCEPTUALIZING RELIGION IN THE MODERN WEST

Scholars such as Asad, Masuzawa, and Kippenberg have recently drawn attention to how profoundly modern Western notions of religion have been shaped by a Christian, and specifically Protestant, history.[3] One of the most

[3] See, for instance, Asad 1993, Dubuisson 2003, Kippenberg 2002, Masuzawa 2005, and Smith 1990.

prominent features of modern discourse on religion has been the effort to delineate a distinct religious domain.[4] Religion is preserved in part through a kind of non-competition agreement with such domains as politics, philosophy, and science. As Talal Asad summarizes this strategy,

> the insistence that religion has an autonomous essence—not to be confused with the essence of science, or of politics, or of common sense—invites us to define religion (like any essence) as a transhistorical and transcultural phenomenon. It may be a happy accident that this effort of defining religion converges with the liberal demand in our time that it be kept quite separate from politics, law, and science—spaces in which varieties of power and reason articulate our distinctively modern life. This definition is at once part of a strategy (for secular liberals) of the confinement, and (for liberal Christians) of the defense of religion.[5]

Religion, in its essence, is arational and apolitical.

For many thinkers who view religion in this manner, the modern West stands out precisely because religion's distinctiveness has been recognized and its authentic essence has been separated from powers and interests that have been improperly associated with it. Much of the nineteenth-century scholarship on "religion" in other parts of the world stressed how interwoven it was with all dimensions of life. The value judgment, however, could go in either direction. For some, modern society represented a fall from an original unity. Many German romantics of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—Hegel's contemporaries—saw in the ancient Greek *polis* a vision of an integrated life in which religion was a thoroughly public matter. This vision of social harmony served as a point of contrast with an emerging modernity that was seen as individualistic and fractured.[6] In the early decades of the nineteenth century, a number of these same romantics, such as the brothers Friedrich and August Wilhelm Schlegel, turned toward India as the model of harmony. A. W. Schlegel, for instance, saw India as preserving a sense of the miraculous and of the unity of life, which had been lost in a European modernity dominated by calculation and dissection.[7] Later in the century,

[4] My point is not to suggest that this cluster of conceptions of religion have been the only options available. To the contrary, my project as a whole seeks to present Hegel's view as just such an alternative. But this heterogeneity need not obscure that a particular cluster of conceptions have tended to dominate the discussion—in the nineteenth century, in the contemporary academic study of religion, and in much of our public discourse.

[5] Asad 1993, 28. See also Dubuisson 2003, 113.

[6] Of course, romantics—German and otherwise—were by no means all simply nostalgic for an intensely communal past. Other elements of romanticism, such as the celebration of individual genius, provided a counterpoint to this idealization of community. For a brief introduction to romanticism and its relationship to German idealism, see Ameriks 2000b, 10–13.

[7] Kippenberg 2002, 29.

William Robertson Smith contrasted the inseparability of religion and politics in the ancient world with the divisions of the modern world. As Kippenberg writes, Robertson Smith "considered religious and political institutions as parts of a larger whole, i.e., the general public of a social community. 'To us moderns religion is above all a matter of individual conviction and reasoned belief, but to the ancients it was part of a citizen's public life.'"[8] Some looked upon that integration as a kind of paradise lost, while others saw it as a world in which superstition substituted for science and political power was rationalized by ideological misappropriations of the "sacred."[9] Both sides, however, largely agreed on the dichotomy itself: in other times and places, religion had been entangled with other aspects of social life; in the modern West, religion had been relegated—or elevated—to its own sphere.

Those who advocate the separation of religion from other spheres of social life have often done so by making religion something interior. Precisely what this means has varied significantly among proponents of the strategy, but the tendency has been to locate religion's core in a feeling, intuition, or belief, rather than in actions or in institutional manifestations. Religion thereby becomes a private matter that need not interfere with politics or—depending on one's theory of cognition—compete with either philosophy or the natural sciences. While in some cases beliefs may be deemed central, many have defined religion in terms of sentiment, feeling or intuition, rendering it less

[8] Kippenberg 2002, 78, quoting Robertson Smith 1894, 22.

[9] Masuzawa highlights the "pro-modern" side and its connection to the emergence of the social sciences in the nineteenth century:

> To examine the side of the three sciences for the West first, it stands to reason that political science, economics, and sociology should come into existence just at this time, just as politics, economy, and the social life of citizens were seemingly coming into their own, in short, just as this society was becoming secularized. According to the narrative of secularization now eminently familiar, these spheres were emerging from the control of church authority and becoming increasingly liberated from the sphere of religion. In effect, the logic here seems to be that these new sciences became viable and effective as ways of understanding European society because this society had finally reached maturity, that is, had sufficiently developed in accordance with rational principles and established itself on the basis of the rule of law, instead of on some real or imagined supernatural authority. (Masuzawa 2005, 16; see also Kippenberg 2002, ix)

This vision of a secularized, autonomous, mature modernity seems to flow naturally from the Enlightenment and recalls the opening of Kant's famous essay, "What Is Enlightenment?": "Enlightenment is the human being's emergence from his self-incurred minority" ("Aufklärung" 8:35). While these three sciences treat an enlightened Europe, "the two new sciences pertaining to non-European worlds, anthropology and Orientalism, promoted and bolstered the presumption that this thing called 'religion' still held sway over all those who were unlike them: non-Europeans, Europeans of the premodern past, and among their own contemporary neighbors, the uncivilized and uneducated bucolic populace as well as the superstitious urban poor . . . " (Masuzawa 2005, 19). These latter were still prey to "the oppressive supernaturalism of hidebound traditions and umbrageous priestcraft [that] continued to control and command those hapless others' thoughts and acts in myriad idiosyncratic ways" (Masuzawa 2005, 19).

vulnerable to developments in the understanding of human origins as well as growing confidence in the power of reason more generally. Hegel's later colleague and rival, Friedrich Schleiermacher, provides one of the classic statements of this view in his *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* (1799). Schleiermacher sought to take recent intellectual developments seriously by deemphasizing the supernatural and focusing on religious experience—rather than rational knowledge or morality—as the key to religion. Responding to religion's "cultured despisers," his rhetorical strategy is largely to say that they are looking in the wrong place; they focus on dogmas and institutions rather than the kernel of religious experience: "I ask, therefore, that turning from all that is usually called religion you aim your attention only at these individual intimations and moods that you will find in all expressions and noble deeds of God-inspired persons."[10] While Schleiermacher himself is also concerned with how these "intimations and moods" are manifest in actions, the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of his early work in particular has verged on reducing religion to emotion and intuition.[11] Religion is thereby conceived as a fundamentally private matter—a matter of faith, not dogma and certainly not institutions. While the latter might be engendered, they are not to be confused with the essence or core of religion.[12]

Whereas some focus on feeling, Asad associates this interiority with belief, though religious belief is understood to be qualitatively different from belief in the social or natural sciences. For Asad the term "belief" functions in large part to juxtapose this interior state with action:

> [Clifford] Geertz's treatment of religious belief, which lies at the core of his conception of religion, is a modern, privatized Christian one because and to the extent that it emphasizes the priority of belief as a state of mind rather than as a constituting activity in the world.[13]

Whether or not we accept the charge as fitting Geertz, the complaint that academic conceptions of religion reveal a Protestant bias by virtue of prioritizing belief over practice is now quite familiar. Although Daniel Dubuisson attributes this pattern to Christianity as a whole, he makes a similar point:

[10] Schleiermacher 1996, 15.

[11] For perhaps the clearest example, see Rudolf Otto's introduction to Schleiermacher's *Speeches* (Otto 1958). On the crucial but often overlooked differences between Schleiermacher and Otto on religion, see Dole 2004.

[12] Daniel Dubuisson traces an emphasis on interiority and faith from Paul's epistles to the modern period, mentioning German Pietism, J. G. Herder, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and Rudolf Otto in particular (Dubuisson 2003, 107–8). He views this focus on the self as profoundly formative of European sensibilities, interweaving with other influences so that "religion becomes sentiment, and sentiment the quintessence of religious life" (Dubuisson 2003, 109). While Dubuisson's generalizations oversimplify the landscape, his language captures well this powerful current in modern Western conceptions of religion.

[13] Asad 1993, 47.

because of a prioritization of theology and faith, "the practices or acts (worship, sacrifices, asceticisms, disciplines, ecstasies, or deliriums) and the organizations (brotherhoods priesthoods, communities) will always occupy an inferior position, subordinate to this absolute, this transcendence."[14]

In thinking about what is excluded by each of these narratives, it is worth noting that Dubuisson links this focus on the interior self to Christianity as a whole, rendering Christianity the oddity vis-à-vis other "cosmographic formations" and thereby marginalizing much of Catholicism to the history of Christianity. Asad, by contrast, portrays this development as a distinctly post-Enlightenment Protestant phenomenon, rendering modern Protestantism the oddity vis-à-vis not only other religions but also most of the history of Christianity.[15] While Asad implicitly reveals problems in Dubuisson's generalizations about Christianity, attending to Hegel and the socially activist strand of Pietism that influenced him exposes similar occlusions in Asad's account of modern Protestantism. As valuable as this recent scholarship has been, it has tended to flatten important differences among Protestant conceptualizations of religion and thereby obscure contestations among Protestants over the core of religion.

Living from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth centuries, Hegel is located at a decisive moment in the emergence of this portrait of religion and stands in a complex relationship to the dominant trajectory traced in this scholarship. While he participates in a broader Western discourse that constructs these other religions, his account of religion challenges much that has been central to dominant currents in the conceptualization of religion. Many of these accounts of religion—at least when offering defenses of religion—have tended to separate religion from philosophy, on one hand, and politics, on the other. Hegel, in contrast, views religion and philosophy as well as religion and politics as necessarily—not just historically—complexly interconnected. He thus stands as a counterpoint to the narrative of religion in modernity sketched above. He adopts a markedly different strategy for the conceptualization, analysis, and defense of religion in the modern world.

RELIGION AND POLITICS

Not surprisingly, Hegel's distinctive theory of religion has significant consequences for his account of religion's role in the public sphere. Well beyond Hegel, the conceptualization of religion has the most obvious practical impact in relation to religion and politics. On this topic, what can appear to be purely

[14] Dubuisson 2003, 26.
[15] Asad 1993, 45.

academic debates about the history of a discipline come to bear profoundly on collective life. Typically, demoting the significance of practice not only "frees" religion of what some see as "ritualistic" and "superstitious" encumbrances, but also tends to lessen its significance and role in the public sphere. Though this conclusion need not follow from a view that locates religion's core in interior experience, claims that religion is fundamentally about feeling or inward faith have often gone hand in hand with arguments that it must have little public role. If religion is first and foremost interior—if, as John Locke puts it, "true and saving religion consists in the inward persuasion of the mind"—it cannot be legislated, nor need it be actualized or expressed in political institutions.[16] As Asad notes, this arrangement has worked well for secular liberals as well as for liberal Christians.[17] While it is misleading to oversimplify the relation between religion as inner experience and religion as excluded from the public sphere, this alliance remains powerful in a good deal of our public rhetoric about religion.

Much of the debate regarding religion's role in the public sphere has focused on whether reasons offered in the public arena should be, or perhaps even necessarily are, based in religious commitments. Many liberals have argued that public policies must be justified by reasons that are available to everyone, regardless of their religious commitments. Religious commitments are thereby largely proscribed from the public sphere—which must function on the basis of some publicly available reason, not reasoning based in any particular tradition. John Rawls has provided the most influential version of the liberal position in the last several decades. Religious commitments and beliefs are in some sense bracketed for the sake of engaging in public debate of the most significant political matters.[18] The public sphere, then, is in crucial respects a secular sphere.

If religion does not concern political matters, then this restraint—keeping religion out of the public sphere—is no constraint at all. It will not limit religion itself, only distortions of religion that inappropriately intermingle the discrete domains of religion and politics. It bears emphasizing, however, that one need not accept this view to be a liberal in the relevant sense: a variety of reasons might be offered for bracketing religious beliefs, even if those beliefs do in principle pertain to public matters. Rawls's later work offers one version

[16] Locke 1955, 18. Many of these points find their classic early expression in John Locke's 1689 *Letter Concerning Toleration* (1955), though the differences between Locke's view and more recent liberal iterations are greater than we often appreciate. Perhaps most tellingly, Locke did not hesitate to argue that adherents of some religions (as well as atheists) are unfit for participation in the state.

[17] Asad 1993, 28, quoted above.

[18] Rawls 1971, 1993, and 1999. Rawls's position on these issues is subtle and has been significantly reworked in light of criticisms. I address these interpretive issues in more detail in Chapter 7.

of this, as does Richard Rorty.[19] Nonetheless, views of religion as interior and of religion as absent from the public sphere have frequently gone comfortably together.

Against such arguments for withholding "religious" reasons from the public sphere, a number of recent theorists have argued that without bringing our deepest commitments—which are often in some sense religious—to bear, we lack what it takes to reason effectively about major issues of public concern. Moreover, if one holds that the good state requires not only the right laws but also good habits and dispositions among citizens and attributes to religion an important role in the formation of these habits and dispositions, then religion must be of great political import. Alasdair MacIntyre has elaborated a version of these claims in arguing that tradition is not an alternative to reason but rather the bearer of reason. Substantive, reasoned debate can take place only on the basis of sharing a tradition and commitments, not by prescinding from them.[20] Stanley Hauerwas, too, has maintained that the notion of deliberating about our public life without bringing religious commitments to bear presupposes an inadequate conception of Christian faith and effectively requires Christians to violate, not just suspend, their deepest commitments about how to live.[21]

From this second perspective, religion concerns much more than interior experience. MacIntyre and Hauerwas, for instance, attend closely to practices. Their views on religion's role in the public sphere derive to a large extent from notions of religion as concerning our most basic commitments not only about a transcendent other but also about character, ethics, and community. At the same time, their attention to character formation highlights the need to think more broadly about religion's public role. The topic should include not only the role of religious claims in public argument but also the role of religious practices, communities, and institutions in the formation of our deepest commitments and character. Here as well, we can see that the conception of religion is one of the axes along which the debate about religion in public life turns.[22]

Hegel charts a nuanced course that attends to this connection between religion and public life and does justice to powerful insights on various sides of the debate. Like MacIntyre and Hauerwas, he shares a concern with

[19] See Rorty 1999 and 2003.

[20] For the most important formulations of this position, see MacIntyre 1984, 1988, and 1990.

[21] See Hauerwas 1981, 1983, and 2001.

[22] It bears emphasizing again that these different elements need not all accompany each other: many grant religion a substantial and legitimate role in the public sphere yet hold to the idea that religion's core lies in an experience that eludes linguistic expression and cognitive analysis. Moreover, the vitality of these discussions reveals the inadequacy of Asad's and Dubuisson's accounts of the conceptualization in the modern West. While the views they describe may be dominant, they are by no means uncontested.

religion's role in cultivating the intuitions and dispositions necessary to sustain a polity. Like Rawls and Rorty, he is centrally concerned with religion's tendency to oppress individual freedom when it plays a public role. His solution is no mere balancing act but rather a subtle account that follows from his conception of religion. Religion's role in the formation of our deepest commitments means that it will profoundly inform our political views and inclinations. Religion *matters* for politics. But religion is no trump card: for Hegel, the relation between religion and philosophy entails that reasons given in the public sphere must not appeal to mere authority. Religious reasons can be challenged by other reasons. Appeals to religion must themselves be justified by arguments that do not take the religious claims for granted. In this respect, Hegel stands close to the liberal line.

At stake in discussions of both the Western construction of religion and the role of religion in the public sphere are two related issues. The first concerns how religious traditions can adapt to the social, political, and intellectual contexts of Western modernity and postmodernity. Attempts to focus religion on interior experience and/or feeling were a strategy for responding to the various challenges confronting faith in a post-Enlightenment context. They sought to take religion out of competition with developments in social and natural sciences and to decouple it from what came to appear as a premodern social and political order. In doing so, they provided one influential direction for modern Christian apologetics, a defense of the "heart" of faith against these multiple challenges. They were therefore an attempt to articulate a distinctly modern religion that would not be toppled by broad social, cultural, and intellectual developments. To engage with this current in modern religious thought—and to articulate the alternative Hegel offers—is to probe the forms that religion may take in this context.

At the same time, these discussions of the conceptualization of religion in the modern West also frequently claim to describe the form religions have actually taken. Narratives of religion in the modern West and its relation to religion in other times and places are deeply intertwined with narratives of secularization. Normative claims that religion *should* be a private matter are mirrored in descriptive claims that religion *has become* a private matter, excluded from the public sphere. This understanding has been highly influential in public discussions. Yet while scholars have been challenging this account for some time, recent political events have brought the issue of secularization to the fore of public consciousness.[23] Both in the academy and beyond, more and more people find the descriptive accounts of secularization that were once widely accepted to be inadequate. As Asad, Dubuisson, and others highlight, however, the conceptual tools we have for studying

[23] For two of the most influential recent discussions of secularization, see Casanova 1994 and Taylor 2007.

religion still often presuppose some account of religion as occupying its own sphere. We therefore need to continue articulating tools for studying religion that are adequate to this situation, both in the modern West and elsewhere.

RECENT HEGEL SCHOLARSHIP AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Scholarship on the history of the conceptualization of religion in general and the relation between religion and politics in particular plays an important role in framing the broader concerns of this study. At the same time, recent developments in Hegel scholarship make the reexamination of Hegel's philosophy of religion propitious for independent reasons. A wave of recent scholarship has profoundly challenged accepted views of Hegel's philosophical project as a whole, focusing on his relation to Kant, on one hand, and to metaphysics, on the other. Robert Pippin, Terry Pinkard, and others have emphasized Hegel's debt to Kant and argued that Hegel radicalizes, rather than reneges upon, Kant's critique of metaphysics.[24] In Pippin's reading, defining elements of Hegel's thought must be understood in terms of his attempt to overcome the shortcomings he finds in Kant's deduction of the categories. As a result, Hegel should not be seen as returning to anything like a "premodern" synthesis of theology and philosophy, but as engaged in a distinctly modern project attentive to Kantian concerns about the limits of human reason.

To date, this scholarship—written principally by scholars in departments of philosophy—has given little attention to Hegel's philosophy of religion. Instead, much of the scholarship on Hegel's philosophy of religion, particularly in English, has been undertaken by those with constructive, Christian theological interests.[25] The result has been a lacuna: no scholarship builds on this recent work on the character of Hegel's thought as a whole *and* engages at length with his reflection on religion.[26]

[24] I consider this current—and its critics—at length in Chapter 2. On its broader relevance for the interpretation of Hegel's philosophy of religion in relation to other interpretations, see Lewis 2008a, 14–16.

[25] See, for instance, O'Regan 1994, Desmond 2003, and Hodgson 2005. I have provided an overview of recent English-language scholarship on Hegel's philosophy of religion in Lewis 2008a. For overviews of the German-language scholarship, see Jaeschke 1983a and Wendte 2007, 12–51.

[26] For noteworthy, though brief, movements in this direction, see Pinkard 2000, 576–93 and Redding 2007b. Redding's thought-provoking piece, "Hegel, Idealism and God," asks, as he states in the abstract, "Can Hegel . . . ever be taken as anything *other than* a religious philosopher with little to say to any philosophical project that identifies itself as *secular*?" (2007b, 16, emphasis in original). He answers in the affirmative. In contrast, my project asks how Hegel challenges our

This gap is all that much more significant because it is easy to suspect that Hegel's philosophy of religion offers the greatest challenge to these post-Kantian readings of his thought. Indeed, critics have charged that this line of interpretation cannot account for his treatment of religion.[27] More generally, this interpretive wave has been accused of stripping Hegel's thought of all that is unacceptable to contemporary, secular sensibilities; Hegel is thereby rendered comfortable and familiar to contemporary philosophers rather than shown to pose profound challenges to modes of thought fully ensconced in the finite and secular.[28]

The response to such critics can only be elaborated through careful engagement with the relevant primary texts—a task I take up over the course of the book. At present, however, it is essential to be clear about the basic character of my response: I argue that this new current in Hegel scholarship does not simply ignore Hegel's metaphysics or strip away what is deemed unacceptable to a post-Wittgensteinian philosophical guild; it is not driven simply by an attempt to salvage "what is living" today in Hegel's thought. To the contrary, these "non-traditionalists" provide a better interpretation of Hegel than do more "traditional" readings.[29] It is a better interpretation not because it accords with certain of today's philosophical prejudices but because it provides a more compelling reading of Hegel's corpus in its historical context.

More specifically, I argue that reading Hegel's philosophy of religion in relation to these new interpretations of his intellectual project generates a dramatically new understanding of Hegel on religion. The problem of social cohesion—especially the individual's relation to the polity—stands forth as a central theme in Hegel's reflection on religion throughout his lifetime. Hegel argues that "God" is the religious language for spirit, which he conceives in terms of socially constituted subjectivity that is self-realizing activity rather than a thing or being. Moreover, spirit is properly understood as our own essence. Hegel's "God" is no transcendent Other, not an entity separate from human beings. Such claims typically draw the accusation that this interpretation reduces theology to anthropology.[30] As we will see, there is some truth in the accusation; Hegel already articulates central elements of Feuerbach's

understanding of terms such as "religious" and "secular." To take them for granted, as Redding here implies, is to overlook central aspects of what Hegel can teach us regarding the study of religion. Within the article itself, however, Redding's strategy is somewhat closer to my own; see 2007b, 17.

[27] See, for instance, Beiser 2008, 5; O'Regan 1994, 86; and Magee 2001, 14–15.

[28] For examples of these charges, see Peperzak 2001, 10–13; Williams 2005–06, 31; and Beiser 2008, 4–5.

[29] For this formulation of the debate in terms of traditional and non-traditional readings, see Kreines 2006.

[30] William Desmond raises this concern in relation to my first book (Desmond 2006, 789). For an articulation of this charge in relation to other recent interpretations of Hegel, see Williams 2005–06.

account of religion as projection. Yet the charge is itself ambiguous: everything turns on how one conceives of anthropology. Insofar as one understands the reduction of theology to anthropology to entail the reduction of infinitude to finitude, for instance, the accusation presupposes a conception of human beings as finite in a manner at odds with Hegel's thought. In Hegel's terms, to conceive of anthropology in this more limited sense is to treat us as we are in our immediacy. For Hegel, by nature or in our immediacy we are implicitly spirit, but we are not yet actual, realized spirit. The humanity that is identical with spirit is humanity that has realized this potential and become spirit.

Undoubtedly, some will be dissatisfied with the resulting view of Christianity. Rather than responding that such a reading constitutes a "non-religious" reading, however, an adequate interpretation must take seriously that this is how Hegel understands the essence of Christianity and of religion. In a profoundly transformative historical moment, Hegel offers a conception of Christianity that he takes to be simultaneously expressive of the genuine content of the tradition and consistent with modern social and intellectual developments. Even if some view him as sacrificing religion's essence, he views himself as defending religion rather than rendering it obsolete. Our task as interpreters must be to take his reconceptualization of religion seriously, not to dismiss it out of hand as "not really religion." The result, I will argue, is a new perspective on religion, politics, and modernity as well as a significant conception of religion that challenges the conceptions that have dominated both public discourse and religious studies scholarship.

The opening chapter of this volume situates Hegel's early writings on civil religion and social reform in the intellectual and political context of the late eighteenth century. Over the course of the 1790s, Hegel tries out a variety of strategies to respond to what he sees as the interrelated social and religious challenges of the day—particularly the need for social cohesion and the prospects of religion playing a role in providing it. These various attempts, however, constitute—in Hegel's own mind—a series of failures. While Hegel quickly rejects each solution he proposes, the problems that he identifies—especially the problem of social cohesion in complex modern societies—continue to motivate him throughout his lifetime.

Judging these early attempts to be inadequate, Hegel turns to philosophy—post-Kantian idealism in particular—as the only adequate basis for addressing the cultural and political problems of the modern world. Chapter 2 sets out Hegel's confrontation with Kant's legacy and its centrality to his philosophical project as a whole. Crucial thereto is his own development of the spontaneity and self-determination of thought. Hegel's reworking of the implications of thought's self-determination constitutes a central task of his most daunting work, *The Science of Logic*. Articulating the task of Hegel's logic in these terms provides the systematic context essential to the interpretation of the philosophy of religion. In elaborating Hegel's relationship to Kant's theoretical

philosophy, this chapter bears the core of my argument that Hegel's thought is best interpreted as a distinctly post-Kantian project. Consequently, it is the locus of my engagement with vibrant debates in contemporary Hegel scholarship over the nature of Hegel's idealism.

With this interpretation of Hegel's larger project to draw upon, the third chapter turns to Hegel's mature philosophy of religion itself. Understanding the multiple tasks that Hegel's philosophy of religion takes on requires situating it in relation to both the more immediate historical context and the systematic philosophical context. The former enables us to appreciate the social concerns that continue to occupy Hegel during the Napoleonic and post-Napoleonic periods. The latter addresses the movement from Hegel's logic through the emergence of the conception of spirit; it thus articulates the philosophical presuppositions of the starting point of Hegel's philosophy of religion.

The next three chapters analyze the three parts of Hegel's philosophy of religion as presented in the Berlin *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. In treating "The Concept of Religion," Chapter 4 provides—in a relatively abstract form—the essential elements of Hegel's account of religion. Beyond a preliminary account of "the absolute" as a kind of placeholder, this section articulates the relation between religion and philosophy as well as the central role that Hegel attributes to religious practice. Chapter 5 addresses the most problematic but least analyzed segment of Hegel's philosophy of religion, "Determinate Religion," which treats religions other than Christianity. Here Hegel's constantly changing account suffers from the attempt—unjustified even in his own project—to unite two distinct conceptions: what I have called a conceptual mapping and a narrative of genesis. Each is powerful on its own; but when they are united, the result is incoherent. Chapter 6 takes up Hegel's account of "The Consummate Religion." The focus of my treatment will be on the hermeneutic Hegel brings to bear—which rests on his conception of the relation between religion and philosophy—as well as precisely what, for Hegel, makes Christianity the "consummate religion." First here, specifically in the 1827 version of these lectures, does Hegel elaborate a conception of Christianity as the civil religion for which he has been searching since the 1790s.

Finally, Chapter 7 draws on both the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* and untranslated lectures on the philosophy of right to analyze Hegel's mature view of the relation between religion and politics. Hegel's hierarchical ordering of philosophical thought over religious representation in no way renders religion obsolete. To the contrary, Hegel attributes to the practices of the religious community a vital role in shaping our intuitions about justice and about how society should be ordered. These religiously informed intuitions, however, are not fixed; they can be challenged by and evolve through encounters with philosophical reflection. Moreover, religious representations lack the articulation necessary to determine the laws and structures of the state. The latter must find their justification in philosophy. Religion's role in

cultivating these intuitions gives society reason to be highly attentive to the political attitudes being instilled by its religious traditions. He thus explains the political power of religious commitments as well as why they need not be taken as fixed points in debate. Ultimately, Hegel connects religion to politics in a manner that accounts for and legitimates the political significance of religion without conceiving of religion as immune to criticism and challenge from a variety of sources.

1

Civil Religion and Social Reform

Hegel's Early Reflection on Religion

Hegel was born into the rapidly changing, intellectually and politically turbulent world of the late Holy Roman Empire. His early writings reveal an earnest youth fascinated and compelled by the new social order he saw emerging. For Hegel, as for Friedrich Schelling, Friedrich Hölderlin, and many other members of their generation, one way of life had grown old, and he and his friends sought to be the midwives of a new way of life being born.[1] From the beginning, a central thrust of Hegel's engagement with these complex social, cultural, and political transformations is religion's role in providing—or failing to provide—social cohesion for the modern world. Though he writes about religion again and again, he does not write as a theologian in any conventional sense but as a theorist of religion and society. A *Leitfaden* throughout his writings of the 1790s is the idea of a civil religion, or *Volksreligion*, that can function as social glue without becoming oppressive or infringing upon freedom of conscience. In these writings he views Christianity as incapable of playing this role and probes the origins of this failure as well as the possibility of alternatives. He seeks a religion that infuses all dimensions of life, including politics, without dictating its specific forms and arrangements: a civil religion that is not a state religion. Although the form of division in the foreground shifts, virtually all of these writings consider what role religion might play in overcoming fragmentation—both of society and of the self. By focusing on religion's impact on society more generally rather than particular individuals, Hegel demonstrates greater concern for the ethical everyman—the typical citizen—than for ethical elites—those few individuals who become adepts in a tradition. Drawing these concerns together, Hegel seeks to articulate the requirements for and possibilities of a *Volksreligion* for the modern world.

Despite the dramatic developments between Hegel's earliest writings on religion and his mature philosophy of religion, these early drafts

[1] John Toews also employs the imagery of "midwives" (1980, 32).

articulate basic problems concerning religion's role in society that endure throughout his work. Beyond placing these concerns in relief, these early writings illuminate the pathways through which the religious and political influences on Hegel's upbringing in Württemberg flowed into his later grappling with religion, philosophy, society, and politics. And by tracing his failure to find in religion alone a satisfactory solution to the problems that here concern him, we can better see how and why he came to view theoretical philosophy as necessary for their resolution.

To highlight Hegel's distinctive approach to religion during this period, the chapter begins by discussing the intellectual, political, and religious context of Hegel's youth. I then turn to the writings from Tübingen and Berne, which argue for a Kantian conception of morality as the core of a defensible religion that provides unity. In Frankfurt Hegel comes to view Kantian morality as reinscribing the division Hegel seeks to overcome; instead, Hegel turns to love as the basis for the unity he seeks, viewing religion as expressing this unification that is higher than the bifurcation intrinsic to understanding and reason. Taken together, the developments of this decade constitute a fruitful succession of failures. Hegel concludes this period with a greater appreciation of religion but still without a satisfactory solution to social fragmentation. Kantian morality, religion, and love have all fallen short. The failure of these proposals will ultimately drive him toward theoretical philosophy to ground a vision of social cohesion in the modern world.

Hegel's thinking transforms dramatically during this period and the surviving writings show a mind constantly incorporating new perspectives and reframing issues. He never published any of these writings and even the less fragmentary pieces have the character of works still under revision. Given the unpolished nature of the texts and the purposes for which we are considering them here, resolving the apparent tensions to determine Hegel's precise view at a particular moment is less important than identifying the guiding problems and the solutions tested.[2]

THE RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL MILIEU OF HEGEL'S YOUTH

In the centuries prior to Hegel's birth, most German-speaking territories were organized into the loose confederation of the Holy Roman Empire. With members ranging from major political powers such as Austria to minor cities

[2] For the most important recent treatment of these writings, see Crites 1998. Perhaps the most detailed examination of the documents of this period is contained in Harris 1972. See also Dickey 1987, 143–79; Pinkard 2000; and Schmidt 1997.

controlled by weak monarchs, the Holy Roman Empire was a complex system of particular arrangements and customs very different from those often taken for granted in the world of modern nation states.[3] From the vantage point of the political order about to emerge, these arrangements could not but appear chaotic, arbitrary, and irrational.[4] Political power was widely strewn, distinctions between public and private institutions were unclear, and different regions were not closely integrated. Although much political control devolved to the local level, state sovereignty was limited by membership in the Empire.

After dramatic losses in the Thirty Years War (1618–1648), the population as well as the economy recovered and grew rapidly during the eighteenth century.[5] These developments strained the limits of traditional institutions, so that new social and cultural patterns began to emerge. A rising commercial class gained in power relative to the aristocracy. While Prussia was becoming a significant European power, extensive segments of what is now Germany remained a patchwork of semi-feudal duchies rules by minor princes and dukes. In attempting to expand their power and privileges, many of these rulers sought to take advantage of Enlightenment-influenced trends toward rationalizing administration. Princes frequently brought in educated bureaucratic administrators, who were given increasingly important roles in the running of the state. The centralizing tactics of these monarchs and their administrators were frequently opposed by the estates, the partially representative assemblies that—in many *Länder*—dated back to the medieval period. Historians of the period offer conflicting views on whether to regard the estates as protectors of liberty against the self-aggrandizement of the monarch or as traditionalist obstacles to the emergence of a more rationally organized modern state.[6] All sides contributed to as well as hindered the newly emerging order—thwarting any simple narrative of modernization.

This greater role for an educated elite was an important facet of a broader emergence of new elites in the Germanic world. The eighteenth century saw the rise of a new clerisy of educated cultural figures as well as government administrators who tended to view cultural and political reform as closely related.[7] Despite geographic dispersion, significant cultural differences among

[3] On the Holy Roman Empire in the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Sheehan 1989, 11–24. His work provides an excellent account of the political, social, and intellectual developments of this period (1989, 11–206). See also Blackbourn 2003, 1–33; Pinkard 2000, 1–15; and Toews 1980, 13–48.

[4] Recently, however, some scholars have argued that these political arrangements were both less rigid and more effective than often thought. See Sheehan 1989, 23–4 and Wilson 1995, 8.

[5] Württemberg, for instance, lost approximately three quarters of its population (Sheehan 1989, 75).

[6] Wilson 1995, 6–7 and 252.

[7] See Wilson 1995, 251; Sheehan 1989, 125–206; and Toews 1980, 14–15.

the regions, and poor communication between them, there emerged an educated, reading public that began to share literary, religious, and philosophical ideas. International in its membership, this cosmopolitan group was in some respects culturally more closely linked to elites in other regions than to their neighbors. "From this historical situation," writes James Sheehan, "arose two impulses within German literary culture: first, a widespread belief among German writers that they were public figures whose work had a profound moral purpose and national significance; and, second, an equally pervasive sense of authorial isolation and cultural fragmentation."[8] These impulses, together with a broader appreciation of the great social, political, and intellectual transformations taking place, combined to produce a sense that this generation was witnessing the birth of a new age, one of whose great challenges was a lack of social and cultural cohesion.

Born in Stuttgart, in the duchy of Württemberg, in 1770, Hegel grew up in a particularly complex religio-political environment.[9] Though Württemberg's population was predominantly Protestant, it had been ruled by Catholic dukes since 1733. The duke's absolutizing tendencies were countered by the Protestant estates, a long-standing and largely feudal governmental assembly that eventually brought a suit against the current duke, Karl Eugen, in the imperial court of the Holy Roman Empire. Pressured by the Catholic archduke of Austria—who was himself pressured by the Protestant Frederick the Great of Prussia—Karl Eugen agreed to a constitutional settlement with the Protestant estates in 1770.[10] Powerful monarchs had applied pressure so that traditional powers and privileges of estates were defended against the encroachments of a monarch. In different ways, both the estates and the duke contributed to and opposed the development of what now appear to be modern political institutions: a representative government administered by educated, professional bureaucrats. Hegel's early environment was no simple picture of religious homogeneity, and the important political developments by no means followed a clearly modernizing trajectory.

These political arrangements were embedded within a larger set of social practices characterizing the German "hometown" of this period. Terry Pinkard describes this social world as

> in a broad sense . . . 'communitarian.' There was clearly a sense of who belonged (and equally as clearly and forcefully, who did *not*) in the hometowns, and each hometown had a clear social sense of what groups had what rights and privileges without there being any need for a written statement of them. The guild system in Württemberg played a central role in the structure of its hometowns in the sense

8 Sheehan 1989, 174.

9 On Württemberg's history during this period, see Wilson 1995 and Toews 1980, 13–25.

10 Pinkard 2000, 1–2 and Wilson 1995, 199–239.

> that the guild functioned as a kind of 'second family'. . . . [I]t regulated a person's life from apprenticeship to death.[11]

Each group's rights and privileges were the result of long histories and accretions, not the straightforward implementation of a rationalized political vision. These practices provided the basis for the actual political arrangements and were reinforced for a time by the constitutional settlement of 1770—though they would soon be dramatically transformed by the impact of the French Revolution.

While the political contours were deeply shaped by Protestant and Catholic identities, distinctive currents of Protestantism circulating in Württemberg at the time significantly challenged Lutheran orthodoxy. As Laurence Dickey has chronicled in detail, Protestantism in Württemberg was deeply shaped by Pietism and other strands of religious activism that produced a socially reformist vision of Christian activism and coalesced with many of the German Enlightenment's goals.[12] These activist strands of Christianity shaped Hegel's early social and religious milieu and seem to have played a critical role in cultivating Hegel's own intuitions on these matters, even if he would later critique central elements of this inheritance.

Württemberg's Protestantism of the time did not sharply differentiate religion and politics. Religious views, religious institutions, and political practices were interwoven and mutually supportive. Distinctly Christian views about anthropology—specifically regarding faith, sin, and salvation—were understood to have concrete implications for political actions.[13]

This understanding of religion as having strong political dimensions was part of a larger tradition of Christian reform. This strand of Christian reform has deep roots in early Christianity and flourished in the context of the

[11] Pinkard 2000, 6. For the classic treatment of German hometowns during this period, see Walker 1998.

[12] My treatment of this aspect of Württemberg's religious climate draws extensively from Dickey's excellent and fine-grained account. I follow him in finding the broader Protestant milieu of Württemberg more illuminating than the specifics of Hegel's childhood for understanding Hegel's views of religion (1987, 5). In stressing this background as well as the import of Hegel's reading in political economy, however, Dickey tends to underplay the impact of Kant, Fichte, and Schelling as well as the radicalism of Hegel's early criticisms of Christianity; see, for instance, 1987, 141. My interpretation sees the key to grasping Hegel's view of religion in how he brought these multiple currents together. Nonetheless, this means we must begin with the tradition of Christian reform and civil piety that Dickey documents. Toews is also very helpful (1980, 13–48). On this Pietist background, see also Olson 1992, 36–52. Olson effectively stresses tensions and developments within Pietism in late eighteenth-century Württemberg, though he attends relatively little to the imbrication with political developments.

[13] Dickey suggests that one of the reasons "[s]cholars have been slow . . . to recognize the importance of Protestant civil piety as a formative influence on Hegel's thought," is the "modern conception of religion [that] is premised on a clear separation of church and state, of religion and politics . . . This separation . . . invariably forces us to look in history for the sharp distinctions implied in present usage of the term" (1987, 8–9).

German Enlightenment, or *Aufklärung*. Dickey attributes a central role in this tradition to the theological anthropologies articulated by the Alexandrian Church Fathers. Defending a more optimistic conception of the human condition than that offered by Augustine, they maintained that even after the Fall humans have the capacity for virtue and consequently the responsibility to participate in their own salvation. In this view, life entails a process of "ceaseless striving after perfection" to make oneself like, or return oneself to, God.[14] This anthropology was closely connected with eschatology, such that the pursuit of ethical perfection was seen as helping to prepare the way for the Kingdom of God on earth.

This early tradition within Christianity, nourished and further developed by figures such as Joachim de Fiore, fed into early modern calls for a Second Reformation. Seeking to extend the Reformation in a manner that realized the implications of this theological anthropology, a number of Protestants drew upon Joachimite eschatology, combined with a "shift of agency from godly prince to godly people," to argue for reforming the Reformation. In *True Christianity*, Johann Arndt (1555–1621) critiqued what he saw as the neglect of life and action in favor of doctrine and ceremony in the emerging Lutheran orthodoxy. One of Arndt's followers, Johann Valentin Andreae (1586–1654) became one of the most important figures in Württemberg's church history. Influenced by time he spent in Geneva and concerned that orthodox Lutheranism had become morally stultified and politically compromised, Andreae built on Arndt's notion of "gradual sanctification" and argued for active involvement in a process of social regeneration. What was called for was a second reformation that would transform society, not through taking over the state, but through generally non-governmental institutions such as the family, universities, other private associations, as well as the church itself. Thus, Andreae directed the Church of Württemberg toward, as Dickey writes, "a civil piety that was working 'outward' and 'upward' from society toward the state, not 'inward' and 'downward' from the state toward society."[15] Advancing this current closer to Hegel's own time, Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687–1752) linked this concern with action to a focus on the general judgment and practices of the community, not the individual exercise of abstract reflection on moral questions—a theme clearly reflected in Hegel's early writings on *Volksreligion* as well as his mature conception of ethical life.[16] Thus, even before being picked up by figures such as Lessing, Kant, and Schiller, this theological current provided Württemberg Pietists with an alternative to a more Augustinian Lutheran orthodoxy.

[14] Dickey 1987, 14.
[15] Dickey 1987, 60, 68.
[16] Olson 1992, 42.

In this conception, "religion" does not control or determine the precise shape of political institutions or laws, but it comfortably and significantly informs what might be thought of as the "prepolitical": views and norms concerning collective life—social organization, economic arrangements, the nature of justice, and so forth.[17] Frequently only semi-conscious, these attitudes and associated practices typically guide our intuitions and approaches to political questions, without dictating specific outcomes.

This tradition was all the more influential because it also informed and functioned in tandem with the *Aufklärung*. As a number of scholars have stressed, the German Enlightenment was much less antagonistic toward religion than its French counterpart. The French *philosophes*, such as Voltaire and Diderot, tended to juxtapose Christianity with a humanism rooted in classical antiquity and opted for the latter. By contrast, "among eighteenth-century German Protestants classical learning was generally employed to support Christianity, not to discredit or destroy it."[18] In doing so, they participated in a larger tendency in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to de-Judaize Christianity in favor of its Hellenic elements. Moreover, the broad tradition of Christian reform within Lutheranism provided space for the *Aufklärer* to challenge orthodox Lutheranism without viewing themselves as rejecting Protestantism. Dickey therefore argues they are better viewed as "oscillat[ing] less between religious and secular values than between two poles of Christian value that may roughly be labeled 'biblical' and 'classical.'" This "classical" conception of Christianity shared much with Pelagian tendencies within the tradition and drew heavily on the kinds of anthropologies developed by the Alexandrian Fathers. For many of the *Aufklärer*, anthropology lay at the center of their religious concerns. They concentrated on human morality and the human capacity for both self-improvement and the improvement of society. As Dickey writes,

> To the doctrines of a transcendent God, original sin, and gratuitous grace they opposed conceptions of a God who was immanent in the world; of a man who was ethically responsible in a religious sense for his actions in this world; and of a salvation process that required human participation to complete itself. Viewed in this way, the *Aufklärer* could be said to have been searching for what their detractors called a "compromise theology," a theology that was voluntarist in a religious sense, activist in an ethical sense, civil in a human sense, and moderately synergist in a soteriological sense.[19]

Optimism about human capacity to change was channeled into an emphasis on education as crucial to both individual religious development and social

[17] Dickey introduces this term later in his own analysis (1987, 281).
[18] Dickey 1987, 19. See also Crites 1998, 10.
[19] Dickey 1987, 26.

transformation.[20] Summing up the German Enlightenment's complex relation to the Christian tradition, Stephen Crites writes,

> [t]he German Enlightenment was a humanistic revival, which exhibited a reverence for the classics, a degree of religious tolerance, a keen interest in science, a sturdy moralism, and a passion for the universal that easily became tinged with pantheism, but turned aside from materialism or atheism. Certainly this German Enlightenment was reformist in religion, but as such was able to regard itself as a genuine continuation of the Reformation itself.[21]

The German Enlightenment thus functioned largely within ethically and socially activist currents in German Protestantism, expanding the boundaries without cutting the threads of continuity.

This Christian reformist concern with religion's potential to motivate and inform social and political action resonates in Hegel's work, yet it does so in a peculiar way. His early writing on Christianity—as we will see—does not elaborate such a theology but rather criticizes the existing church for its failure to play such a role in society. Hegel does not take these reformist, activist formulations as a basis for his portrayal of Christianity and is highly critical of those who claim that Christianity is to be defined by the latest "Compendium." Hegel seems to have imbibed the spirit of the Christian reform tradition Dickey traces without accepting it as a convincing vision of Christianity itself.[22] It did more to define his goals for what a religion should achieve than his early vision of what Christianity is.

Spending his childhood in Stuttgart and remaining in Württemberg to enter the Protestant seminary in Tübingen in 1788, Hegel was steeped in this context.[23] At the seminary, his engagement with these factors began to take a more concrete shape. Like his closest friends and most influential intellectual peers, Friedrich Hölderlin and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, Hegel found much of his experience at the seminary alienating.[24] Though Hegel was more influenced by the German Enlightenment than the French, he and his friends experienced a tension between the climate at Tübingen and the ideas from the French and English Enlightenments that were filtering into

[20] Dickey 1987, 32.

[21] Crites, 1998, 10.

[22] Thus, despite the importance of the Protestant background of Hegel's thought, Dickey overstates the extent of Hegel's self-conscious identification with this tradition. In the 1790s in particular, Hegel was much more serious about rejecting Christianity altogether than Dickey allows (1987, 155–79).

[23] On Hegel's life up to his time at the Tübinger Stift, see Pinkard 2000, 2–18, Harris 1972, 1–47, Crites 1998, 3–15. For detailed discussions of Hegel's early life, see also Althaus 1992 and 2000, 1–59; Rosenkranz 1844; Haering 1929, 1:13–32; and Rosenzweig 1920, 1:1–101. Note that the 2000 "translation" of Althaus's *Hegel und die heroischen Jahre der Philosophie* (1992) is significantly condensed from the German version.

[24] See Pinkard 2000, 21–2; Harris 1972, 58–108; and Crites 1998, 34–134.

Germany. While the latter seemed to promise epochal transformations, the seminary seemed dominated by stale tradition. The friends' initial enthusiasm over the French Revolution heightened their disillusionment with Württemberg's present as well as their desire for change.

Dissatisfied with what he saw as the stagnation of German social and political life, Hegel abandoned his earlier intention to become a pastor in favor of becoming a *Volkserzieher*, an "educator of the people," who would work to transform society through writing that would educate and elevate the populace. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781) provided Hegel's paradigm for such a role. Lessing's range of interests and his sympathetic but enlightened treatment of religion was extremely influential on Hegel even before Tübingen and continued to impress him.[25]

In Tübingen, the conflict between a more traditional Christianity and the portent of something new coalesced in debates over the religious implications of Kant's philosophy. On one side of this debate, Gottlob Storr, a professor, argued that by demonstrating the limits of reason, Kant's work had undermined Enlightenment critiques of religion and shown the need for revelation. The overall result was the employment of Kant to buttress conventional orthodoxy—a strategy Hegel would later characterize as "procur[ing] Critical building material to fortify their Gothic temple" (*Briefe* 1:16/31). On the other side of this debate, Carl Immanuel Diez, an older student and tutor, adamantly rejected this downplaying of Kant's challenge, arguing that the *Critique of Pure Reason*, in its account of the conditions of experience, had undermined even the possibility of such a model of revelation. Kant demolished, rather than buttressed, orthodoxy.

Diez had a significant impact on Schelling, Hölderlin, and Hegel. They were sympathetic toward his understanding of Kant's implications as well as his Jacobin political views. Schelling and Hölderlin were thereby convinced of the import of engaging extensively with Kant's thought, including his theoretical philosophy. With his intent to become a *Volkserzieher*, however, Hegel tended to regard the more abstruse discussion of Kant's theoretical philosophy as unnecessary for the project of social improvement.[26] Only by the end of the 1790s was he convinced of the need to grapple with Kant's theoretical philosophy. Already in the essays from the early 1790s, however, he was deeply impressed by Kant's view of morality, even if he tended to find it more reconcilable with an emphasis on feeling than stricter Kantians would allow. Moreover, by the time he left the seminary, Hegel seems to have been deeply influenced by Kant's notion of a "religion of reason," and this focus on the need for religion to be rational appears prominently in his earliest writings.[27]

[25] Pinkard 2000, 15; Crites 1998, 10–15.
[26] Pinkard 2000, 33–7; Crites 1998, 30, 58 n. 62.
[27] See Pinkard 2000, 37.

RELIGION AND SOCIETY IN HEGEL'S EARLY WRITINGS: TÜBINGEN AND BERNE

In 1793, Hegel began an essay that provides a surprisingly clear formulation of his approach to thinking and writing about religion as well as to central themes for thinking about religion and society.[28] Hegel writes not as a theologian but as a social theorist exploring how a civil religion might function as the social glue to hold together a fragmenting social order. His understanding of the task as well as of what a solution might look like is influenced by both ideals of classical political life and socially reformist currents in Protestantism. Keeping both of these influences in mind, we need not choose between a central concern with *zōon politikon* and with *homo religiosus*; in Hegel's intellectual landscape the two need not diverge. Not written for a highly technical philosophical audience, the piece brings out Hegel's sense of vocation as a *Volkserzieher*. Both this genre of reflection on religion and the specific problems that it seeks to address will characterize his writing throughout the 1790s. And while Hegel's developments during this period will lead to a shift in the genre of his writing, the central concerns as well as many specific points about religion's role in motivating action will endure throughout his life.

Known as the "Tübingen Essay," the piece considers how religion might provide the shared intuitions and motivations that can hold a complex and free society together. As Hegel understands this task in 1793, it requires a civil religion that effectively induces a people to act in a manner that accords with reason. While practical reason can determine morally right actions, most people will not be sufficiently motivated by duty alone.[29] The essay thus has a significant dose of Kantian practical philosophy, but it goes beyond Kant in its focus on a necessary role for religion in providing psychologically efficacious motivation for moral action.[30] From the beginning, Hegel sees that neither a purely rational philosophical vision nor a bare-bones "natural

[28] He began the essay in Tübingen and continued to work on it after his return to Stuttgart; it remained unfinished. The work's unfinished character illuminates well the extent to which Hegel's thought is constantly evolving. The concerns and approach to addressing them are more significant than his answers at any given moment. On the essay's composition, see Harris 1972, 119 and Pinkard 2002, 39.

[29] Foregrounding the point about the need for effective motivation, Harris argues that during this early period Hegel's "fundamental concern was to comprehend why knowledge was 'living' (practically effective) in some minds and 'dead' (merely theoretical) in others" (1972, xviii). As important as this concern is for Hegel, however, it is best understood within the broader horizon of his concern to address the challenges facing modern society, particularly fragmentation.

[30] Kant's own stand on the matter is deeply contested. Kant certainly shared the concern with religion's role in motivating action, particularly in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. For valuable recent discussions of Kant on religion and moral motivation, see Beiser 2006 and Ameriks 2006, 89–107.

religion" has the power to motivate many people. This insight seems to be a central reason why, despite his profound and varied criticisms of existing religion and his appreciation of the challenges faced by the idea of a modern religion, Hegel never stops struggling with religion or proposes abandoning it altogether.

A *Volksreligion*, or civil religion, stimulates our action by shaping and instilling—through ceremonies and early habituation—"the conviction of a whole people," a common ethos according to which a society acts ("TE" 12/32; see also 13/33). Consequently, Hegel's "concern is with what needs to be done so that religion with all the force of its teaching might be blended into the fabric of human feelings, bonded with what moves us to act, and shown to be efficacious, thus enabling religion to become entirely subjective" ("TE" 16/36). To fulfill this role in his day, however—to actually hold the society together—Hegel thinks civil religion must respect freedom of conscience and important elements of religious freedom. As much as it shapes an ethos, it must not demand belief or preclude the coexistence of a plurality of voluntary, private religions. In this sense, Hegel can be seen as seeking a distinctly modern form of civil religion, one that overcomes fragmentation without crushing individual liberty. Though Hegel—like many of his contemporaries—is fascinated by an idealized vision of the cohesive polis of ancient Greece, he does not suggest their way of life can be revived.

The first sections of the essay are structured around the distinction between what Hegel calls "subjective" and "objective" religion. Where objective religion focuses on the doctrines and existing beliefs, subjective religion "expresses itself only in feelings and actions" ("TE" 14/33). As Stephen Crites stresses, these are best understood as poles or dimensions of religion, rather than different types of religion altogether.[31] Objective religion is dead, ossified religion:

> Objective religion is *fides quae creditur* [the faith that is believed]; understanding and memory are the powers that do the work, investigating facts, thinking them through, retaining and even believing them. Objective religion can also possess practical knowledge, but only as a sort of dead capital. It is susceptible to organizational schemes: it can be systematized, set forth in a book, and expounded discursively. ("TE" 13–14/33)

Cold, abstract, and formulaic, objective religion lacks the power to move us to action.

Subjective religion, which is "what has inherent and true worth" ("TE" 16/35), is a religion of the heart:

> If I say of someone that he has religion, this does not mean that he is well schooled in it, but rather that his heart feels the active presence, the wonder, the

[31] Crites 1998, 72.

> closeness of the deity, that his heart knows or sees God in nature and in the destinies of men, that he prostrates himself before God, thanking him and glorifying him in all that he does. ("TE" 14/33–4)

Religion in this mode engages feeling and moves us to action. Linking feeling and specifically moral action, Hegel writes, "religion is a concern of the heart stemming from a need of practical reason" ("TE" 17/36). Doctrinal content is limited, for it is not fundamentally about what is believed. Consequently, Hegel "classif[ies] as religious only such knowledge of God and immortality as is responsive to the demands of practical reason and connected with it in a readily discernible way" ("TE" 16/35). Hegel here draws on Kant's account of the religious postulates that are necessary for practical reason. With doctrinal specificity at a minimum, there is no great variety in subjective religion; rather, "subjective religion among good people is basically the same: what makes me a Christian in your eyes makes you a Jew in mine, Nathan says" ("TE" 18–19/37). Hegel here draws on his early hero, Lessing, for a kind of universalism that he later eschews in favor of greater emphasis on the particularities of distinct traditions. While subjective religion is in some sense interior, it is by no means exclusively interior: "Subjective religion is alive, having an efficacy that, while abiding within one's being, is actively directed outward" ("TE" 14/34). Subjective religion is about good disposition and action, not orthodox belief.[32]

Hegel's emphasis on the subjective appropriation of religion could easily lead in the direction of a notion of the essence of religion as largely private. One of the most remarkable aspects of the essay, then, is the way Hegel next moves to an extended analysis of *Volksreligion*, or civil religion. While most literally translated as "religion of a people," "civil religion" better captures the public, social, and political character of Hegel's notion of a *Volksreligion*.[33] Precisely here Hegel at an early age charts a different trajectory for a modern religion than the one that has dominated liberal discourse in the West.

While Hegel's focus appears to shift at this point in the essay, a basic unity underlies the piece as a whole: both the initial analysis of subjective religion and the discussion of *Volksreligion* are centrally concerned with how to motivate a people to act in a manner appropriate to modern society. More specifically, how might religion be conceived so as to support—not just refrain from interfering with—a rational, enlightened mode of life?

The role of *Volksreligion* in cultivating the general dispositions of a people becomes apparent in the contrast Hegel draws between it and private religion:

[32] As Pinkard notes, "Hegel's distinction between subjective and objective religion nicely fit into the Pietist division between real, emotional religious experience and the dry, falsifying intellectual articulation of that experience" (2000, 42).

[33] "Folk religion" too easily suggests a stress on popular, rather than elite, religion that is foreign to Hegel's usage.

"Through the mighty influence it exerts on the imagination and the heart, *Volksreligion* imbues the soul with power and enthusiasm, with a spirit indispensable for the noble exercise of virtue" ("TE" 31/47). The *Volksreligion* shapes the social and political culture that constitutes a way of life. By contrast, private religion concerns the shaping of a small group of elites. To try to impose moral excellence on everyone tends to be counterproductive; "the various arts invented allegedly to produce virtue as though in a hothouse . . . actually do more damage to people than just letting them grow wild" ("TE" 32/48). *Volksreligion*, then, deals first and foremost with the moral cultivation of the population as a whole, not the formation of ethical adepts or sages (see also "TE" 34–5/50). To attempt to micromanage the cultivation of character for all is to confuse a *Volksreligion*, which can be relevant to all, with what must be left to private religion.

While private religion should not be entirely lost sight of, Hegel is clearly most concerned with *Volksreligion*. He spends the later portion of the essay considering three requirements for a *Volksreligion* today. In response to the question, "How is a *Volksreligion* to be constituted?," Hegel offers three positive responses:

i. Its teachings must be founded on universal reason.
ii. Imagination, the heart, and the senses must not go away empty-handed in the process.
iii. It must be so constituted that all of life's needs, including public and official transactions, are bound up with it. ("TE" 33/49)

The first requirement reflects the *Aufklärung*'s concern with a religion that does not violate the demands of reason. More specifically, a civil religion will center largely around the demands of practical reason—understood in Kantian terms. To be broadly efficacious, a *Volksreligion* cannot demand that people accept the irrational. A religion that demands a sacrifice of the intellect will be limited in its power to persuade the population over the long term. He does not claim, however, that it must be understood by all to *derive* directly from reason, that it cannot appeal to other authority.[34] Adamantly rejecting what he views as obscurantism and superstition, he contends that "the tenets of a *Volksreligion* should as a rule be as simple as possible. That is to say, they should contain nothing which common human reason does not acknowledge—no specific dogmatic assertions that might overstep the bounds of reason, even if their authority is alleged to derive from heaven itself" ("BF" 73/81). Irrationality most often increases with the complexity of doctrines. Doctrines that "either claim to furnish special means of obtaining

[34] "The doctrines [of a *Volksreligion*], even if resting on the authority of some divine revelation, must of necessity be constituted so that they are actually authorized by the universal reason of mankind" ("TE" 33/49).

God's favor or promise all sorts of privileged insights and detailed information concerning otherwise inaccessible matters" easily lead to rigidity and factions; they are "unnatural in their link to the true needs and demands of rationality" and frequently interfere with moral motivation and actions ("TE" 33–4/49).

This concern with a simplicity of doctrine supports Hegel's caustic remarks about "theology": "when I speak of religion here, I am abstracting completely from all scientific (or rather metaphysical) knowledge of God, as well as from the relationship of the world and ourselves to him, etc.; such knowledge, the province of discursive understanding, is theology and no longer religion" ("TE" 16/35).

Hegel associates theology with scholastic ratiocination and views it as undermining, rather than supporting, religion's essential function. Although much will change in Hegel's view of thought's capacity to grasp the absolute, he will continue to view the understanding (*Verstand*) as a form of cognition that falls into contradiction when it tries to grasp the absolute. Hegel will not so much change his view of understanding and ratiocination as expand his view of cognition to encompass modes of thought that overcome the finitude of understanding.

As important as accord with reason is, however, this rationality is insufficient as a motive for action. A *Volksreligion* is needed in large part because practical reason alone does not sufficiently motivate most people: "Having my understanding enlightened does make me smarter, but not better" ("TE" 21/40). These insufficiencies of reason point to the importance of the second requirement of a *Volksreligion*, that "Imagination, the heart, and the senses must not go away empty-handed in the process" ("TE" 33/49). While we may hold as an ideal that individuals are motivated by the moral law itself, "it is altogether unlikely that humankind, or even a single individual, will ever in this world be able to dispense entirely with non-moral promptings" ("TE" 29/46). A *Volksreligion* builds up and builds upon these non-moral inclinations toward morality, particularly love ("TE" 30/46–7). *Volksreligion* is necessary, then, in part because we are not perfect enough to be motivated by the moral law alone and require a positive religion that we initially learn through a largely unconscious process of appropriation:

> customs must be introduced that require, if one is to be aware of their necessity and utility, either trusting belief or habituation from childhood on. Thus it is evident that a *Volksreligion*, if as the concept of religion implies its teaching is to be efficacious in active life, cannot possibly be constructed out of sheer reason. Positive religion necessarily rests on faith in the tradition by which it is handed down to us. ("TE" 24/42)

Tradition and trust are thus vital to prompting us to act morally.

The inadequacy of reason in this context, however, extends beyond its inability to motivate us. Already in this essay, Hegel contends that reason alone is too abstract to become part of ourselves in the way that motives must in order to be effective. Given its significance for his later development, this passage merits quoting at length:

> when it comes to the improvement of mankind (the cultivation of strong and great dispositions, of noble feelings, and of a decisive sense of independence), the powers of the understanding are of little moment . . . .Human understanding is nonetheless rather flattered when it contemplates its work: a grand and lofty edifice of knowledge divine, moral, and natural. And true enough, it has provided out of its own resources the building materials for this edifice, which it is making ever more beautiful or elaborate. But as this building, which engages the efforts of humanity as a whole, becomes gradually more extensive and complex, it becomes less and less the property of any one individual. Anybody who simply copies this universal structure or appropriates it piecemeal—anybody who does not build within (and indeed from inside) himself a little residence of his own, roofed and framed so that he feels at home in it, with every stone if not hewn then at least laid by his own hands—anybody who neglects to do this becomes a person who can only rigidly adhere to the letter, who has never really lived. ("TE" 27–8/44–5)

Universal reason provides only a skeletal structure, not the furniture, colors, and strong sense impressions that make me feel comfortable in a place, that make it my home. A building without a solid skeletal structure will not stand; religion must also be rational. But universal reason alone is like the worst instantiations of modern architecture, in which no one feels at home.

Religion moves the heart largely by engaging the imagination. Through symbols, narratives, and ceremonies it cultivates particular feelings. To engage yet direct the imagination, myths should be woven into the religion itself. Such myths—particularly the historically situated myths of Christianity—seem, for Hegel, to ground the imagination so that it does not fly off into pure fancy, yet still allow it "room to rove" ("TE" 37/52).

In this context, Hegel devotes noteworthy attention to "ceremonies" [*Zeremonien*], highlighting the significance of practical dimensions of religion. Hegel is most concerned with ritualized practices such as sacrifice, but he holds that these have their justification in the cultivation of feeling: "Their sole aim must be to intensify devotion and pious sentiments." Worried about their potential to encourage superstition, he continues, "[p]erhaps the only pure means for eliciting such an effect, the one least susceptible to misuse, is sacred music and the song of an entire people—perhaps also folk festivals, in which religion is inevitably involved" ("TE" 40/55). Hegel thus views religious rituals as vital to *Volksreligion*, despite their potential to encourage "fetishistic worship" that distracts from and obstructs religion's moral ends ("TE" 40/55). From early on, Hegel attributes to ritualized religious practice a vital role in the cultivation of the feelings, dispositions, and attitudes that constitute religion's

end. He seeks to ply a middle path between a radical interiorization of faith that would disregard practice altogether and what he views as an irrational superstition that views these practices as "mechanical operations." He seeks to give the Enlightenment its due without allowing it to undermine a vital role for religious rituals.

The practices relevant to the cultivation of these dispositions, however, need not be specifically "religious" practices. Hegel does not sharply differentiate "religious" practices from the broader range of social practices of a society, even suggesting that certain practices will be more efficacious if they are not viewed as specifically religious commandments: "Essential practices like these need not be bound more closely to religion than to the spirit of the people; it is preferable that they actually spring from the latter. Otherwise their exercise is without life, cold and powerless, and the attendant feelings artificial and forced" ("TE" 40/54). Religion should be intertwined with the general practices of the society, its way of life: "As soon as any sort of wall is put between doctrine and life—as soon as they become in any way separated or lose touch with each other—we begin suspecting that there is something wrong with the very form of this religion" ("TE" 41/55). Religion's autonomy from other spheres of life is a danger, not an ideal.

The consideration of practices thus provides the transition to the third canon of a viable *Volksreligion*, that it "must be so constituted that all of life's needs, including public and official transactions, are bound up with it" ("TE" 33/49). Hegel is particularly concerned that religion accompany a people not only in moments of sorrow and loss but also in times of joy, especially festivals ("TE" 41/55). Clearly favoring the ancient Greek world, Hegel contrasts the dour mood and dark dress of the Christian feast of the Eucharist with that of ancient Greeks, who "approached the altars of their friendly gods clad in the colors of joy, their faces . . . beaming with good cheer" ("TE" 42/56). In this context, he sketches a moral critique of Christianity: "our religion would train people to be citizens of heaven, gazing ever upward, making our most human feelings seem alien" ("TE" 42/56). Christianity directs our attention away from this world and the human realm in general—a point which in later writings of this period, as well as in Feuerbach's work, will function to pit religion against morality.

While such festivals are an essential aspect of having "all of life's needs" bound up with religion, religion's imbrication in life as a whole encompasses political life in particular: "The spirit of a people, its history, its religion, and the degree of its political freedom—these cannot be taken in isolation when considering either their individual character or their influence on each other. They are woven together as one " ("TE" 42/56). Religion is not a separate sphere but a thread whose significance cannot be extricated from the fabric of which it forms a part. A shared *Volksreligion* is, Hegel suggests, a vital part of the glue that provides social cohesion. Providing more detail, he writes, "The

improvement of individual morality is a matter involving private religion, parents, personal efforts, and individual situations. The cultivation of the spirit of the people requires in addition the respective contributions of *Volksreligion* and political relationships" ("TE" 42/56). Hegel is more concerned with "the spirit of the people" than with individual flourishing or the production of ethical elites. Accordingly, Crites defines this *Volksgeist* as

> the corporate way of life that identifies a people sharing a common language and history: a characteristic way of thinking, a sense of justice and of acceptable behavior, a coherent artistic culture and order of values, a sense of being at home with one another that is not shared by even the most sympathetic alien.[35]

The ethos supported by the *Volksreligion* animates political life, enlivening what would otherwise be the dead letter of the law. Both religious and political institutions play crucial roles in forming this spirit, which in turn is expressed and manifest in both religious and political life. Though Hegel does not use religion and politics synonymously, no clear lines can be drawn between them in his analysis. Though Hegel later develops additional conceptual tools for analyzing these phenomena, his interest in religion's social significance as well as his conviction of the interweaving of "religion" and "politics" will endure throughout his work.

Although this essay effectively sketches what would be needed, Hegel gives no indication how such a *Volksreligion* could be brought about in the present. The Christianity of his day—whether Catholic or Protestant, orthodox or reformist—does not seem to Hegel to offer it. Hegel's subsequent writings explore this inadequacy in much more detail. In this essay, however, he largely presupposes that contemporary Christianity is not a viable *Volksreligion* and has become too focused on theological orthodoxy and mechanistic performance. It fails to capture the hearts and imagination of a large portion of the German populace. Though he admires the ancient Greek polis, he offers no suggestion that their *Volksreligion* might be revivified. This lack of a solution is no coincidence, however. The problems of social fragmentation and the poor fit between religion and contemporary society that Hegel seeks to solve with a *Volksreligion* themselves constitute conditions that make such a *Volksreligion* unavailable.[36] The problem was the lack of the social cohesion that a *Volksreligion* functioned to provide; yet without that cohesion, it is difficult to see how such a *Volksreligion* could emerge.

While Hegel's "Tübingen Essay" frames the central issues of his concern with a *Volksreligion* for the modern world, additional fragments from his time in Berne richly elaborate the conception of *Volksreligion* itself, Christianity's inadequacy as a *Volksreligion*, and a growing appreciation of the importance

[35] Crites 1998, 80–1.
[36] See Pinkard 2000, 43.

of history. Highlighting the political significance of *Volksreligion*, Hegel becomes more explicit about the state's interest in the attitudes being cultivated by the latter: "Making objective religion subjective must be the great undertaking of the state" ("BF" 71/79). The state has an interest in such dispositions among its citizens, precisely because laws alone do not make a state. Such claims easily suggest a tyrannical state religion, however, and Hegel is at pains to reject this possibility. The passage just quoted continues, "To this end its institutions must be compatible with freedom of conviction; they must not violate conscience and liberty, but exert only an indirect influence on the motives of the will" ("BF" 71/79). Profoundly concerned with "intrusive institutions" that would police the individual conscience, Hegel "consider[s] it absolutely essential that the doctrines of a *Volksreligion* not be obtrusive or repressive of anyone's conscience" ("BF" 73/81). Hegel at this point provides little explanation of why he values freedom of conscience so highly, but it is likely justified for him by the first requirement of a *Volksreligion* in the "Tübingen Essay," that "[i]ts teachings must be founded on universal reason" ("TE" 33/49). It is thus entailed by a modern *Volksreligion*, not a constraint on *Volksreligion*.

This emphasis on freedom is one of the chief characteristics distinguishing *Volksreligion* from private religion. Whereas it may be appropriate for a voluntarily chosen private religion to demand such practices as oral confession or to excommunicate members, a *Volksreligion* becomes tyrannical when it does so. What a private group may voluntarily choose becomes unjust when imposed on a society as a whole, precisely because it is then not chosen.

This concern with the oppression caused by imposing a private religion on an entire society forms a central element of Hegel's developing critique of Christianity. These fragments significantly develop the criticisms of Christianity hinted at in the "Tübingen Essay," introducing points that will be further elaborated in "The Positivity of the Christian Religion." Displaying a complex attitude toward Jesus' teachings—which he regards as themselves morally pure ("BF" 71/79–80)—Hegel discusses Jesus' advice to sell all one's possessions and give the proceeds to the poor. For Hegel, "This image of perfection that Christ erects carries within itself the proof of how much Christ in his teaching had in mind the cultivation and perfection of the individual human being and how little it can be extended to a society as a whole" (*Werke* 1:46; see also "BF" 62/71). The passage illuminates clearly how different Hegel understands his own concerns to be from Jesus': while Jesus was primarily interested in the cultivation of ethical elites, excellent individuals, Hegel is concerned with the society as a whole, with the ethical everyman. When perfectionist ideals are imposed on an entire society, tyranny arises:

> Little by little this arrogant practice of prying into a person's innards, of judging and punishing his conscience, began insinuating itself [in Christian society], and

> did so without much difficulty, since the germ of this presumptuous attitude—its tendency falsely to extend what is appropriate only in the context of the immediate family to civil society as a whole—lay within Christianity from its very inception. It became incredibly deep-rooted . . . and burgeoned into the most shocking profusion of repressive institutions and ways of deluding mankind: oral confession, excommunication, penances, and a whole array of disgraceful monuments to human self-abasement. ("BF" 62–3/72)

Lest this appear exclusively an expression of Hegel's critical attitude toward Catholicism, he extends it explicitly to Protestants. Luther, for instance, may have wanted to strip clergy of much of their power, but "he still wanted to retain control over men's thoughts" ("BF" 63/72). Christian history offers numerous illustrations "of the fact that the institutions and laws of a small society (whose every citizen retains the freedom to be or not to be a member), when expanded to encompass civil society at large, are no longer appropriate and cannot coexist with civil liberty" ("BF" 66/74–5; see also "BF" 67, 73/76, 81). When spread to a society as a whole, Christianity becomes oppressive and undermines the freedom of conscience necessary for a modern *Volksreligion*.

Other elements of his critique of Christianity focus on moral objections. Christianity bears responsibility for supporting despotism and the slave trade (*Werke* 1:46), yet the more fundamental problem is the way in which it has replaced morality with salvation through belief in Christ as humanity's highest aim:

> Our worship consists first of propagating his name, and then, somewhere along the line, of piety, charity, etc. as well. By detours of this sort we arrived at morality; we did not work up to it; we just got around to it eventually. Thus while the reproach that the Christian religion does not further morality at all would be unjustified, it is evident that these moral detours . . . have done much to harm morality. The real end of morality had already been lost sight of when salvation replaced it as the ultimate purpose of such teachings. ("BF" 85–6/91; see also 51/62, 90/94)

Even if—on the far side of this "moral detour"—belief in Christ and moral goodness are somehow linked, another problem emerges: since knowledge of Christ is not universal, either moral knowledge is not accessible to all—which contradicts practical reason—or belief in God is not as important as its defenders would have it, since it is unnecessary for moral goodness ("BF" 93–4/97). While Hegel only briefly sketches these criticisms, they are nonetheless remarkable for the way they anticipate many nineteenth-century criticisms of Christianity, especially that of Ludwig Feuerbach.[37]

[37] See in particular "The Contradictions of Faith and Love" in chapter twenty six of *The Essence of Christianity* (1957). See also Harris 1972, 399 n. 1 and Crites 1998, 93.

The parallels with Feuerbach go even further, however, in Hegel's argument that Christianity undermines our moral potential by locating virtue beyond us:

> we have been persuaded that these capacities are alien to us, that man belongs only to the order of natural beings (and depraved ones at that). The idea of sanctity has been totally isolated and attached exclusively to a remote being. ("BF" 97/99)

We project our moral potential onto a supernatural being and thereby undermine our ability to realize our own potential. By contrast, at present humanity is overcoming this tendency to project, learning "to appreciate all that is fine in human nature (instead of transferring it onto an alien individual, retaining for ourselves nothing but the loathsomeness of which our nature is capable) and joyfully to recognize and claim it as our own work, thereby regaining a sense of self-respect" ("BF" 100–1/102). The Enlightenment has brought about an era in which humanity can look to itself rather than elsewhere for moral virtue.

In relation to Christianity's defenders, Hegel is particularly dismissive of theologians who seek to refute attacks on Christianity by referring to their own "compendia," ignoring the problems that Christianity has caused (*Werke* 1:46; "BF" 87/92). Part of Hegel's disinterest in these theological defenses of Christianity is that they fail to address how Christianity functions for the society as a whole. At best, they concern Christianity as a private religion, whereas Hegel is most concerned with a public religion:

> Accordingly, in what follows here, anything considered as belonging to the Christian religion is either drawn directly out of the New Testament or presently constitutes (with the exception of only a few textbooks and convictions espoused by a handful of enlightened individuals) a systematized version of the popular doctrine officially recognized by the Church Councils and their committees. In other words, it is still the line generally taken on the pulpit and in the schools, and is in any case the system by which the entire generation that has now come of age has been educated and instructed. ("BF" 87–8/92)

This, and only this, is the Christianity Hegel finds relevant to discussions of Christianity's contemporary role in society.

A final element of Hegel's critique of Christianity's potential as a civil religion is that it is too Jewish. Hegel's anti-Semitism comes out strongly in several of these passages, and he participates in a broader discourse regarding Christianity's Jewish heritage. While others subsequently tried to rid Christianity of or at least downplay the Jewish elements, in these early writings Hegel suggests that Christianity is fatally flawed as a contemporary *Volksreligion* by virtue of its Jewish roots.[38] In a passage whose horrific irony cannot be lost on the contemporary reader, he writes,

[38] On this aspect of early nineteenth-century Christianity, see Masuzawa 2005.

> There is no denying the backwards and immoral concepts of the Jews—of the anger, the partiality, the hatred of other peoples, the intolerance of their Jehovah. Unfortunately, these concepts have passed over into the praxis and theory of the Christian religion and have wreaked too much damage for one not to wish it had its origins in a more human friendly religion or had accepted less from it. (*Werke* 1:45)

Beyond what Hegel sees as the particular shortcomings of Judaism, however, part of the problem is simply that it is foreign: This tradition, its memories and imagination, "is filled with the prehistory of humanity, the history of a foreign people, the deeds and misdeeds of their kings—which do not concern us" (*Werke* 1:45). In such passages, Hegel reinforces the sense of alterity between Germans and Jews that becomes so dangerous.

While Hegel will later moderate this criticism of Judaism and adamantly oppose romantic nationalism, this concern with Judaism being "foreign" indicates a concern that will only grow in importance in Hegel's thought: history. In these fragments Hegel begins to note the significance of history and tradition in determining what *Volksreligion* can be viable for a particular people at a particular time. For instance, even though the myths and religion of ancient Greece might appear to Hegel more appealing than Jewish and Christian ones, their heroes are not—and cannot become—"our" heroes. Myths, memories, and histories cannot simply be adopted (*Werke* 1:45). This role for history follows from the way in which traditions are appropriated—not through critical scrutiny once one comes of age. Rather, "Our children are taught to say grace, morning prayer, and evening prayer" (*Werke* 1:45). We learn traditions as children, appropriating them largely unconsciously, and their power derives in large part from how deeply within us they are embedded. Because these traditions—both political and religious—are initially appropriated through this largely unconscious process, they change more slowly than views that are self-consciously chosen, so that a "childlike" trust preserves them over long periods of time ("BF" 54/65).

This uncritical trust, however, is only part of the story. Traditions are not static. As conditions change, a tradition that once may have been adequate to a people's way of life may cease to be so ("BF" 89/93). When this happens, typically "the pious customs and exercises associated with them become burdensome in a way not heretofore felt by the devout—and as reason makes steady headway—such practices are indeed on the threshold of extinction" ("BF" 56/66). What religious and political practices and institutions are appropriate for a people depends upon their history and their present; it is not determined by "pure" reason alone. The attendant transformations usually involve tremendous social upheaval, such as that of the Reformation or the French Revolution. They involve a people as a whole rebelling against established institutions, even though they may not grasp what Hegel sees as the deeper source of their discontent.

Though such transformations involve more than "Enlightenment," reason's advances play a central role in undermining outdated traditions. Like an acid, reason ineluctably eats away at tradition-based claims of authority:

> No matter how deeply it [a faith based on mere authority] entrenches itself behind authority, no matter how artfully it seeks to ward off all counter-hypotheses and alternative possibilities by assembling a system that covers every conceivable circumstance . . . , reason will still venture to subject it to critical scrutiny. And it will do so spontaneously [*aus sich selbst*], generating from within itself principles of possibility and plausibility irrespective of any such artificial historical structure predisposed to neglect reason and to claim primacy on historical grounds over the persuasiveness of rational truths. ("BF" 95–6/98; see also 73/81)

Reason spontaneously and irresistibly erodes claims based merely on appeals to authority and tradition. This vision of reason's unstoppable march in important senses instantiates a conventional Enlightenment narrative of (mature) reason overcoming (childish) superstition. Yet even here, Hegel thinks that profound changes come about not simply through a change in consciousness but as a result of an incongruence that develops within a people's way of life—between the traditions they have inherited and manner which they now live.

Much of Hegel's thinking about Christianity, religion, and society in these fragments coalesces in two more extensive essays that he drafted in the summer and fall of 1795.[39] Commonly referred to as "The Life of Jesus" and "The Positivity of the Christian Religion," these essays represent, as Stephen Crites remarks, "the high-water mark of Kant's influence on the moral and religious thought of the young Hegel."[40] He is particularly influenced by Kant's *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. As in the fragments from Berne, Hegel identifies "the aim and essence of all true religion" as "human morality," such that all religious teachings and practices must "have their worth and their sanctity appraised according to their close or distant connection with that aim" ("PcR" 105/68).

Hegel's Kantianism is particularly striking in the remarkable "Life of Jesus." Hegel portrays Jesus as a great teacher of Kantian morality, to a degree that verges on parody. In the words of Hegel's Jesus, "You must not remain satisfied, like the scribes and Pharisees among you, with observing the mere letter of the law; . . . you must act out of respect for duty and in the spirit of the law" ("LJ" 216/111; see also 213/109, 217–21/113–6). Hegel interprets Jesus' parables as allegorical presentations of a basically Kantian theory of morality. Prefiguring his later account of religious representations (*Vorstellungen*), Hegel defines a parable as "a fictitious story that spells out a specific moral

[39] On the dating of these manuscripts, see Harris 1972, appendix.
[40] Crites 1998, 105.

lesson in sensuous form," highlighting the sensuousness and therefore finitude of the form, which will be a defining feature of representation ("LJ" 227/121). In line with this interpretive strategy, Hegel dramatically underplays the supernatural aspects of the stories of Jesus' life. The young Hegel's Jesus is an exemplary teacher of Kantian morality, not a unique Incarnation.[41] Perhaps most tellingly, the essay ends with Jesus' death, with no indication of resurrection. The essay's extreme and self-conscious Kantianism makes it difficult to believe that Hegel intended the work as an accurate account of Jesus' life. Rather, it seems to be a kind of experiment regarding the extent to which Christianity might be portrayed as a truly moral religion. As Crites notes, however, Hegel seems to have quickly realized the project's failure, as he soon began working on "The Positivity of the Christian Religion," which saw the sources of Christianity's problems already in Jesus' own teaching.[42]

Though the "Positivity" essay is set up around the question of how Christianity became a positive religion, much of the essay explores why Christianity is not a *Volksreligion*. That is, while aspects of Hegel's framing of the question reflect Kant's distinction between natural and revealed religion, the concern with positivity appears motivated largely by Hegel's interest in a *Volksreligion* that can animate social and political life without repressing the individual's freedom of conscience. In continuing to wrestle with these issues, Hegel confronts an apparent paradox. On one hand, Christianity is the official religion and is complexly interwoven with the state. On the other hand, Christianity fails to function as an effective *Volksreligion*, which is to say that it fails to inculcate the habits and attitudes necessary to support civil institutions effectively. Christianity is at once too political and ineffectively political—the state religion but not an authentic civil religion. Hegel's exploration of positivity seeks to address this predicament, to explain Christianity's failure as a *Volksreligion* through the concept of positivity.

At this stage in his career, Hegel looks for the source of the problem in Christianity's origins. Thus, the first sections of the essay focus on Jesus' teachings and the subsequent formation of Christianity. As in "The Life of Jesus," he portrays Jesus' central teachings as moral teachings about genuine virtue ("PcR" 106–8/69–71). Insofar as Jesus preaches a religion whose aim is morality, he offers a genuine or natural religion. This characterization of Jesus' teaching poses the guiding question of the early part of the essay: How could a religion centered around a teacher of the moral law become a positive religion, "i.e., a religion which is grounded in authority and puts man's worth not at all, or at least not wholly, in morals" ("PcR" 108/71)? Hegel's conception of

[41] For Hegel, "[i]t was equally axiomatic that Jesus could not have been the Son of God in any unique sense" (Crites 1998, 110).

[42] Crites 1998, 105.

positivity is here constituted by appeals to authority rather than reason and a conception of humanity's highest good in something other than morality.

According to Hegel, the origins of this positivity lie with Jesus himself. In order to convince those around him, Jesus had to accommodate his teaching to their attitudes and expectations: "To propose to appeal to reason alone would have meant the same thing as preaching to fish, because the Jews had no means of apprehending a challenge of that kind" ("PcR" 113/76). Because they were not ready for a religion of reason, Jesus used appeals to God's authority and to miracles to persuade them of his teaching. While the tone of Hegel's blaming of the Jews fits a larger pattern of anti-Semitism, he is also making a more general point: people can only appreciate and learn that for which their history has prepared them. By accommodating his audience in this manner, however, Jesus set Christianity on the path toward positivity: "This authority of his became the underlying principle of the obligation to act morally," so that Jesus himself, rather than the moral law, became the object of reverence ("PcR" 117/79). Morality's autonomy was thereby undermined. This focus on Jesus rather than the moral law was further accentuated by the disciples, who focused on spreading belief rather than spreading virtue ("PcR" 121/83).

While these points already pick up on and extend Hegel's earlier critique of Christianity as undermining genuine morality, what is more striking is how much of the essay focuses on the way in which Christianity becomes oppressive when it shifts from being the private religion of a voluntary association to being the religion of a state.[43] That Hegel's concern with positivity is ultimately motivated by a concern with civil religion becomes apparent in the opening sentences of the section, "What Is Applicable in a Small Society Is Unjust in a State":

> A sect which treats moral commands as positive and then links other positive commands with them acquires certain distinctive characteristics which are wholly alien to a purely philosophical sect (i.e. a sect which also maintains religious doctrines but which recognizes no judge other than reason). *These characteristics are expedient, appropriate, and permissible in a small society* of sectarian believers, but so soon as the society or its faith becomes more widespread and even omnipresent throughout a state, then either they are no longer appropriate . . . , or else they become actually wrong and oppressive. ("PcR" 124/86–7, emphasis added)

What is perhaps most remarkable is that Hegel condones positivity as long as it is limited to a voluntary association rather than made obligatory for society as a whole. Given the tension between positivity and morality, this move is

[43] Although the fragmentary nature of the manuscript makes it difficult to judge the intended length, approximately three quarters of the original draft of the essay (excluding the "materials for a continuation" that were appended to it) focus on the consequences of Christianity's becoming a state religion.

itself surprising (though—since he seems to be concerned with what should be legally permissible—not necessarily in tension with Hegel's aims in this essay). What this approval indicates, then, is that Hegel is ultimately more concerned with civil religion than with positivity. Positivity is a concern precisely insofar as it stands in tension with the needs of society, i.e. insofar as it stands in tension with the requirements of a modern *Volksreligion*.

More specifically, when a state's disciplinary apparatus seeks to enforce moral commandments, it becomes genuinely oppressive and takes on a task that is neither just nor possible. Virtue and private religion concern not only outward behavior but also dispositions, feelings, and motives. By contrast, "[i]n a civil constitution only those duties are in question which arise out of another's rights, and the only duties the state can impose are of this order" ("PcR" 134/95). While a private religion can demand charity, for instance, a state cannot. Moreover, such a state commands feelings, which Hegel considers a contradiction in terms ("PcR" 184/140). When the state and church merge and seek to impose virtue itself, the state oversteps its proper bounds. It tries to police motives and thought, thereby demanding what should only be demanded in a voluntary society, which is necessarily restricted to only a few members.

Imposing a positive religion on society heightens the consequences of the contradiction between reason and positivity. Because it is based on appeals to a merely given authority rather than reason, positive religion tends to undermine the development of faculties ("PcR" 179/135). Hegel posits this antagonism to reason as basic to the positivity of religion ("PcR" 187/143). When the church takes over education for the state as a whole and imposes its teaching in an overly heavy-handed way, freedom is compromised:

> The church . . . educates the child to believe in the faith, i.e. reason and intellect are not so trained as to be led to develop their own native principles or to judge what they hear by their own standards; on the contrary, the ideas and words engraved on imagination and memory are so girt with terrors and placed by commands in such a holy, inviolable, and blinding light that either they dumbfound the laws of reason and intellect by their brilliance and prevent their use, or else they prescribe to reason and intellect laws of another kind [*die also heterogen sind*]. By this legislation *ab extra*, reason and intellect are deprived of freedom . . . However well-intentioned, the state has betrayed the child's right to a free development of the capacities of its soul. ("PcR" 157/115–6)

While Hegel thinks children should be raised in a religious tradition, for the state and church to collaborate in imposing its beliefs through fear undermines the development of the intellect and will. If it does so, "[i]t has infringed the child's natural right to the free development of his faculties and brought him up as a slave instead of as a free citizen" ("PcR" 157/115). Though Hegel's analysis begins with the way in which appeals to authority are at odds with the

freedom and autonomy intrinsic to practical reason, Hegel's greatest concern seems to be for the way in which such a positive religion, when it becomes a state religion, undermines the freedom of citizens.

Hegel's concerns with the state not imposing a private religion and with respect for basic human faculties converge in his claims about the importance of the state respecting private conscience:

> To be true to one's faith and to be free in the practice of one's religion is a right in which the individual must be protected, not primarily as a church member, but as a citizen; and a prince in his capacity as such has a duty to secure this right to his subjects. ("PcR" 169–70/127; see also 162/120)

A *Volksreligion* not only can allow for private conscience in this manner but must be constituted so as to preserve it. A positive religion that has become a state religion cannot do so.

Hegel finds support for this freedom of conviction—and thus religion—within Protestantism itself:

> [T]he great foundation of Protestant freedom . . . was discovered when men refused to appear at a Council and repudiated all part in its proceedings . . . because it would contradict the very nature of religious opinions to decide them by majority vote, and because everyone has the right to settle for himself what his faith is. ("PcR" 163/121)

Protestantism, according to Hegel, is built upon this principle of freedom of conviction.

What is particularly intriguing about this aspect of Hegel's discussion is that it initially appears to offer a distinctly "religious" justification of freedom of religion. This, however, is precisely where Hegel does not differentiate "religion" as many do today. The question whether the basis for the separation of church and state is religious or philosophical is non-sensical for Hegel. The basis for the freedom of conviction lies in the nature of the human faculties and practical reason. Yet since morality constitutes "the aim and essence of all true religion" ("PcR" 105/68), this conception of practical reason is no less religious than philosophical. In Hegel's early portrayal, Jesus and Luther are both, at their best, addressing this aspect of morality. Thus, on one hand, while the need to respect freedom of conscience appears as a "limit" to the imposition of religion, it does not constrain genuine religion but rather accords with it. On the other hand, because the basis for this conception lies in practical reason, it is not—for Hegel—a distinctly Protestant vision of political life. For Hegel, this vision allows a role for a plurality of private religions, so long as these do not undermine the state and its fundamental concerns. While this is not well expressed as a "separation of church and state"—since it is compatible with an important role for a civil religion—it argues against any private

religion becoming a state religion and does so on grounds of practical reason, not merely the claims of a particular religious tradition.

Despite this emphasis on freedom of religion, already in these early writings Hegel diverges from a more conventional separation of church and state in another crucial respect as well. While the state should not impose a private religion on the population, he continues the concern from the "Tübingen Essay" for the way in which religion cultivates general dispositions toward social and political institutions. Because of the importance of such dispositions, the state should seek to influence indirectly the religious formation of the population. Hegel thus seeks a difficult balance between imposing an overbearing religion and abandoning concern for the attitudes required for the healthy functioning of a state. Hegel brings these complementary concerns together well in a crucial paragraph:

> It is the state's duty not to make any arrangements which contravene or secretly undermine morality, because it is in its own greatest interest . . . to insure that its citizens shall also be morally good. But if it sets up institutions with a view to bringing about this result directly, then it might issue laws enacting that its citizens ought to be moral, but they would be improper, contradictory, and laughable. (Varying the political institutions whose imperceptible influence builds up a virtuous spirit in the people [has an indirect moral effect], but this is not the point here.) The state could only bring its citizens to submit to these institutions through their trust in them, and this trust it must first arouse. Religion is the best means of doing this, and all depends on the use the state makes of it whether religion is able to attain this end. The end is plain in the religion of all nations; all have this in common, that their efforts always bear on producing a certain attitude of mind, and this cannot be the object of any civil legislation. A religion is better or worse according as, with a view to producing this disposition which gives birth to action in correspondence with the civil or moral laws, it sets to work through moral motives or through terrorizing the imagination and, consequentially, the will. ("PcR" 137–8/97–8)

Hegel's point here is quite general, but the guiding concerns are clear: For a state to attempt to legislate morality is folly, yet the state does have an interest in its citizens' dispositions toward the state as well as their morality more generally. Consequently, the state should seek to promote these dispositions by indirect means, and since religion plays a crucial role in their cultivation, the state has an interest in supporting religious institutions that play this role. Exactly how this can be achieved—particularly, what indirect means Hegel recommends—remains unspecified. Hegel is much clearer on the goal than the means of achieving it.

In some pages Hegel appended to the original manuscript of "The Positivity of the Christian Religion" and intended as materials for a continuation of the essay, Hegel advances his reflections on the significance of history and national imagination. While much of the essay concerns itself with a distinctly

universalistic, indeed Kantian, account of moral life, these materials advance the more historical emphasis that becomes important in his later work. Stressing the power of myths and stories, he writes, "Every nation had its own imagery, its gods, angels, devils, or saints who live on in the nation's traditions, whose stories and deeds the nurse tells to her charges and so wins them over by impressing their imagination" ("PcR" 197/145). These traditions are manifest not only in stories and the imagination but also in festivals and national institutions. Germany, however, is not a nation in this sense. As in the fragments from this period, he contends that Germany lacks an active national imagination and tradition of its own. Christianity is an import that has displaced indigenous German traditions without being able to replace them: "Christianity has emptied Valhalla, felled the sacred groves, extirpated the national imagery as a shameful superstition, as a devilish poison, and given us instead the imagery of a nation whose climate, laws, culture, and interests are strange to us and whose history has no connection whatever with our own" ("PcR" 197/146). The romantic nationalism of many of Hegel's contemporaries finds much greater sympathy in these passages than in much of Hegel's later writing, and Hegel's wariness of the Jewish aspects of Christianity lurks just below the surface. What is striking, however, is Hegel's concern with the vital role of myths and stories and his view that Christian imagination is incapable of playing this role in the Germany of his youth. As in earlier writings, he gives little sense of the way out of the predicament. Christianity has rendered indigenous German imagery inaccessible to most of the population. Attempts to revitalize this tradition—of which Wagner's mid-nineteenth century operas are perhaps the most vivid example—seem to Hegel incapable of resurrecting these myths into a vital *Volksreligion*.

In this essay, Hegel goes further in explaining why such deliberate intervention is bound to fail. Grand social transformations, such as the Reformation or the French Revolution, are not the result of self-conscious efforts. These outward manifestations are the result of a long-term process through which a society's central practices shift out of synch with each other, an earthquake that finally occurs after tension has long built between tectonic plates ("PcR" 203/152). The society's orienting attitudes and dispositions no longer fit its central institutions. Hegel considers this process in relation to Christianity's victory over paganism in the Roman Empire. In his idealized picture, Greeks and Romans—for a time—lived in harmony with society by finding their identity in their participation in the state:

> The idea [*Idee*] of his country [*seines Vaterlandes*] or of his state was the invisible and higher reality for which he strove, which impelled him to effort; it was the final end of his world or in his eyes the final end of the world . . . Confronted by this idea, his own individuality vanished. ("PcR" 205/154)

As wealth and power accumulated, however, Romans came to see their own interests as different from that of the state ("PcR" 205–7/155–7). They sought their own good as something other than the state's; and since the individual no longer identified with the state, he no longer found immortality in its continued existence after his own death. Consequently, he began to look for his own good in a life beyond this one. This shift prepared the ground for Christianity. In a passage Nietzschean in both tone and content, Hegel writes,

> In this situation humankind was offered a religion which either was already adapted to the needs of the age (since it had arisen in a people characterized by a similar degeneracy and a similar though differently colored emptiness and deficiency) or else was one out of which men could form what their needs demanded and what they could then adhere to. ("PcR" 208/158)

Christianity was a religion for those alienated from the world in which they lived. It appealed to and promoted this alienation, prompting doctrines of human corruption that would exculpate a corrupt people ("PcR" 209/159–60). Salvation was to be found in another world, not through moral action in this one. Foreshadowing many of the most powerful criticisms of Christianity to emerge in the next century, this early piece delivers a barrage of criticism of Christianity that does not merely object to its present manifestations but locates the contemporary problems in its origins. The positivity present in Jesus' teachings only became more problematic with each step in Christianity's spread.

FRANKFURT AND THE MOVE BEYOND KANTIAN MORALITY

In the fall of 1796, Hegel left his unhappy situation as a private tutor in Berne to take up a private tutor position in the Gogel household in Frankfurt. His arrival in Frankfurt in January of 1797 brought him into a much livelier intellectual milieu. For Hegel, the most significant presence was that of Hölderlin, who had spent much of the time since Tübingen in Jena, attending Fichte's lectures and immersing himself in the leading currents of post-Kantian philosophy. Through Hölderlin—as well as his ongoing correspondence with Schelling—Hegel imbibed important developments in post-Kantian philosophy as well as romanticism.[44]

Seeking to push beyond Kant, these currents in German thought converged with the concerns emerging out of Hegel's own wrestling with religion and

[44] For valuable accounts of these influences, see Ameriks, ed. 2000.

society. Objections to what many saw as a series of dualisms in Kant's philosophy intersected with Hegel's concerns with social fragmentation, linking notions of social fragmentation to a notion of an internally divided self.[45] In this context, Hegel came to see Kant's practical philosophy as another manifestation of fragmentation rather than the needed reconciliation and explored paths for a deeper basis for reconciliation and unity than he thought Kant could provide. During Hegel's time in Frankfurt, love is the primary candidate for this role, providing a unification between subjects in which alterity can be overcome.[46] Among the problems with this ideal, perhaps the most significant is its inability to preserve a modern notion of the individual—precisely the concern reflected in earlier worries about the way religion becomes oppressive. This incapacity is revealed in what Hegel sees as the intrinsic tension between love and the crucial modern institution of property. In exploring love as a potential basis for cohesion, Hegel links love closely to religion, offering an account of the power and limits of religious representations that he will continue to develop in his later thought. He continues to seek the origin of Christianity's inadequacy in its early history. Hegel's realization of the failure of this ideal of love, however, led him—over the course of his time in Frankfurt—to see developments in post-Kantian idealism as the necessary path toward addressing the problem of fragmentation on both an individual and a social level.

In "The Life of Jesus" and "The Positivity of the Christian Religion," Hegel champions a broadly Kantian approach to morality as part of the key to overcoming contemporary society's predicament, contrasting the self-determination central to Kantian morality with the role of authority in positive religion. In Frankfurt, however, Hegel comes to view Kantian morality as just another form of heteronomy. If duty is conceived over against our own inclinations, then obeying the demands of duty still leaves the self divided. And Hegel seems to take for granted that a divided self cannot be the basis for a cohesive society. Explicitly rejecting the interpretation of Jesus that he earlier proposed, Hegel writes,

> We might have expected Jesus to work along these lines against the positivity of moral commands, against sheer legality, and to show that, although the legal is a universal whose entire obligatoriness lies in its universality, still even if every ought, every command, declares itself as something alien, nevertheless as a concept (universality) it is something subjective, and, as subjective, as a product of a human power (i.e. of reason as the capacity for universality), it loses its

[45] Because Hegel only fully takes on these developments after Frankfurt, in Jena, I provide a more extensive discussion of intervening developments in German idealism in chapter two.

[46] In addition to this central focus on love, Hegel also tried out conceptions of "life" and even "spirit" as crucial terms for this reconciliation; see Crites 1998, 117. Nonetheless, his most developed views from this period focus on love.

> objectivity, its positivity, its heteronomy, and the thing commanded is revealed as grounded in an autonomy of the human will. ("GCS" 322–3/210–11)

That is, we might have expected Jesus to be a Kantian. But Jesus does not take this path—as he appeared to do in Hegel's "Life of Jesus." Hegel's criticism of this view of morality comes out in the next sentences, which merit quoting at length:

> By this line of argument, however, positivity is only partially removed; and between the Shaman of the Tungus, the European prelate who rules church and state, the Voguls, and the Puritans, on the one hand, and the man who listens to his own command of duty, on the other, the difference is not that the former make themselves slaves, while the latter is free, but that the former have their lord outside themselves, while the latter carries his lord in himself, yet at the same time is his own slave. For the particular—impulses, inclinations, pathological love, sensuous experience, or whatever else it is called—the universal is necessary and always something alien and objective. There remains a residuum of indestructible positivity. ("GCS" 323/211)

Hegel is commenting directly on Kant's claim in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, and his position is surprisingly clear.[47] Rule by duty is only a step less heteronymous than rule by a tyrant. The "ruler" has been internalized, but there is no less domination of impulses and inclinations. This situation, in which the universal stands over against particular inclinations, is not freedom and leaves the self just as divided as before. Despite how dramatically Hegel has here shifted from his earlier position, it is crucial to appreciate the continuity with his earlier concern with overcoming fragmentation—in the self as well as within society. The objective remains relatively constant; but what previously appeared to be a satisfactory resolution of the problem—a Kantian conception of autonomy—now appears as one more example of division, this time internalized.

Hegel's new solution—though only a partial one—is love. His discussion of love, both in the fragments from this period and in "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate," provides a crucial step in his transition toward the views he develops in Jena and afterwards. His turn to love was driven by his close contact with Hölderlin and Schelling as well as his broader engagement with Early Romanticism during this period, and it can be seen as the high-water mark of his engagement with romanticism.[48] Though much of his later, more systematic thought is prefigured in his account of love, the discussion also reveals the limitations to love as a solution to the problems with which he is

[47] Kant argues that there is no difference between "a *shaman* of the Tunguses and the European prelate who rules over both church and state," but contrasts these with those who act out of duty (*Religion* 6:176).

[48] On this aspect of Hegel's context, see Toews 1980, 44–5 and Pinkard 2000, 75–7. For a brief account of the distinction between Early and Late Romanticism, see Ameriks 2000a, 13.

grappling—and thus the need to move beyond love as the key to a cohesive modern society. His engagement with love is therefore a stepping stone, not the hidden key to unlocking Hegel's mature thought.[49]

At this point in Hegel's development, love rises above morality and provides the reconciliation and unity Hegel and his contemporaries were seeking. Love overcomes the division intrinsic to duty. Following upon the analysis of duty just discussed, Hegel writes, "Since the commands of duty presuppose a cleavage and since the domination of the concept declares itself in a 'thou shalt,' that which is raised above this cleavage is by contrast an '*is*'" ("GCS" 324/212). Where duty presupposes and instantiates a division and tension within the self—between what is and what ought to be as well as between the particular and the universal—love is a unity that cancels the form of ought. For Hegel, it is Kant's failure to see the contrast between love and duty that enables Kant's "reduction of what he calls a 'command' (love God first of all and thy neighbor as thyself) to his moral imperative" ("GCS" 325/213).[50] Love fulfills the law not by prompting action that "corresponds" to the law but by uniting inclination and the law such that they are no longer different ("GCS" 326/214). Hegel thus champions an ethic of virtue—centered on, if not exclusive to, love—over a deontic approach to ethics.

Hegel's conception of love, however, is more than an alternative to Kantian morality. Its greater significance lies in the type of relation it constitutes. Love does not simply overcome the cleavage between inclination and duty within the individual but rather brings about a unification of subject and object ("GCS" 326/214). This point comes out particularly strongly in one of Hegel's fragments from this period.[51] Here the treatment of love emerges from a discussion of relations within a social body. In an attitude or consciousness defined in relation to dead matter, the object appears as something absolute standing over against the subject. The subject "exists only as something opposed [to the object], and one of a pair of opposites is reciprocally condition and conditioned" ("Liebe" 245/304). Hegel is grappling here with the ways in which two entities in relationship may condition or determine each other. The first forms of relating with which Hegel deals—which he will take up again and again in subsequent discussions of the development of consciousness—are fundamentally unequal and do not overcome alterity; one is determined by the other. By contrast, "True union, or love proper, exists only between living

[49] Cf. Westphal 1992, 3–17.

[50] The interpretation of Kant on these issues is by no means as simple as Hegel's brief discussion suggests. For our purposes, however, what matters most is what Hegel made of Kant and where this led him, not whether Kant's thought contains resources to defeat the criticisms.

[51] This fragment was probably written in late 1797 or 1798, thus probably at least a year before "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate." Given the title "Love" by Nohl, the piece is found in *Werke* 1:244–50 and *ETW* 302–8.

beings who are alike in power and thus in one another's eyes living beings from every point of view; in no respect is either dead for the other. This genuine love excludes all oppositions" ("Liebe" 245–6/304). In love, one finds oneself in another, such that one is both with another and with oneself, without this being a contrast: "in love, life is present both as a duplicate of itself and as a single and unified self... In love the separate does still remain, but as something united and no longer as something separate" ("Liebe" 246/305; see also "GCS" 363/247). Because one is determined in relation to others and because only in love is one relating to another who is also oneself, only in love is one self-determining and thus free.

In discussing love in terms of this process of overcoming oppositions—between universal and particular as well as between subject and object—Hegel introduces a pattern of movement that will endure throughout his mature corpus. This process moves from immediate unity, through differentiation, to a mediated unity. As Hegel expresses the relation at this stage in his thought,

> life has run through the circle of development from an undeveloped to a consummate [*vollendeten*] unity: when the unity was undeveloped, there still stood over against it the world and the possibility of a cleavage between itself and the world; as the development proceeded, reflection produced more and more oppositions (unified by satisfied impulses) until it set the whole of the human being himself in opposition; finally, love completely destroys objectivity and thereby annuls and transcends reflection [*die Reflexion in völliger Objektlosigkeit aufhebt*], deprives the human being's opposite of all foreign character, and discovers life itself without any further defect. ("Liebe" 246/305)

At this stage in Hegel's thought, this pattern of movement—from a simple unity, through difference, to a regained unity—finds its culmination in love. Hegel will go on to argue that the unity of love lacks the mediation necessary to preserve genuine difference; that is, what appears here as the second unity is what Hegel later conceives as unmediated unity. Here in his Frankfurt reflections, however, only love can achieve a unity that incorporates difference through sublating it. Love thus appears as the key to overcoming fragmentation.

Hegel's view that this unity can only be achieved between equals who find themselves in the other has extensive theological ramifications. We cannot experience it or be free in relation to a Being that is beyond us, superior, or radically other ("Liebe" 245/304). Expressed in religious language, this entails that such a relation to the divine or absolute is possible only because we possess it in ourselves:

> The relation of spirit to spirit is a feeling of harmony, is their unification; how could heterogeneity be unified? Faith in the divine is only possible if in the believer himself there is a divine element which rediscovers itself, its own nature,

in that on which it believes, even if it be unconscious that what it has found *is* its own nature. ("GCS" 382/266)

Even in the period when Hegel offers his most positive appraisal of religion, he rules out any conception of God or the absolute as radically other. One thus sees the impact of a tradition of mysticism in which Meister Eckart and Jacob Boehme figure prominently.[52]

Demonstrating that his concern with social fragmentation is never far from the surface, Hegel considers at length love's role in society. He posits a vision of early Christian communities as having been bound together by love. These groups renounced private property and shared their goods and meals ("GCS" 403/287). To this extent, they appear as a social body instantiating the reconciliation of love. Yet a community based in love is not the beginning of a universal community but rather intrinsically limited. One element of this limitation is, according to Hegel, a result of Jesus' strategy for adapting to his particular context. Hegel's negative view of Judaism in Jesus' day again comes out strongly, though the specific criticism has changed. Because the Jewish people at the time were incapable of reconciling God and the world, Jesus had to choose between sacrificing his connection to God and sacrificing his connection to the world ("GCS" 401/285). In opting for the latter, he caused his followers to be united in opposition to the world. This aspect of the group's constitution is tied to its positivity, its reliance on faith, and "faith can only unify a group if the group sets an actual world over against itself and sunders itself from it" ("GCS" 403/287). Its unity depends upon its being other—not universal.

As, or more importantly, however, property constitutes a fundamental obstacle to love's functioning as the basis for a large-scale society's unity. Hegel's concern with property reflects his reading of the classical political economists, and his writings from this period demonstrate his efforts to interrelate what he takes from these materials to the concern with unification.[53] Hegel views love as incompatible with private property and private property as necessary for large-scale, modern societies. In one fragment from the period, he makes property virtually definitive of modern society: "In the states of the modern period, security of property is the axis around which all lawgiving revolves, to which the majority of rights of citizens relate" (*Werke* 1:439). His introduction of the topic—in the context of his analysis of the Sermon on the Mount—is telling:

[52] On Hegel's early interest in medieval mysticism, see Crites 1998, 30–1 and 120 and Harris 1972, 230–1. Though he focuses more on Hegel's later work, Cyril O'Regan (1994) argues for the centrality of Christian mystical traditions to Hegel's thought as a whole. I take up O'Regan's reading in later chapters.

[53] On Hegel's extensive reading of the classical political economists, especially James Steuart, during this decade, see Avineri 1972, 4–5 and Dickey 1987.

> About the command which follows, to cast aside care for one's life and to despise riches, as also about Matthew xix. 23: "How hard it is for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven," there is nothing to be said; it is a litany pardonable only in sermons and rhymes, for such a command is without truth for us. The fate of property has become too powerful for us to tolerate reflections on it, to find its abolition thinkable. ("GCS" 333/221)

Calls for indifference to material wealth simply cannot be taken seriously today. Hegel's point is not simply about the unpopularity of such a view—that people are too attached to their possessions to be willing to give them up. Rather, such indifference stands in fundamental opposition to the social world in which our identities have been formed. Attempting to reject private property would therefore render us further alienated from both society and ourselves. Hegel views the institution of private property as intrinsic to complex, modern societies and to the selves shaped by these societies.

Moreover, the relevant issue cannot be addressed simply by tempering the desire for property through a good dose of *caritas*. To the contrary, property is inimical to the unity of love as Hegel understands it at this point in his development:

> [P]ossession of riches, with all the rights as well as all the cares connected with it, brings into human life definitive details [*Bestimmtheiten*] whose restrictedness prescribes limits to the virtues, imposes conditions on them, and makes them dependent on circumstances. Wealth at once betrays its opposition to love, to the whole, because it is a right caught in a context of multiple rights, and this means that both its immediately appropriate virtue, honesty [*Rechtschaffenheit*[54]], and also the other virtues possible within its sphere, are of necessity linked with exclusion, and every act of virtue is in itself one of a pair of opposites. ("GCS" 334/221)

Two points stand out in this rich passage: First, property is necessarily embedded within a complex web of relations to others, webs that are intrinsically exclusionary and therefore at odds with the complete union of love. To claim anything as mine is to declare it not yours, which is to assert my individuality—over against your individuality—in relation to it. Second, Hegel is not claiming that property is inimical to virtue itself. Rather, property is associated with a range of virtues, most closely with honesty. But these virtues themselves presuppose and reinforce division. Thus, the problem with property is that the virtues with which it is associated are themselves divisive. Greed is not the principal concern. For this reason, the chasm between love and property cannot be bridged: "A syncretism, a service of two masters, is unthinkable because the indeterminate and the determinate cannot retain their form and still be bound together" ("GCS" 334/221–2). Love represents

[54] Hegel may have Adam Smith's conception of "propriety" in mind here.

a unity so tight that it excludes determination altogether and therefore cannot be reconciled with the determinacy and differentiation intrinsic to property.

While the most significant implications of this point concern the limits of love as a basis for societal cohesion, in one fragment Hegel posits property as undermining the bond not only of a complex society but even of two lovers. In the present context, what is most interesting about the passage is the extent which it deepens the intrinsicality of the conflict between love and property. The unity of love is threatened by the fact that the lovers relate not only to each other but also to a range of inanimate objects. Insofar as one of the lovers possesses property that the other does not, the will of the possessor exists as an other to the one that does not possess it; they are then not in union. Even shared ownership cannot solve this problem: "But if the possessor gives the other the same right of possession as he has himself, community of goods is still only the right of one or other of the two to the thing" ("Liebe" 250/308). Even if the property belongs to both, in many cases it can only be used by one. The coat is worn by only one person at a time. The lovers' difference from each other reappears in the decision for one or the other to use it. The one coat, or perhaps the last piece of chocolate, shows that we are dealing with two wills—not "one organ in a living whole" ("Liebe" 249/308). It is perhaps no coincidence that this fragment, subsequently given the title "Love," ends with this discussion of property. This tension between property and love is one of the key elements undermining the central role of love in Hegel's thought during this period.

For Hegel, then, the tension between property and love will ultimately be resolved by giving up on this conception of love as a basis for social unity. Hegel does not make this conclusion explicit at this point in his writings, but it explains his subsequent shift—marked by his move to Jena in 1800—away from love. Its incompatibility with property, which Hegel takes to be necessary for complex societies, drives Hegel's abandonment of love as a basis for social unity.

At stake in this shift, however, is not merely the abandonment of love as a social ideal but—more fundamentally—a realization that social cohesion in the modern world cannot be *too* tightly knit. Rather, modern social cohesion needs to preserve difference to a greater degree than an ideal such as love can. Only such a society will have room for property as well as other differences. What Hegel gives up, then, is not simply love itself but such a strong sense of unity as the goal of social cohesion. Hegel's growing clarity on this point is vital to his later accounts of the necessary mediation or articulation of society along several lines.

In addition to love's limits as a basis for social cohesion in a complex society, Hegel's account of love can also appear frustratingly vague and lacking in concreteness. Closely connected to feeling, love seems subjective and exceedingly arbitrary. This lack will become an additional aspect of love's

inadequacy for overcoming of fragmentation in the modern world. At this stage in his development, however, Hegel does not view this as a shortcoming but rather contrasts the unity of love with the bifurcation intrinsic to understanding ("Liebe" 245–6/304). Though understanding and reason are distinguished, both are finitizing and bifurcating. Feeling, not cognition, is the key to overcoming limitations and uniting what appear opposed. As Pinkard notes, this is the stage at which Hegel experiments with the romanticism of his contemporaries.[55] This ranking of feeling over the intellect, however, entails that discursive accounts of love will necessarily fall short. Neither philosophy nor any other discursive genre can adequately express the unity it provides.

Though love cannot be adequately expressed in discursive language, love's unity finds expression in religion. Though "[l]ove itself is present only as an emotion, not as an image also" ("GCS" 364/248), religion is the expression of this unity in images, representations, and practices. Religion thus objectifies the unity of love: "Faith is the manner in which the united, that through which the antinomy is united, is present in our representation. The unification is the activity; this activity, reflected as object [*Objekt*], is that which is believed" (*Werke* 1: 250–1). Religion renders this unification present as an object. While representation is its most characteristic mode of doing so, this unity is also expressed in religious practices:

> Since religious practice is the most holy, the most beautiful, of all things, it is our endeavor to unify the discords necessitated by our development and our attempt to exhibit the unification in the ideal as fully existent, as no longer opposed to reality, and thus to express and confirm it in a deed. ("GCS" 318/206)

Hegel's attitude toward this objectification is complex. By viewing religion as representing this unity, he opens up the possibility of a much greater appreciation of religion in general—and Christianity in particular—than was present in his earlier writings. Religious representations (*Vorstellungen*) express what are already becoming the central claims of his thought. This aspect of his view of religion will endure. At this point, however, religion appears superior to philosophy in that the understanding and reason—the modes of cognition characteristic of philosophy—are intrinsically bifurcating, whereas religious representations express the unification that is only fully achieved in love.

Nonetheless, while religious representations express this unification, their expression is limited and finitizes the content. Hegel here posits a tension between any form of objectification and genuine love ("GCS" 370/253). He appreciates religion's expression of love yet faults its limits in terms strikingly similar to his mature account of religious representation. Expressing this unity in finite form, religion easily leads to misconceptions:

[55] Pinkard 2000, 77.

> To become religion, [love] must manifest itself in an objective form. A feeling, something subjective, it must be fused with the universal, with something represented, and thereby acquire the form of a being to whom prayer is both possible and due. The need to unite subject with object, to unite feeling and feeling's demand for objects, with the intellect, to unite them in something beautiful, in a god, by means of fancy, is the supreme need of the human spirit and the urge to religion. ("GCS" 405–6/289)

While the terms to be reconciled have shifted somewhat at this point in the essay, the problem of unification endures. Most importantly, the form of representation—which is a mode of the intellect—generates conceptions that are not themselves a product of the content of the reconciliation—and are even at odds with it ("GCS" 380/264). In this case, the conception of a transcendent being who can be petitioned through prayer is produced by the inevitable drive to find images and representations expressive of the experience of unity in love.[56] For Hegel, this being is a projection of the unity experienced in love and only inadequately expressed through representation and other cognitive forms.

Viewing Hegel's conception of religion in these terms provides a useful frame for viewing "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate" as a whole. While Hegel often portrays religion as such as representing the unity of love, Hegel's treatment of the differences between Judaism and Christianity reveals differences between the conceptions expressed by distinct religious traditions. Hegel begins the essay by discussing "the spirit of Judaism." Giving Noah a central role, he writes, "he turned his thought-produced ideal into a Being [*zum Seienden*] and then set everything else over against it" ("GCS" 275/183). Two points are particularly noteworthy here. First, in this case as well, the deity conceived as a being transcending the world is produced by human cognition—an expression of a human grasp of the absolute. God, theistically understood, is a projection. Second, this production—the God produced—expresses the conception of human beings and the world that Hegel sees at the center of the tradition, the "spirit" of that religion.

The discussion of Judaism is propaedeutic to the essay's central task: an investigation of "the spirit of Christianity." This task is largely one of discerning—in a sense demythologizing—the disposition toward others, the self, and the absolute expressed in this tradition. In this sense, the first part of the title, "The Spirit of Christianity" is a shorthand for the kind analysis of religion that is central to the essay. We see this demythologizing interpretation in Hegel's account of the symbol of baptism and in his treatment of Jesus' resurrection. The latter is not "an event" that could be studied by a historian but an image in

[56] As Crites shows, earlier in the decade Hegel responded cautiously to Schelling's dismissal of a more traditional, theistically conceived God (1998, 40). By this point, however, Hegel's thinking has developed to a point that such a God is no longer conceivable.

which "love found the objectification [*Darstellung*] of its oneness. . . . The need for religion finds its satisfaction in the risen Jesus, in love thus given shape" ("GCS" 408/292). To study the spirit of a religion is thus to analyze the attitudes given expression in its representations and practices. Much of the essay concerns the way in which Christianity's "spirit" fell into the finite forms that were the only possibilities available to Jesus in his context and subsequently developed along the tracks established at its origins. Hegel's overall picture is ambiguous. On one hand, he blames Christianity's problems on the false path on which it was set by Jesus' attempts to adapt his message to his audience. On the other, toward the end of the essay—as we have seen—he indicates that the form that religion takes, principally representation, is intrinsically finite and incapable of a satisfactory expression of the unity of love which represents the apex of Hegel's vision at this point. Religion may be higher than philosophy, but it still falls short of love.

At the same time, we can distinguish religions on the basis of their different spirits. With regard to Hegel's long-standing concerns about religion and social organization, we can see that different religions will express different conceptions of social life. Societies dominated by different religions will thus display different forms of political organization corresponding to their different fundamental positions on these topics and thus their different spirits.

This concern with differences among particular religions and with historical development stands out clearly in a new introduction to the earlier "Positivity" essay that Hegel drafted in 1800. The transformations in style as well as content between the earlier version and the revised introduction give the sense that in the intervening years, Hegel has become "Hegel"—despite the dramatic developments in his thought that were yet to occur. Having rejected the particular Kantian conceptions on which his earlier notion of positivity was based, Hegel requires a new conceptualization of positivity.[57] Since "the universal concepts of human nature are too empty to afford a criterion for the special and necessarily multiplex needs of religiosity" ("PcR" 219/170), some of what he previously deemed "positivity" is intrinsic to religion. The criterion for positivity shifts to whether these elements come into conflict with freedom, the understanding or reason: "Only if this excess annuls freedom does it become positive, i.e. if it has pretension against understanding and reason and contradicts their necessary laws" ("PcR" 220/170). Crucially, whether elements of a religion annul freedom depends upon the particular context. It concerns "the *content* of its doctrines and precepts far less than the *form* in which it authenticates the truth of its doctrines and requires the fulfillment of its precepts. Any doctrine, any precept, is capable of becoming positive, since anything can be claimed in a forcible way with a suppression of freedom"

[57] On this shift and the change in the targets of Hegel's critique, see Harris 1972, 399–404.

("PcR" 221/171, my emphasis). Positivity derives from the manner in which a doctrine or practice appears, specifically the nature of the authority on which it claims to be based. Positivity ensues, for example, when religion does not simply appeal to "the human being's natural sense of the good or on his longing for it" but demands "obedience to specific precepts and commands about actions, feelings, and convictions" ("PcR" 223/174). What appears as humanity's "natural sense," however, develops differently over time and in different cultures. It cannot be determined simply by the application of universal concepts. In eschewing the application of universal concepts as the criterion for determining positivity, Hegel necessitates a deeply historical approach that seeks to discern the reasonableness of religious representations with respect to their particular historical contexts.[58]

In present circumstances,

> what our time needs instead perhaps is to hear someone proving the very opposite of what results from this 'enlightenment' application of universal concepts, though of course such a proof would not proceed on the principles and the method proffered to the old dogmatic theologians by the culture of their day. On the contrary, it would derive that now discarded theology from what we now know as a need of human nature and would thus exhibit its naturalness and inevitability. ("PcR" 221/172)

Hegel thereby suggests an approach to religion that neither recapitulates nor entirely rejects the dogmatic theology that he has criticized so often in these early writings. To simply judge these theological doctrines on the basis of an Enlightenment notion of universal reason involves presupposing that "the convictions of many centuries, regarded as sacrosanct, true, and obligatory by the millions who lived and died by them in those centuries" were "downright folly or plain immorality" ("PcR" 221/172). Hegel seeks a more generous hermeneutic, but he does so by interpreting this theology not on its own terms but as concrete expressions of universal—but in themselves abstract—needs of human nature. As Crites notes, "The aim is not so much to defend it [Christianity] as to understand it, sympathetically and in the deepest sense historically, as a form in which human life shaped itself for compelling reasons."[59] Theology has expressed these universal needs in the specific forms appropriate to a given time and place. To view them as less than this, as merely arbitrary superstition, overlooks their genuine significance. To view them as more than this, as timelessly authoritative expressions of the absolute, construes them in such a manner that they come into inevitable conflict with reason and freedom; in other words, it is to make them positive. Hegel's new introduction to the "Positivity" essay thus displays deepening

[58] See Crites 1998, 132–3.
[59] Crites 1998, 133.

historicist sensibilities that enable a greater appreciation of Christianity's doctrinal past while opening space to reinterpret its significance in the present.

During his time in Frankfurt, then, Hegel came to a greater appreciation of religion, shifted his concern with social fragmentation to a conception of love, and yet still could not find a satisfying solution to the problems that had motivated him since his earliest writings. At most, love may have the potential to overcome fragmentation and difference within a small group, but it is incapable of doing so for a complex modern society. Hegel's turn to love came as an alternative to what he came to see as the failure of Kant's conception of practical reason. Yet as love and religion too fail as a basis for the social reconciliation he seeks, Hegel looks toward theoretical philosophy, specifically idealism, as the possible basis for resolving the fragmentation in society through a reconciliation of the finite with the infinite. Ironically, the inadequacy of Kant's moral philosophy is part of what drives Hegel to immerse himself in the legacy of Kant's theoretical philosophy.

Despite the failures of the decade—Hegel's dissatisfaction with every new solution he proposed—attending to Hegel's early motivating concerns and the paths he initially followed to address them enables us to see how his mature thought both takes religion extremely seriously and rejects any notion of a transcendent God. It thus enables us to overcome an important impasse in contemporary scholarship. Though philosophy, not religion, will provide the fundamental theoretical basis for social unity, religion will play an essential role in bringing the majority of the population to identify with an emerging, modern social order that supports the freedom of the individual.

2

The Philosophical Basis of Hegel's Philosophy of Religion

At the dawn of the next century, in January of 1801, Hegel arrived in Jena. His father's recent death had left him with a small inheritance that enabled him to give up his position as a tutor in Frankfurt and pursue his vocation as a scholar. Though Jena's star had already begun to set, it had recently been at the center of German intellectual life. With the presence of Fichte and Schelling, as well as leading romantics such as August and Friedrich Schlegel, Jena during the late 1790s had been the center of post-Kantian idealism as well as romantic responses.[1] Even though a number of these figures had departed before Hegel arrived, he was able to work closely with Schelling until the latter's departure in 1803 and more generally immersed himself in the philosophical currents of the period.[2]

In a new place and a new century, Hegel's work took a decisive turn. While the shift toward philosophy had been long in developing, Hegel's move to Jena symbolizes a shift toward philosophy as the necessary point of entry for confronting the social fragmentation that had long occupied him. In an oft quoted letter to Schelling from the previous fall, Hegel wrote,

> [i]n my scientific development, which started from more subordinate needs of man, I was inevitably driven toward science, and the ideal of youth had to take the form of reflection and thus at once of a system. I now ask myself, while I am still occupied with it, what return to the intervention in the life of men can be found. (*Briefe* 1:59–60/64)

Hegel's earlier struggles to overcome social fragmentation in the modern world had led him through several candidates for solutions: a new *Volksreligion*, a religion based in morality, and love. Each of these candidates had failed,

[1] Moreover, as Ameriks stresses, romanticism itself can be seen as internal to idealism, so that the landscape was one of multiple interactions and mutual influences rather than entrenched camps in opposition; see Ameriks 2000a, 10.

[2] On Jena during this period, see Pinkard 2000, 88–106; Crites 1998, 145–7; and Harris 1983, xix–xxxiii.

and Hegel came to believe that the only viable basis for a solution lay in philosophy, not religion. In doing so, he came to see the need to grapple with the more technical aspects of Kantian and post-Kantian philosophy, precisely those elements he had once seen as inessential to his social and political concerns. At the same time, this turn to philosophy, to "science," was not an abandonment of the social concerns that had previously engaged him. Rather, even before this turn was fully made, he had already articulated to Schelling his concern with moving from these more theoretical, apparently abstract considerations back "to the intervention in the life of men." As much as the style of Hegel's Jena writings diverged from those of the 1790s, as abstract and abstruse as they became, they were never, for Hegel, disconnected from his social concerns.

Paralleling Hegel's own turn to central questions in theoretical philosophy, this chapter steps back from direct discussion of broader questions about religion, politics, and modernity to address the philosophical project that undergirds Hegel's mature treatment of these topics. Specifically, I examine the way in which Hegel came to terms with and sought to extend central elements in Kantian and post-Kantian theoretical philosophy. This task lies at the heart of Hegel's philosophical project, and interpreting it correctly is crucial for understanding the basic orientation of his mature thought and his philosophy of religion in particular. A failure to do so easily supports readings of his religious thought diametrically opposed to the project.

Though Hegel is often viewed as one of the dominant alternatives to Kant, Hegel sought to extend, not reject, what he viewed as the driving elements of Kant's work. Hegel's pursuit of this line was profoundly influenced by the work of Reinhold, Fichte, Schelling, and others who also tried to develop the Kantian project to what they saw as its necessary conclusion. For the present purposes, however, it is Hegel's engagement with and transformation of Kant in particular that is most pertinent to our examination of his philosophy of religion.[3]

Hegel's response to the problem he sees posed yet unresolved by Kant and subsequent developments in German idealism lies in Hegel's account of the spontaneity of thinking. As we will see below, he rejects all accounts that conceive of thought as externally determined in its structure. He shares Kant's rejection of empiricist accounts of thinking yet argues that Kant's solution has not gone far enough. Kant conceives of sensibility and understanding as two independent sources, both necessary for knowledge. Sensibility, in this account, is purely receptive—passive in relation to objects. Moreover, in Hegel's view, Kant's account of the pure concepts of the understanding, the

[3] While Crites emphasizes the impact of classical philosophers, particularly Plato, Hegel's writings during the Jena period demonstrate the extent to which those sources were read through the lens created by his engagement with post-Kantian idealism (see Crites 1998, 145–6).

categories, takes these categories over uncritically from the table of judgments. As a result, Kant's account of thinking remains infected with a givenness that undermines the account.

Instead, Hegel develops an account of thinking as self-determining. No object is simply given for thought. Rather, objects become objects only by virtue of being taken up by thought. The basic determinations of any particular instance of thinking are posited by thinking itself, not by some independently given material under investigation. For Hegel, this means that objects are objects only by virtue of the activity of thinking or mind or spirit. Such claims immediately bring us to the elements of Hegel's view that easily appear to be ambitiously metaphysical—i.e. to make grand claims about the ultimate nature of reality independent of human thought. Yet Hegel's claims need not and indeed should not be interpreted in this manner. Doing so generally results in positions that fall back into the views that Hegel has already criticized—ones that juxtapose thinking with a reality made up of objects that exist independently of this thinking.

In conceiving of Hegel's project in these terms, my interpretation builds on the work of scholars such as Robert Pippin and Terry Pinkard who have rejected spirit monist readings in favor of an interpretation of Hegel as carrying over more from Kant than has often been appreciated.[4] While this family of interpretations has been highly influential in the last two decades, it continues to generate tremendous controversy. Interpreters such as Paul Franks, Frederick Beiser, Merold Westphal, Stephen Houlgate, William Desmond, and others have—sometimes respectfully and sometimes heatedly—rejected it.[5] While the latter group is itself diverse, a recurrent concern is that interpreters such as Pippin and Pinkard can only make their interpretations work by downplaying or ignoring the religious dimensions of Hegel's thought, particularly as it is developed in his philosophy of religion. Against this view, one of the central claims of this book is that the lines of interpretation Pippin and others have opened up clear the way for a much greater appreciation of the significance of Hegel's account of religion.

While that claim can only be developed in the subsequent interpretation of the philosophy of religion itself, the present chapter takes up the daunting task of setting out the philosophical underpinnings of Hegel's mature philosophical

[4] For one of the defining statements of this current, see Pippin 1989. See also Pippin 1993, 1997, 1999, and 2005; Pinkard 1994, 2000, and 2002; Brandom 1985 and 2002; Redding 1996, 2007a, and 2007b; and Stekeler-Weithofer 1992. For two recent overviews of the debate over this line of interpretation, see Kreines 2006 and Lumsden 2008.

[5] See Ameriks 1991 and 1992, Beiser 2002 and 2005, Desmond 2003, Franks 2005, Houlgate 2006 and 2008, Inwood 2002, and Westphal 2000. For a particularly strident rejection of Pippin's work, see Peperzak 2001, 5–18. Robert Stern offers a particularly thoughtful response to Pippin's interpretation that shares crucial elements of Pippin's interpretation of Hegel's relation to Kant but still develops a more strongly metaphysical interpretation of Hegel's idealism (Stern 2008).

position as a whole. For this reason, it is necessarily the most technical chapter of the book, but this treatment of the philosophical basis of Hegel's position is essential to the justification of my reading of his philosophy of religion. In order to provide this account in just one chapter, I have limited my discussion to the texts essential to this background as it bears on the philosophy of religion.[6] With this goal in mind, the first section of the chapter sets out the elements of Kant's theoretical philosophy that Hegel subsequently picks up and transforms into the basis of his own project. I then turn to two of Hegel's Jena writings, the *Differenzschrift* and *Faith and Knowledge*, where Hegel articulates his own concerns and the direction of his thought in relation to the problems he sees in Kant's project. While these writings indicate what Hegel finds promising and what he finds unsatisfactory in Kant's legacy, they do not provide a solution to the problems that he thinks remain. For that, we turn—in the third section—to Hegel's logic, focusing first on the task of the logic and then on its conclusion.

KANT ON THE SYNTHETIC UNITY OF APPERCEPTION

Awakened by David Hume's concern with the origin and status of the most basic categories that structure our understanding and thought, Immanuel Kant seeks to develop an account of thinking that overcomes Hume's skepticism without falling back into the rationalism exemplified by Christian Wolff. Doing so requires a "critique" of pure theoretical reason that sets its scope and boundaries. Through this critique, Kant defends the validity of categories such as causality for objects of possible experience while simultaneously delineating their limits—limits that rational metaphysicians have transgressed. He argues that these categories cannot be understood as empirical, derived from our experience, but must structure understanding in order to make experience possible. Central to Kant's task in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, then, is determining just what these categories are and securing their universality within our experience such that they can be known to hold for all objects of possible experience.

[6] Consequently, I have been unable to do full justice to the rich debate on these matters in the secondary literature. To do so would require expanding this chapter into its own book. For some of the most important contributions to this debate, see notes 4 and 5 above. I have also left out topics and materials—most significantly the *Phenomenology of Spirit*—that have been central to other post-Kantian interpretations of Hegel. I have analyzed Hegel's account of religion in the *Phenomenology* in Lewis 2008b.

The aspects of Kant's thought that become crucial to Hegel's project lie in this account of the deduction of the categories and specifically in the account of apperception.[7] Here Kant sets out core elements of his conception of thinking itself—which is conceived as a way to overcome the inadequacies that he sees in empiricist accounts. Providing a succinct treatment of these pieces of Kant's argument is no easy task. The interpretation of Kant's deductions is no less contested than the interpretation of Hegel, and the specific issues at stake are ones on which major lines of Kant interpretation divide.[8] In light of this difficulty, my account seeks to articulate the crucial elements and tensions as they were taken up by Hegel. By focusing on what matters for understanding Hegel, we can at least partially avoid the thickets of these Kantian interpretive debates.[9]

While much of the discussion of this material in the philosophy of religion has focused on the consequences of Kant's limiting the validity of the categories to objects of possible experience—Kant's claim that theoretical reason cannot provide knowledge of the traditional objects of rationalist metaphysics (God, an immortal soul, and the cosmos)—an adequate understanding of Hegel's philosophy as a whole and his philosophy of religion in particular requires focusing on the way that Hegel takes up and extends Kant's claim that the most basic act of combining representations is a spontaneous act of the thinking subject.

Earlier in the *Critique*, in the Transcendental Aesthetic, Kant has provided his account of space and time as the forms through which we receive sensory data. They are thus the forms of intuition, where intuition is understood as a representation that is singular and immediate. Intuition alone, however, can provide neither experience nor knowledge.[10] In the deduction of the pure concepts of the understanding, the topic shifts to the action through which

[7] For this reason, interpretive controversies over the extent to which Kant ultimately defends a role for rationalistic metaphysics are less directly relevant to our present concerns. On this debate in Kant scholarship, see Ameriks 2003, 112–34.

[8] For a particularly concise and clear statement of central issues in the debate over the role of the A and B Deductions, see Longuenesse 1998, 59–60, esp. n. 3. For helpful reviews of the state of discussion at earlier points in time, see Ameriks 2003, 67–111. Two works that have continued to frame much of the debate are Allison 2004 (first edition in 1983) and Guyer 1987. Also important with regard to these topics are Förster, ed. 1989 and Kitcher 1990.

[9] At the same time, by attending to the tensions that Hegel sees in Kant's position, I also hope to make plausible Hegel's (and Pippin's) claim that Hegel's own idealism results from an immanent critique of Kant's idealism. In her response to Pippin, Sally Sedgwick has offered an important challenge to the claim that "Hegel's critique of Kant is truly immanent and that objective idealism is the necessary resolution of the contradictions internal to transcendental idealism," as both Hegel and Pippin claim (Sedgwick 1993, 282). Pippin's response is found in Pippin 1993; see especially 294. See also Ameriks' critique in Ameriks 1991 and his more developed critique of Hegel's response to Kant's theoretical philosophy in Ameriks 2000b, 267–308.

[10] Allison is helpful on the complexities of and ambiguities in Kant's use of the term, some of which will become apparent later in our discussion (2004, 80–2). See also Longuenesse 1998, 24.

what is received through the senses is put together—combined—by the understanding. What is received by sensibility (*Sinnlichkeit*) does not bring itself together to constitute experience. Rather, "the combination (*conjunctio*) of a manifold in general can never come to us through the senses . . . For it is an act of spontaneity of the faculty of representation" (*KrV* B129–30). In distinguishing sensibility and understanding (*Verstand*) in this manner, Kant provides distinct but co-essential roles for intuitions received by the senses and the act of combination performed by the understanding itself.[11] As he famously puts it, "[w]ithout sensibility no object would be given to us, without understanding no object would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind" (*KrV* A51/B75). Both are essential for knowledge. The deduction, however, focuses on the spontaneous activity of combining or synthesis. Kant emphasizes spontaneity to contrast the self-determined or self-caused nature of this act with the receptivity that characterizes sensibility.

Kant develops his argument that it is the understanding that combines through his account of apperception: "It must be possible for the 'I think' to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me which could not be thought at all, and that is equivalent to saying that the representation would be impossible, or at least would be nothing to me" (*KrV* B131–2).[12] For a representation to be mine, it must be such that it can be "accompanied" by this "I think": "All the manifold of intuition has, therefore, a necessary relation to the 'I think' in the same subject in which this manifold is found" (*KrV* B132). In order to have this relation to the "I think," "[a]s *my* representations (even if I am not conscious of them as such) they must conform to the condition under which alone they *can* stand together in one universal self-consciousness, because otherwise they would not all without exception belong to me" (*KrV* B132–3). This common condition entails, Kant argues, that they are brought together by the subject's activity, or at least can be so brought together:

> The thought that the representations given in intuition one and all belong to me, is therefore equivalent to the thought that I unite them in one self-consciousness, or can at least so unite them; and although this thought is not itself the consciousness of the *synthesis* of the representations, it presupposes the possibility of that synthesis. (*KrV* B134)

To refer to the unity of self-consciousness that precedes what is received through sensibility, Kant uses the term transcendental apperception (see also *KrV* A107). Kant's notion of apperception is thus central to his claim that combination is a spontaneous act of the understanding rather than taken up from sense data:

[11] See Pippin 1989, 23.
[12] Note the parallel in Hegel's language at a crucial point in the *Science of Logic* (*WL* 2:464/756).

> Combination does not, however, lie in the objects, and cannot be borrowed from them, and so, through perception, first taken up into the understanding. On the contrary, it is an affair of the understanding alone, which itself is nothing but the faculty of combining *a priori*, and of bringing the manifold of given representations under the unity of apperception. The principle of apperception is the highest principle in the whole sphere of human knowledge. (*KrV* B134–5)

Given this role of apperception, "all the manifold of intuition should be subject to conditions of the original synthetic unity of apperception" (*KrV* B136). This unity thus sets bounds on possible experience, ensuring that "all the manifold" be subject to its rules: "The synthetic unity of consciousness, is, therefore, an objective condition of all knowledge. It is not merely a condition that I myself require in knowing an object, but is a condition under which every intuition must stand in order *to become an object for me*" (*KrV* B138). This account of the complementary roles of intuition and understanding thus grounds Kant's account of the possibility of objective knowledge. If there were no norms for this combining, there would be no objectivity. Moreover, because the norms for this combining derive from the spontaneous act of the understanding itself, they avoid the Humean skepticism that results when one thinks of the combination as merely arising through sensibility (*KrV* B142).

Kant's next step, then, must be to deduce the rules by which this combining takes place, i.e. to deduce the pure concepts of the understanding, or categories. Since "the *categories* are just these functions of judgment, in so far as they are employed in determination of the manifold of a given intuition," the task of the deduction of the categories involves the articulation of the basic forms of the judgments that make experience possible (*KrV* B143). Here as well, Kant stresses that "the categories have their source in the understanding alone, *independently of sensibility*" (*KrV* B144). Consequently, empiricist accounts of thinking necessarily fail, as does any account that locates the source of these categories outside of the understanding itself.

As Kant highlights, however, this account applies only to an understanding that requires sensibility to provide it with data. An understanding that did not have to look to the senses to provide a manifold would not require thinking to perform this combining.[13] Such an "intuitive understanding," as Kant labels it, would not have these two distinct sources for knowledge. As we will see in the analysis of *Faith and Knowledge*, while Hegel is fascinated by the Kantian notion of "intuitive understanding," as developed both here and in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, his engagement with this notion is driven by the

[13] "An understanding which through its self-consciousness could supply to itself the manifold of intuition—an understanding, that is to say, through whose representation the objects of the representation should at the same time exist—would not require, for the unity of consciousness, a special act of synthesis of the manifold. For the human understanding, however, which thinks only, and does not intuit, that act is necessary" (*KrV* B138–9).

problems arising from Kant's account of the role of the understanding in unifying the manifold that is provided by sensibility. It therefore does not play the decisive role in his response to Kant that some interpreters have attributed to it.

Hegel is particularly taken with what he sees as the tensions emerging within later sections of the B edition of the Deduction, points at which Hegel thinks Kant has begun to glimpse the genuine consequences of his position. Much of Kant's account highlights the contrast between intuition and understanding, and thus between intuition and concepts. Intuitions appear to provide "content" independently of the conceptualizing activity of thought. Yet Hegel sees this picture being complicated toward the end of the B Deduction. The issue concerns just how far the structuring activity of the understanding extends. While it is relatively clear that the categories constrain what can be a representation for me, in the second part of the B Deduction Kant seems to extend the argument beyond this subjective claim. In Pippin's words, Kant "clearly wants to establish that *objects* do conform to the categories, not that we must apply the categories to *whatever* sensory contact is delivered to us, and therewith to show that synthetic a priori judgments are possible."[14]

Kant develops this point through his account of the imagination, which will figure prominently in Hegel's *Faith and Knowledge*. In § 24, Kant focuses on the distinction between "intellectual synthesis" (*synthesis intellectualis*) and "figurative synthesis" (*synthesis speciosa*) (*KrV* B150–1). The former synthesis combines according to the categories but without input from sensibility; it "relates only to apperception," not to the sensible given.[15] The figurative synthesis, which Kant also labels the "transcendental synthesis of imagination," is the thinking of "synthetic unity of the apperception of the manifold of *a priori sensible intuition*—that being the condition under which all objects of our human intuition must necessarily stand" (*KrV* B150). In the figurative synthesis, the understanding affects sensibility:

> But inasmuch as its synthesis is an expression of spontaneity, which is determinative and not, like sense, determinable merely, and which is therefore able to determine sense *a priori* in respect of its form in accordance with the unity of apperception, imagination is to that extent a faculty which determines the sensibility *a priori*; and its synthesis of intuitions, conforming as it does to the *categories*, must be the transcendental synthesis of *imagination*. This synthesis is an action [*Wirkung*] of the understanding on the sensibility; and is its first application—and thereby the ground of all its other applications—to the objects of our possible intuition. (*KrV* B151–2)

[14] Pippin 2005, 32.

[15] My analysis here draws on Longuenesse 1998, 202. Longuenesse also argues for the continuity of Kant's view on this matter from the A Deduction to the B Deduction (1998, 205). See also Allison 2004, 189–93.

The imagination brings order to sensibility, as Longuenesse writes, "not by making clear what was already perceived in a confused way (as Leibniz thought), but by *generating* the sensible orderings (figure, succession, simultaneity . . .) that make possible reflection according to the forms of discursive combination."[16] Here, as Hegel will stress, the understanding is not simply parallel to sensibility but shapes sensibility itself—not as an a posteriori molding of something already there but as forming the sensible given itself.

This conception of the transcendental synthesis of imagination supports an account of the role of the categories in forming objects. Apperception and its synthetic unity, "as the source of all *combination*, applies to the manifold of *intuitions in general*, and in the guise of the *categories*, prior to all sensible intuition, to *objects in general*" (*KrV* B154). The categories thus constrain not only our own thinking and experience but also the objects. As Kant puts it a few pages later,

> We have now to explain the possibility of knowing *a priori*, by means of *categories*, whatever objects may *present themselves to our senses*, not indeed in respect of the form of their intuition, but in respect of the laws of their combination, and so, as it were, of prescribing laws to nature, and even of making nature possible. (*KrV* B159; see also B160–1)

Kant's language here sounds much like the kinds of claims for which Hegel is often ridiculed. Most importantly, depending upon exactly what we make of these passages, *they seem to call into question the possibility of considering the manifold generated by sensibility independently of the categories provided by the understanding*. The first of the two sources of knowledge, sensibility, thereby appears to lose its radical independence from the second, understanding.[17]

My goal here is not to adjudicate the vibrant debate over this matter within Kant scholarship but to highlight elements of Kant's position that Hegel understood to challenge the strict separation of intuition and understanding that is so prominent in other aspects of Kant's work. As Pippin is at pains to emphasize, to argue that they are not separable is not to claim that they are indistinguishable.[18] Nonetheless, if they cannot be separated in this manner, then Kant's strategy for preserving objectivity collapses, and an alternative will need to be found if we are to avoid the subjectivism that Hegel thinks plagues Kant's position.[19]

[16] Longuenesse 1998, 203, ellipsis hers.

[17] Allison is particularly clear on this point (2004, 80–2).

[18] See Pippin 1993 and 2005.

[19] In his valuable response to both Pippin and Ameriks, Robert Stern concurs with Pippin that the argument for the impossibility of a firm separation of intuition and concepts is central to Hegel's response to Kant, but uses this point to develop a different interpretation of Hegel's idealism than Pippin's (Stern 2008, especially 170–1). Stern is particularly helpful in identifying the range of interpretive options available: we by no means need to choose simply between Pippin's interpretation and a pre-critical metaphysics. Nonetheless, Stern's account gives too little attention to the consequences of Hegel's account of the spontaneity of thinking.

To briefly sum up the crucial aspects of Kant's legacy and their significance for Hegel, we can frame the issue in terms of the complex relation between intuitions and the pure concepts of the understanding. Initially, Kant presents these as two independent sources of knowledge. For a finite intellect, both are necessary in order for there to be knowledge. As Kant works out his account of combination and the role of concepts in this activity, particularly in the second part of the B Deduction, the strict separation between these two sources of knowledge seems to be complicated. Intuitions do not seem to be independent of concepts. Hegel will find this "complicating" to be a tension within Kant's thought that provides a point of entry for his immanent critique of Kant.

One way to think about Hegel's response is to view him as collapsing the distinction altogether, such that sensibility is not necessary for knowledge. That can be understood as positing an intuitive understanding of the sort that Kant says might be possible for God but is not possible for creatures such as ourselves. Many have read Hegel as moving in this direction, picking up on his interest in Kant's *KU* § 77. That typically leads one to think of the logic as being about the thinking of some superhuman entity and simultaneously an ontology and metaphysics. For this reason, the interpretation of this point constitutes a "watershed moment" for competing streams of Hegel scholarship.[20]

As we will see, however, this interpretation is by no means the only option. One need not see Hegel as collapsing this distinction; rather, the relation is best understood as a "relative antithesis."[21] Doing so enables us to see Hegel's project as extending Kant's rather than as fundamentally concerned with overcoming the limits Kant places on knowledge and thereby returning to a pre-Kantian metaphysics. More specifically, it provides an account of the spontaneity of thinking compatible with "access to 'extra-conceptual content.'"[22] Content is not simply generated a priori by the intellect alone, in the manner of the Kantian intuitive understanding. Yet what counts as a particular content is determined by the activity of thought. There is no meta-theoretical account of the relation between the thinking subject and a world independent of that subject.

HEGEL'S CRITIQUE OF KANT AND POST-KANTIAN IDEALISM IN THE EARLY JENA WRITINGS

Early in his time at Jena, Hegel published two pieces that demonstrate his engagement with these aspects of Kant's thought and their centrality to the motivating concerns and basic strategy of his philosophical project as a whole. Despite later developments in his thinking, *The Difference Between Fichte's*

[20] See Speight 2008, 22–3.

[21] Pippin 1993, 295. Pippin stresses this point in his responses to Sally Sedgwick and Miriam Wildenauer (Pippin 1993, 291–5 and Pippin 2005). See also Sedgwick 1993 and Wildenauer 2003.

[22] Pippin 1993, 291.

and Schelling's System of Philosophy (commonly referred to as the *Differenzschrift*) and *Faith and Knowledge, or the Reflective Philosophy of Subjectivity in the Complete Range of Its Forms as Kantian, Jacobian, and Fichtean Philosophy* set the direction of his response to Kant and the most significant post-Kantians. In so doing, these pieces illustrate his view that the response to these issues is integral to an adequate response to the social, political, and religious concerns so prominent in his writings from the 1790s. While Hegel does not provide an answer to the problems he identifies, he indicates a great deal about the requirements for a satisfactory solution to the problems.

Because they signal the basic orientation of his larger project, attending to these materials is essential if we are to avoid importing inappropriate preconceptions that significantly distort our interpretation of his mature philosophy of religion. They are also particularly worth examining because they are written when Hegel seems to be most under Schelling's influence. They make extensive use of Schelling's language, and at some points seem to abandon the Kantian project in favor of a monistic metaphysics. My treatment seeks to show that even here we can see that Hegel's thought is driven by its engagement with the Kantian problematic set out above and that even these most Schellingian of Hegel's writings should not lead us to construe his larger project in terms of a metaphysical Absolute or cosmic spirit monism.[23]

[23] In his discussion of Hegel's writings from this period, Paul Franks, for instance, argues that Hegel's critique of Fichte and the other reflection-philosophers rests on their failure to "bring the self and nature into a Holistic Monist system, as distinct expressions of one and the same absolute first principle. Thus, for Hegel, an adequately transcendental standpoint is, first and foremost, one that enables the fulfillment of the Holistic Monist requirement" (Franks 2005, 369). Franks' *All or Nothing: Systematicity, Transcendental Arguments, and Skepticism in German Idealism* (2005) is one of the most important recent statements of an alternative reading of the developments of German idealism. This impressive work pays close attention to the significance of so-called "minor" figures of this period, arguing that thinkers such as Maimon decisively shaped the way in which Kant's project was received by the subsequent generation. Through their influence the agenda for a German idealist system was set in the following terms: "to find a uniquely necessary, absolute first principle, heterogeneous with everything empirical, yet with demonstrable actuality; and to progressively derive from this principle, in uniquely necessary steps, the a priori conditions of experience and its objects, while demonstrating that these conditions have actuality within experience" (Franks 2005, 259). He interprets Hegel's *Faith and Knowledge* as focusing on "a Christian experience of incarnation" yet holds that Hegel had at that point not yet developed a complete response to the problems he saw in his predecessors (2005, 370). By contrast, I argue that by the time of *Faith and Knowledge*, religion did not play this role at more than a metaphorical level for Hegel. With regard to Hegel's mature position, Franks provides only a preliminary treatment but argues that Hegel does not there abandon his earlier understanding of the German idealist project (371–9). As Franks acknowledges, however, more evidence would be required to demonstrate the claim that Hegel's mature thought continues to pursue this program. By contrast, I see Hegel as holding closer to Kant's original project in crucial respects. While Maimon and others undoubtedly did infuse the discussion with Spinozistic concerns, as Franks argues, it is not unreasonable to expect Hegel to read these "Spinozistic demands" through Kantian lenses just as much as he would read the latter through the former. On the ambiguities of Hegel's relation to Schelling in these Jena writings, see also Pippin 1989, 60–73.

With these concerns in mind, I focus here on Hegel's response to Kant's theoretical philosophy—specifically on the spontaneity of thought—rather than on his comments explicitly on religion. Without seeing his response to former, we will not be in a position to properly interpret his mature views on the latter. At the end of the section, however, we will turn specifically to the consequences for the conception of God.

On the opening page of his 1801 *Differenzschrift*, Hegel writes, "[i]n the principle of the deduction of the categories Kant's philosophy is authentic idealism" (*DS* 9/79). Through his account of apperception in particular, Kant has opened the way for an account of reason that rises above the finite, dichotomous forms of cognition that Hegel characterizes as reflection. In his execution, however, Kant has fallen short, slipping back into the dichotomies and subjectivism that a genuine account of reason can and must overcome. Thus, in order to fulfill the promise while avoiding the pitfalls of Kant's innovation, "[t]he Kantian philosophy needed to have its spirit distinguished from its letter, and to have its purely speculative principle lifted out of the remainder that belonged to, or could be used for, the arguments of reflection [*räsonierenden Reflexion*]" (*DS* 9/79). This "spirit" of Kantian philosophy lies in its notion of thinking as spontaneous and a priori. Therein Kant grasps and demonstrates the inadequacy of empiricist accounts of thinking. More importantly, by pursuing the consequences of this point more adequately than Kant himself did, we can—Hegel contends—overcome Kant's failures and make the decisive step from subjective to absolute idealism.

Faith and Knowledge offers Hegel's most developed early Jena articulation of his response to Kant. Hegel frames the piece in terms of recent efforts to reconcile faith and reason, arguing that these attempts are characterized by fundamental dualisms that undermine both authentic religion and authentic reason (*GuW* 287/55). He portrays all of these projects as philosophies of reflection—that is, as accepting a fundamental opposition between a reflecting subject and the object of reflection. Despite reason's appearing to emerge victorious, in the reflection-philosophies of Kant, Fichte, and Jacobi, "philosophy has made itself the handmaid of a faith once more," by "placing that which is better than it in a *faith outside and above* itself, as a *beyond* [*Jenseits*]" (*GuW* 288/56). The absolute is projected beyond.

The origin of this problem—shared by all philosophies of reflection—lies in Kant's theoretical philosophy. Hegel therefore develops his response to these philosophies by tracing the way in which he sees Kant—particularly in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*—as having come across an authentic notion of reason yet failing to appreciate it as more than a mere thought that lacks reality (*GuW* 332/96). Kant expresses a genuine conception of reason at several points, all of which concern the identity that makes combination possible; but this idea of reason becomes most apparent in the deduction of the categories, specifically in the account of the synthetic

unity of apperception (*GuW* 304/69). This synthetic activity is spontaneous and is apparent in the combining activity of the productive imagination (*GuW* 305/69–70).[24] This spontaneous unity is not a result or in any sense empirical. Rather, "[t]his original synthetic unity must be conceived, not as produced out of opposites, but as a truly necessary, absolute, original identity of opposites" (*GuW* 305/70). Kant sees apperception's role in uniting the manifold of intuitions, but he fails to pursue its further significance in revealing an original synthetic unity that is prior to the division of subject and predicate or subject and object. Although the term "synthetic unity" might make it appear that this identity presupposes opposition, "in Kant the synthetic unity is undeniably the absolute and original identity of self-consciousness, which of itself posits the judgment absolutely and *a priori*" (*GuW* 306/71). This original, synthetic unity posits the opposition rather than overcoming it a posteriori. Thus,

> we must not take the faculty of [productive] imagination as the middle term [*Mittelglied*] that gets inserted between an existing absolute subject and an absolute existing world. The productive imagination must rather be recognized as what is primary and original, as that out of which subjective I and objective world first sunder themselves. (*GuW* 308/73)

While such language is clearly the kind of language that Paul Franks takes to support a holistic monist reading of this piece, the identity in question need not be interpreted in such terms.[25] Rather, by focusing on the Kantian problems with which Hegel is here grappling, we can understand Hegel to be claiming that no particular can be cognitively significant independently of the spontaneous activity of the imagination. As we will see in greater detail below, this move does not require Hegel to collapse intuition and understanding; they can be distinguished, even if not separated. Because sensibility does not provide a second, separate source for knowledge, there is no "gap" between the way the world is divided up by our concepts and some world of objects independent of these concepts.[26]

Kant's principal formulations, according to Hegel, relativize this unity by conceiving it such that it "opposes itself to, and is radically affected by, the particular as something alien to it and empirical" (*GuW* 309/74). The subject

[24] "So, then, we must not place Kant's merit in this, that he put the forms, as expressed in the categories, into human cognitive faculty, as if it were the stake of an absolute finitude. We must find it, rather, in his having put the Idea of authentic *a priority* in the form of transcendental imagination; and also in his having put the beginning of the Idea of reason in the understanding itself. For he regarded thinking, or the form, not as something subjective, but as something in itself; not as something formless, not as empty apperception, but as understanding, as true form, namely as triplicity" (*GuW* 316/79–80).

[25] See Franks 2005, 369 and note 23 above.

[26] For a more extensive analysis of this account of identity and its relation to Kant's project, see Pippin 1989, 79–86, especially 83–4. See also Pippin 2005.

is juxtaposed with a world that is "in itself falling to pieces, and only gets objective coherence and support, substantiality, multiplicity, even actuality and possibility, through the good offices of human self-consciousness and understanding" (*GuW* 309/74). It thus appears that "the things in themselves and the sensations are without objective determinateness—and with respect to the sensations and their empirical reality nothing remains but to think that sensation comes from the things in themselves" (*GuW* 310/74; see Kant *KrV* Bxxvi). Sensation—but not understanding—receives particular content from a reality that is independent of the (merely relative and subjective) identity. The identity at issue becomes a merely subjective identity that leaves things in themselves as an absolute other—rather than the original synthetic unity that posits the difference between subject and object in the first place. The objectivity of the categories is thereby merely contingent, relative to human cognition, and Kant falls into the dualism for which so many of Hegel's generation faulted him (*GuW* 313–14/77–8).

For Hegel, this dualism is embedded deep within Kant's thought and pervades both his theoretical and practical philosophy:

> something that is not determined by this identity [the unity of self-consciousness] must supervene to it in an incomprehensible fashion; there must be an additional, a *plus*, of something empirical, something alien. This supervening of a B to the pure I-concept [which is A] is called experience, while the supervening of A to B, when B is posited first, is called rational action, [and the formula for both is] A: A + B. The A in A + B is the objective unity of self-consciousness, B is the empirical, the content of experience, a manifold bound together through the unity A. But B is something foreign to A, something not contained in it. And the *plus* itself, i.e., the bond between the binding activity and the manifold, is what is incomprehensible. This *plus* was rationally cognized as productive imagination. But if this productive imagination is merely a property of the subject, of the human being and his understanding, it abandons of itself its [place in the] middle, which alone makes it what it is, and becomes subjective. (*GuW* 329/92–3)

Though the pure I-concept, A, is supposed to do the binding and connecting, Kant's formulation requires something more, the *plus*, to connect this A to an independent empirical reality. This plus is the productive imagination, which provides the original unity; but insofar as Kant conceives of this imagination merely as a faculty of an empirical subject standing over against "something alien," he renders it incapable of effecting the connection that it was first conceived to provide. It becomes part of the A rather than the plus that is required.

Though Kant has, according to Hegel, already come across reason itself in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, his *Critique of the Power of Judgment* goes significantly further in indicating the direction that an adequate idealism must take to overcome the shortcomings of the first *Critique*. Here,

particularly in the discussion of teleological judgment in §§ 76–7, Kant further develops a conception of thinking as spontaneously active and self-determining rather than applying fixed rules to passively received data. Kant here contrasts human understanding with a hypothetically posited "intuitive understanding" that is purely spontaneous rather than based in sensibility (*KU* 5:406). In its independence of experience, an intuitive understanding would involve no contingency and thus overcome the contrast between possibility and actuality (5:402, 5:407). For Kant, then, an intuitive understanding is necessarily superhuman—"another (higher) understanding than the human one" (*KU* 5:406). Although it is neither possible nor necessary to prove the existence of such an intuitive understanding, "we are led to that idea" through a consideration of nature. In this discussion,

> Kant has here before him both the Idea of a reason in which possibility and actuality are absolutely identical and its appearance as cognitive faculty wherein they are separated. In the experience of his thinking he finds both thoughts. However, in choosing between the two his nature despised the necessity of thinking the rational, of thinking an intuitive spontaneity and decided without reservation for appearance. (*GuW* 326/89–90)

Kant glimpsed an authentic notion of reason but turned away, toward a subjective account of understanding limited to human (and, conceivably, other finite rational) subjects. Kant recognizes the subjectivity of such understanding yet "this subjectivity and finitude of the maxim are to stay as absolute cognition" (*GuW* 327/91). Hegel, however, finds in Kant's conception of the intuitive understanding elements of the identity that the productive imagination partially represents but that Kant ultimately undermines (see *GuW* 329/92–3). Crucially, however, to say that it possesses elements of a better conception is not to say that Hegel claims—either for human beings or for a divinity—precisely Kant's intuitive understanding. Kant's account of the intuitive understanding foregrounds the vital question of whether intuition and understanding can be separated, but it does not provide the emphasis on spontaneity that is central to Hegel's own response to the problems.[27]

[27] For Hegel, Kant's discussion of beauty also demonstrates this overcoming of the radical alterity he constructs between understanding and intuition. Beauty is significant because it cannot be explained in terms of adherence to a law: "With respect to beauty in its conscious form [*die ideelle Form der Schönheit*] Kant sets up the Idea of an imagination lawful by itself, of lawfulness without law and of free concord of imagination and understanding" (*GuW* 322/86). Kant's explanation, however, refers this back to the supersensuous realm; beauty's irreducibility to a static law or rule is attributed to the impossibility of intuiting the supersensuous. For Hegel, however,

> Since beauty is the Idea as experienced or more correctly, as intuited, the form of opposition between intuition and concept falls away. Kant cognizes this falling away of the antithesis negatively in the concept of a supersensuous realm in general. But he does not cognize that as beauty, it is positive, it is intuited, or to use his own language, it is

For Hegel, these contradictions within Kant's thought not only result in an inadequate treatment of epistemological problems but also underlie his inadequate conception of God. By positing the intuitive understanding as a superhuman understanding, Kant offers a conception of God as providing a regulative principle for our thinking. This God is not known but rather stands as a beyond, providing the reconciliation called for by thinking. At the conclusion of this discussion of Kant, in a brief but important discussion of his practical philosophy, Hegel links Kant's failure to grasp a more adequate conception of reason—to which he was so close—with the need for a conception of God that bridges the dualism and opposition fundamental in his thinking. In his

> practical faith . . . we shall find nothing else expressed . . . but the Idea that reason does have absolute reality, that in this Idea the antithesis of freedom and necessity is completely suspended, that infinite thought is at the same time absolute reality—or in short we shall find the absolute identity of thought and being. (*GuW* 330–1/94)

Faith unifies what Kant's subjective conception of theoretical reason cannot, so that Kant's failure to find reason generates a conception of faith beyond knowledge (even though not beyond practical reason).[28]

While Hegel's discussion in this section is more explicitly concerned with his critique of Kant than the elaboration of his own view, it nonetheless indicates a great deal about Hegel's alternative. Hegel argues for the "reality" of an understanding that overcomes a dualism of (though does not necessarily collapse) intuition and concepts, resembling the intuitive understanding that Kant conceives as superhuman. He also claims the possibility of knowledge of the identities and reconciliations—of possibility and actuality as well as of morality and happiness—that Kant contends must be objects of faith.

For this reason, it is easy to conclude that Hegel's response to Kant entails claiming to know that which Kant holds can only be an object of faith—not knowledge. More specifically, Hegel can appear to be defending knowledge of a God that is understood largely in theistic terms that have deep roots in Christianity and are advanced by Kant. In this interpretive line, Hegel makes this God rational and knowable without fundamentally transforming the conception of God.

> given in experience. . . Still less does he cognize that it is only because the perennial antithesis of the supersensuous and the sensuous is made basic once for all that the supersensuous is taken to be neither knowable nor intuitable (*GuW* 323–4/87–8).

Hegel links Kant's division between sensuous and supersensuous realms to intuition and understanding. Kant's discussion of beauty is one of the points at which one sees the untenability of Kant's manner of separating intuition and understanding, revealing the direction in which Hegel thinks we need to advance beyond Kant.

[28] Although Kant stresses the close connection between faith and practical reason, Hegel focuses instead on the juxtaposition that Kant has established between faith and the knowledge that theoretical reason can produce.

To respond to Kant in this manner, however, is to leap from one unjustified presupposition to another. For to conceive of the identity that is in some sense at the heart of this project in terms of an entity that is other to the world is to reinstate precisely the dualism that Hegel seeks to overcome. Such an absolute would be limited by the world that stands over against it and therefore not absolute.[29] Thus, a more adequate construal of Hegel's response to Kant will be one that avoids recreating the dualism for which he criticizes Kant, and this will be one that eschews any conception of God as other. Hegel argues that if we properly pursue the guiding speculative insights in Kant's thought, we will not need to posit this kind of God. Crucially, just because Kant seemed to be led by these considerations in the direction of a divine intellect, it does not mean that Hegel was.[30]

While Hegel's mature account of God will draw directly upon his alternative to Kant on these points, the conception of God must be interpreted on the basis of an adequate interpretation of this response. Hegel's treatment of Kant in works such as *Faith and Knowledge* already suggests two points essential to the interpretation of Hegel's mature philosophy of religion: the basis for Hegel's account of God lies in his confrontation with the problem of thought's spontaneity that Hegel took to be at the heart of post-Kantian German idealism. Second, in interpreting Hegel's use of the term "God"—or related terms such as "divine"—we cannot simply take for granted meanings of these terms borrowed from more conventional usage; their significance is radically under dispute in Hegel's milieu, and his engagement with this debate is clearly expressed in the writings that set the course of his mature philosophical project.

To hold that Hegel's response to Kant should be interpreted from this perspective is to view as central to his entire philosophical project the development of a non-empiricist account of thinking—not the resurrection of more classical metaphysics. We must grasp the original, synthetic activity not as some transcendent entity but as thinking itself, without identifying it with a particular subject (especially a superhuman entity). Any account of this thinking that conceives it fundamentally in terms of the activity of a particular subject falls into the contradictions traced in relation to Kant: it presupposes the distinction between subject and world that is to be explained and is consequently unable to explain how this chasm is bridged.

[29] See, for instance, Hegel's discussion of the genuine and spurious infinite in *WL* 1:166–71/150–4.

[30] Pippin makes a similar point in arguing that Hegel "is in some sense conflating what Kant is saying about the *idea* of nature's origins and a putatively *divine intellect* with a claim about the proper relation between the *human intellect* and sensibility. But this sort of claim about the divinity of the human is certainly not foreign to Hegel's idiosyncratic theology" (1997, 141, emphasis in original). The reference to Hegel's "idiosyncratic theology," however, conceals precisely what we hope to illuminate.

Vindicating this reading of Hegel's project, however, requires developing it in a way that does not fall back into the subjectivism that he is so concerned to critique. An instructive point at which to do so is Hegel's treatment of Fichte, because this interpretation of Hegel can appear close to the view he criticizes as Fichte's in both the *Differenzschrift* and *Faith and Knowledge*. Fichte represents a step beyond Kant that attempts to overcome the dualism Hegel sees as central to Kant's project, yet Hegel judges Fichte to have reproduced the dualism he seeks to overcome.[31] The most pertinent point arises in Fichte's attempt to account for the "determinacy" of the world. Kant, Fichte, and Hegel are all concerned to explain how "reality" appears to have a fixity that is independent of our intelligence. That is, it is not simply subject to our whims, and some descriptions of the world seem more adequate than others. For Kant, things in themselves play a key role in this account. Fichte explains this determinacy in terms of the "I posit[ing] itself as determined by non-I" (*DS* 63/128, quoting Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*). In this respect, the I is conditioned by some other, "by an impact [*Anstoß*]" (*DS* 63/128; see also *GuW* 397–8/157). Fichte thus allows empiricism back in; as Hegel expresses it in *Faith and Knowledge*, "[o]rdinary empiricism suffers this change: it gets deduced" (*GuW* 403/162). In positing this non-I, however, "[t]he I posits itself as not posited. The positing of the opposite in general, the positing of something that is absolutely undetermined by the I, is itself a positing of [and by] the I" (*DS* 63/128). The move, then, is incoherent: the I posits something as not posited by itself and simultaneously undermines its own self-identity by positing itself as a result of I and not-I. Hegel, by contrast, does

[31] As Hegel argues early in the *Differenzschrift*, the identity Fichte achieves remains conditioned by an empirical other and is therefore conditioned rather than absolute. Fichte conceives of an "intellectual intuition [*intellektuelle Anschauung*]" as "nothing but activity, doing, intuiting; it is only present in the pure spontaneity which produces it and which it produces. This act tears itself away from everything empirical, manifold, and opposite; it lifts itself to the unity of thinking, to I = I, to the identity of subject and object" (*DS* 54/120–1). Yet, rather than grasping this activity as an original unity, Fichte juxtaposes it with other forms of consciousness, with objects other than the I: "I = I is in this regard opposed to an infinite objective world" (*DS* 54/121). Dualism remains. The identity and self-determining spontaneity expressed in Fichte's I = I is relativized by its juxtaposition with a world that is posited as independent of the I. In delineating Fichte's position, Hegel contrasts it with both dogmatic idealism and dogmatic realism. He views the former as reducing the objective to the subjective and the latter as reducing the subjective to the objective; "[c]onsistent realism denies consciousness as spontaneous self-positing activity" (*DS* 62/127). (The latter point stresses the way in which Hegel holds that any exclusively mechanistic account of reality will be unable to support a viable account of thought; thinking is "a spontaneous activity of connecting opposites and the connection is the positing of the opposites as identical," and "[a]s soon as the realist admits that there is thinking, the analysis of thinking will lead to I = I" and thus undermine the dogmatic aspects of this realism [*DS* 62/127].) In contrast to either of these forms of reductionism, Fichte puts the subjective and objective on the same level—"in the same rank of reality and certainty"—yet fails to unify them (*DS* 63/127). For Hegel, then, a crucial challenge will be to avoid the reductionism he sees in dogmatic approaches while also not falling into the dualism Kant and Fichte perpetuate.

not claim that the particulars are simply posited by the self but that they only have significance and contribute to the constitution of objects—and thus are what they are—by virtue of the activity of thought.

Juxtaposed with an empirical world, the I conceived as Fichte does is abstract and empty. Hegel also pursues the implications of this emptiness in Fichte's practical philosophy, arguing that Fichte's inability to provide reconciliation appears in practical philosophy as the inability to reconcile a pure, autonomous drive with natural drives. Natural drives are then conceived as standing over against the self as an other, and the self cannot generate practical content out of itself. As a result, the state must provide this content and—because it exists as an authority over against natural drives—it is necessarily totalitarian (*DS* 84–7/146–9; see also *GuW* 418/176). The more general point is that Hegel thinks the failure to overcome dualism at the theoretical level has dramatic consequences for conceptualizing political life. A satisfactory solution to a fragmented social life requires a theoretical philosophy that overcomes the dualism intrinsic to Kant, Fichte, and Jacobi.

Hegel's account of the failure of Kant's and Fichte's theoretical philosophies justifies a broader rejection of the conceptions of faith entailed by "the reflection-philosophy of subjectivity" exemplified by Kant, Fichte, as well as Jacobi. All three generate a dualism that sets the infinite over against the finite, the absolute over against the phenomenal world, in such a way that both are absolute and neither is: "The fundamental principle common to the philosophies of Kant, Jacobi, and Fichte is, then, the absoluteness of finitude and, resulting from it, the absolute antithesis of finitude and infinity, reality and ideality, the sensuous and the supersensuous, and the beyondness of what is truly real and absolute" (*GuW* 295–6/62).[32] On one hand, the phenomenal world appears to be everything, with the supersensuous world being nothing more than a kind of place-holder for a great unknown. On the other, what we know are merely subjective appearances, and reality lies on the other side, beyond us. Both poles are relativized by the other without being reconciled. In this account of the dichotomy, the original unity, "the third, which is the true first, the eternal, beyond this antithesis," is lost rather than identified with the spontaneity of thought at the heart of reason (*GuW* 293/60).

Together, these three thinkers represent all possible forms of the principle of Protestant subjectivity. As Hegel expresses it in a passage worth quoting at length,

> The great form of the world spirit that has come to cognizance of itself in these philosophies, is the principle of the North, and from the religious point of view, of Protestantism. This principle is subjectivity for which beauty and truth present

[32] On the basic differences between the forms in which they develop this principle, see *GuW* 296/62.

> themselves in feelings and persuasions, in love and understanding. Religion builds its temples and altars in the heart of the individual. In sighs and prayers he seeks for the God whom he denies to himself in intuition, because of the risk that the understanding will cognize what is intuited as a mere thing, reducing the sacred grove to mere timber. Of course, the inner must be externalized; intention must attain actuality in action; immediate religious sentiment must be expressed in external gesture; and faith, though it flees from the objectivity of cognition, must become objective to itself in thoughts, concepts, and words. But the understanding scrupulously distinguishes the objective from the subjective, and the objective is what is accounted worthless and null. (*GuW* 289–90/57)

It is remarkable how clearly Hegel here presents this conception of religion as reason's other. "Faith" and "religion" are associated with the heart and feeling and separated from reason and cognition. This general conception of religion, whose modern Western form was forged largely in response to the Enlightenment, has since become largely taken for granted in much of our public discourse. Hegel identifies it precisely and challenges it at the moment that it is congealing. He describes this notion of faith juxtaposed with reason as a newly born peace between reason and faith that has "as little of reason in it as it has of authentic faith" (*GuW* 288/55). Although Hegel will later become more appreciative of the subjective side of faith as a necessary element in an adequate religious view, he will always oppose this family of conceptions of faith as an adequate account of religion.

While Hegel finds this conception of faith and its juxtaposition with reason in all three figures, Jacobi presents its starkest form: "Jacobi's way of doing philosophy comes close in its principle to the subjective beauty of Protestantism. For it exalts the individual and the particular above the concept and emphasizes subjective vitality" (*GuW* 389/148). In a strikingly critical portrayal of Protestantism, Hegel writes,

> Protestantism does not admit a communion [*Umgang*] with God and a consciousness of the divine that consists in the saturating objectivity of a cult and in which *this* nature and *this* universe are enjoyed in the present and seen in a sight that is in itself clear. Instead it makes communion with God and consciousness of the divine into something inward that maintains its fixed form of inwardness; it makes them into a yearning for a beyond and a future. Although this nostalgia cannot be united with its eternal object, it has its beauty and its infinite joy in this: its object is in truth what is eternal, and it does not try to trap it in order to get something back for itself. (*GuW* 389/148)[33]

Despite the largely critical tone of this account of Protestantism, Hegel also demonstrates his appreciation. Compared to Kant, Jacobi comes much closer

[33] This attitude toward even the highest form of Christianity—as Hegel views it—also characterizes his portrayal of religion in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Lewis 2008b).

to what Hegel finds valuable in this form of faith: "in Jacobi Protestant subjectivity seems to return out of the Kantian conceptual form to its true shape, to a subjective beauty of feeling [*Empfindung*] and to a lyrical yearning for heaven" (*GuW* 387/147). Jacobi values and stresses this faith over the conceptual concerns that are so prominent in Kant's work. Thus, he appears as one of Kant's most ardent critics, and Hegel views him as the opposite pole from Kant within the sphere of the philosophy of reflection. Nonetheless, he shares with Kant a conception of the supernatural, supersensuous, and infinite in absolute antithesis to the finite. Moreover, for Hegel, Jacobi's thought is already permeated by reflection, such that its "faith" is "cast out of that state of innocence and unreflectedness which alone makes them capable of being beautiful, devout, and religious" (*GuW* 388/147). Even Jacobi's thought is already too much a product of reflection and the understanding to fully represent the most valuable and beautiful elements of Protestantism.

Within his discussion of Jacobi, Hegel includes a brief discussion of Friedrich Schleiermacher that, despite its respect for Schleiermacher, portrays the latter's early thought in illuminating contrast to Hegel's own approach to religion. Hegel holds that "Jacobi's principle has in fact attained this highest level in the *Speeches on Religion*" (*GuW* 391/150). For Hegel, Schleiermacher's portrayal of nature as a comprehensive universe rather than a collection of "finite facts" partially overcomes the antithesis between a finite, phenomenal world and an infinite, supersensuous beyond. Yet in Schleiermacher's *Speeches* this overcoming is achieved only by the "virtuosity of the religious artist" (*GuW* 391/150). The unity or reconciliation remains subjective and particular:

> this subjective element is supposed to constitute the essential vitality and truth both in the exposition of one's own intuition of the universe and in its production in others; art is supposed to be forever without works of art; and the freedom of the highest intuition is supposed to consist in singularity and the possession of personal originality [*in dem Für-sich-etwas-Besonderes-Haben*]. (*GuW* 391–2/151)

The subjectivism against which Hegel here reacts involves an elitism completely at odds with Hegel's concern for a civil religion. A religion tailored to the literati and other cultural elites of Berlin salons will be entirely incapable of providing the broader social cohesion Hegel seeks from religion.[34] It appeals to the particularity of feeling rather than the commonality of reason. Because religion is thereby based in particularities rather than being common and objective, multiple congregations—shaped by the distinctiveness of their own leaders—emerge and diverge: "little congregations and peculiarities assert

[34] Drawing on Karl Rosenkranz's writings on Hegel's lectures in Jena, Paul Franks highlights Hegel's rejection of the idea that truth is available only to a gifted few with "innate or divine gifts" (2005, 374–5).

themselves and multiply *ad infinitum*" (*GuW* 392/151). Hegel describes the resulting fragmentation as a "pervasive atomism" that "fits very well the enlightened separation of church and state" (*GuW* 392/152). The religious intuition of the religious virtuoso is not "to express itself properly in laws, and achieve its objectivity and reality in the body of a people and of a universal church" (*GuW* 393/152). Whereas Hegel is interested in a *Volksreligion* that provides social glue for people and institutions, he views Schleiermacher's early conception of religion as the opposite: based in particularity, this religion fragments society and is deliberately constructed to avoid a grounding role in social and political life.[35]

Hegel's strategy for a religious conception that avoids the pitfalls of dualism between faith and reason lies in rejecting the dualisms that have been allowed to creep into idealist philosophy. Although Hegel does not develop his alternative in this work, he provides some indication of the resulting claims on broadly religious matters. Where Hegel quotes Jacobi claiming that "*Either* God exists and exists *outside* me, a living being subsisting apart [*ein lebendiges, für sich bestehendes Wesen*]; *or else* I am God. *There is no third way*," Hegel argues for a third way (*GuW* 410–11/169). In doing so, he rejects a notion of God as a transcendent being as well as a view that absolutizes the subject: "there is no *outside* for God, and hence . . . God is not an entity that subsists *apart*, one that is determined by something outside it . . . . Hence the *Either-Or*, which is a principle of all formal logic and of the understanding that has renounced reason, is abolished without trace in the absolute middle" (*GuW* 411/169). Crucially, in describing this God as the identity of being and thought, he links it to the conception of original identity and synthetic unity at the heart of his response to Kant. Thus, for Hegel, "God" will have to be understood in relation to this original identity. This point cannot be emphasized enough. This connection to Hegel's confrontation with Kant's legacy determines Hegel's usage of religious language, so that this language must be interpreted in relation to this philosophical project rather than by presupposing meanings of these terms imported from without. Despite the use of traditional language of "God," Hegel presents a dramatic departure from central elements of theism. His absolute here is not the "highest being" of traditional metaphysics.[36] Moreover, in its overcoming of the dualism between this world and the absolute, Hegel's vision presents "the world as hallowed in its essence" (*GuW* 423/181). This world is not other to the absolute.

[35] Schleiermacher's later writings develop his thought in a direction that qualifies the elitism of the *Speeches*. See in particular his discussion of theology as a practical discipline in his *Brief Outline of Theology as a Field of Study* (1990). I am grateful to Andrew Dole for conversations on this issue.

[36] Moreover, as Stephen Crites notes, Hegel does not here identify his alternative with Christianity (1998, 196).

HEGEL'S RESPONSE: THE LOGIC

These essays from Hegel's first years in Jena illuminate the problems that Hegel sought to solve, the inadequacies he found in recent attempts to solve them, as well as some of the criteria that an adequate solution would need to satisfy. The *Differenzschrift* and *Faith and Knowledge* thus show the basic direction of Hegel's response to the Kantian legacy as well as how this engagement both connects with his long-standing concerns about social integration and provides the interpretive key to his mature philosophical project. For all that these pieces offer, however, they do not develop Hegel's own solution.[37] For that, we must turn to later writings.

The key to understanding Hegel's response lies in properly appreciating the project of Hegel's logic: tracing the spontaneous movement of thinking itself. This section of Hegel's mature system places in relief the elements of his thought that are simultaneously central to his reworking of the problems arising out of Kant and essential to the interpretation of his philosophy of religion. Properly grasping the project of the logic is essential to understanding the precise manner in which the logic undergirds the philosophy of religion.

The present analysis of the logic therefore seeks to provide a conception of the larger project of the logic that shows the centrality of Kantian problems and provides the background necessary to the interpretation of the philosophy of religion. Focusing the treatment in this manner enables us to navigate the almost impossible task of providing a brief discussion of this extraordinarily difficult material. Toward this end, I begin with an overview of central elements and then turn to one of the ways in which Hegel presents this material (in the preliminary sections of the *Encyclopaedia Logic*). Finally, I consider the culmination of the logic, as this section both clarifies the larger project and plays a crucial role in Hegel's conception of religion.[38]

The logic considers thought in abstraction from its instantiation in the spheres of nature and spirit—i.e. pure thought. In focusing on thinking itself, Hegel extends Kant's focus on the spontaneous activity identified as the synthetic unity of apperception. This spontaneous activity of thinking itself

[37] Hegel's own philosophical project was at this point very much a work in process. Over the next few years, Hegel tried out—and rejected—many approaches to developing his own system. Works promised to publishers never appeared, and drafts of a system were abandoned part way through as Hegel chose to start all over rather than to revise (Crites 1998, 213–4). For excellent work on this period, see Crites 1998, 143–287 and Harris 1983. Despite the richness of these materials, tracing these developments is not essential to our ability to interpret his mature philosophy of religion. Themes already introduced in the 1790s endure, and our earlier treatment of them provides the necessary background to these aspects of Hegel's mature thought.

[38] Hegel presents two mature versions of the logic (or more, if we count the different editions): the outline version found in the first of the three parts of the *Encyclopaedia* and the much longer *Science of Logic*. For the present purposes, the differences between the versions are not decisive, so I draw on both works.

generates a path that proceeds from the simplest determination of thought—pure being—to the conclusion of this movement in the absolute Idea. New moments or determinations of thought arise as a result of contradictions immanent within the previous moment; that is, thinking through one moment requires the articulation and invocation of a further determination of thought. The movement from one determination of thought to the next thus occurs spontaneously, driven by thinking itself, not by conforming to a structure that originates in an object that is independent of this thinking or by having these forms dictated from without in any other way.

The thinking under consideration here is implicit in all our mental activity, not merely in our most abstract and theoretical thinking: "The activity of thought which is at work in all our representations, purposes, interests, and actions is, as we have said, unconsciously [*bewußtlos*] busy (natural logic)" (*WL* 1:26/36). This logic is "natural" in that it is unconscious and automatic. The task of the science of logic is to make these determinations of thought—which are implicit in all our intuiting, representing, willing, and so forth—explicit: "To bring to consciousness this *logical* nature which animates spirit, moves and works in it, this is the task" (*WL* 1:27/37). The "nature" in this passage is not a reified subject independent of human beings but simply refers to the character of thought as the underlying activity that animates our mental life. The study of logic thus seeks to strip away the particularities and contingencies of the shapes in which these basic determinations of thought generally appear, thereby focusing our attention on thought in itself.

To claim that the logic considers "pure thinking," however, does not entail that thought is separate from social existence. As the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as well as the third part of the *Encyclopaedia*—the philosophy of spirit—argue, thought depends on a social context; it is intrinsically intersubjective.[39] Nonetheless, at this point in our examination of the logic, this aspect of Hegel's thought need not be central.[40] That is precisely the significance of Hegel's attempt to consider thinking in itself here in the logic.

Another aspect of thought's relation to the material and social world, however, is essential to grasping the logic's central thrust. These determinations of thought are not merely forms of thought by which an independently

[39] See especially *Enz.* §§ 424–39. This point also raises the complex question of the *Phenomenology's* relation to the mature system. The standpoint of the logic—as well as its starting point—is articulated in the preliminary sections of both the *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopaedia Logic*. Hegel initially presents this starting point as the result of the work of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, but he ultimately claims that this starting point is sufficiently justified by *Enz.* §§ 19–83 and that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is not required as a point of entry to the system. See *WL* 1:17–18/28–9 and *Enz.* § 25 A.

[40] These elements of Hegel's view have been extremely important to recent post-Kantian interpretations of Hegel. See especially Pinkard 1994 and 2002 and Brandom 1985 and 2002. I return to these issues in the account of spirit in Chapter 3.

given content is structured. As we will see in greater detail below, they constitute the content as much as the form: "[T]he *nature*, the peculiar *essence*, that which is genuinely *permanent* and *substantial* in the manifoldness and contingency of appearance and fleeting manifestation, is the *concept* of the thing [*Sache*], the *immanent universal [das in ihr selbst Allgemeine]* . . ." (*WL* 1:26/36). Thinking makes the object the object that it is.

The decisive questions for the interpretation of the logic—as well as for the philosophy of religion—turn on the interpretation of this claim. Hegel does not claim that that thinking determines all of the contingent features that we associate with specific objects. As Hegel notes, for instance, thinking itself cannot determine the number of species of parrot that exist (*WL* 2:524/804; see also *Enz.* § 16 A). We do not simply "make up" the world. Nor does the logic treat a superhuman entity that creates the world by thinking it. The grandiosity of Hegel's claims—which prompts his often religious language—suggest to some that the subject of this thinking is God. To introduce such a subject, however, would be antithetical to the project.

Rather, Hegel argues that the particulars that are necessary for the determinacy of our experience and knowledge are actively taken up by the thinking subject—not passively received. They do not constitute givens in any meaningful sense independently of thinking itself. Consequently, their meaning and import depend upon thought.[41] Hegel thereby reworks Kant's account of the relation between sensibility and understanding but does not describe or appropriate Kant's intuitive understanding, in which sensibility is not required. For Hegel, the idea of such an intuitive understanding is incoherent, because he does not posit the fundamental gap between sensibility and understanding that this intuitive understanding presupposes. For Hegel, intuition is distinguished from concepts, but not separated.

If thinking determines the significance of any particular, thinking ultimately constitutes the object. That is, thinking makes the object the object that it is. As Hegel continues in the passage quoted above,

> each human individual though infinitely unique is so primarily because he is a *human*, and each individual animal is such individual primarily because it is an animal: if this is true, then it would be impossible to say what such an individual could still be if this foundation were removed, no matter how richly endowed the individual might be with other predicates, if, that is, this foundation can equally be called a predicate like the others. (*WL* 1:26/36–7)

The particular exemplar can only be that by virtue of belonging to a larger category of objects. Hegel here makes the point in a general, introductory

[41] As Pippin writes, "the qualities picked out and held together in some concept acquire a determinate sense only by virtue of the role such a concept can and cannot play in an interrelated network of judgments" (1989, 238).

manner that the particulars are not simply fabricated by thought, but that they only have meaning and we only have objects by virtue of conceptual activity.[42]

Hegel does not think that we therefore need to conceive of a realm radically other to our thinking that underwrites these particulars—a realm of "things in themselves," for instance, that are in some way responsible for these particular characteristics. To do so is to posit such "things in themselves" as constituting objects independently of thinking. Instead, Hegel argues that the account of the source of these particularities will be an account always given within—not prior to or independently of—the movement of thinking itself.

Because the above position is the result developed over the course of the *Phenomenology* as well as much of the *Science of Logic*, it is difficult to present concisely. Early in the preliminary material of the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, however, Hegel elaborates central elements of this view in a presentation that is both concise and relatively systematic, even if condensed. Following the introduction but before the first subdivision of the logic ("The Doctrine of Being"), Hegel offers what he labels a "Preliminary Conception" (*Enz.* §§ 19–83). Before treating the three major alternative positions toward objectivity, the opening pages of this section (§§19–25) articulate crucial moves that define Hegel's position. The section is also more accessible than certain of Hegel's accounts, because he deliberately relates his points to conventional understandings of the nature of thought. These advantages make the passage worth examining in detail, even though it presents the position without providing the entire philosophical justification for it.

Hegel begins with the crucial claim, "The logic is the science of *the pure Idea*, that is, of the Idea in the abstract element of *thinking*" (*Enz.* § 19). The Idea is not a thing but the self-moving unity of concepts and objectivity. While the unity that underwrites the possibility of this conception is the product of the *Phenomenology*—and for that reason can be presupposed for the purpose of the present inquiry—the more important point is that any definition given at this point is necessarily provisional, because the Idea will itself be defined over the course of the inquiry. What is crucial in the present passage is that we are here dealing with this "object" as it appears in pure thinking, stripped of the contingencies that mark its appearance in the spheres of nature and spirit. For that reason, we are here focusing on thinking alone, its pure movement. Hegel elaborates in the Remark:

> It can, of course, be said that logic is the science of *thinking*, of its *determinations and laws*, but thinking as such constitutes only the *universal determinacy* or the *element* in which the Idea is logical. The Idea is thinking, not as formal thinking, but as the self-developing totality of its own peculiar determinations and laws,

[42] My interpretation is deeply informed by the work of Robert Pippin and Terry Pinkard; see especially Pippin 1989, 175–260; 1993; and 2005 and Pinkard 2003, 246–65. For an alternative reading of the project of Hegel's logic, see Houlgate 2006 and 2008.

> which thinking does not already *have* and find given within itself, but which it gives to itself. (*Enz.* §19 A)

The logic can be seen as the science of pure thinking, but Hegel's claim that it is the "Idea in the abstract element of thinking" highlights that the same movement that underlies thinking also constitutes the actualities of the spheres of nature and spirit. The determinate form and content of this movement is self-given—spontaneous—rather than determined by anything external to this activity itself. While one can understand the temptation to interpret the "Idea" in such passages as Hegel's way of talking about a cosmic entity or force that creates the world, Hegel's text does not support the leap of positing such an entity. More importantly, the following paragraphs closely link Hegel's moves at this point to the inadequacies that he sees in Kant's account of the spontaneous I of apperception.

Before drawing that connection, however, later in the Remark to this paragraph, Hegel articulates the relationship between this thinking and our everyday mental activity:

> The logic is the *most difficult* science, inasmuch as it has to do, not with intuitions nor even, like geometry, with abstract sense-representations, but with pure abstractions, and inasmuch as it requires a trained ability at withdrawing into pure thought, holding onto it and moving within it. It could, on the other hand, be viewed as the *easiest* science, because its content is nothing but our own thinking and its ordinary determinations, and because these are both the *simplest* and *what is elementary*. They are also what we are *most familiar* with: being, nothing, etc.; determinacy, magnitude, etc.; being-in-itself, being-for-itself, one, many, and so on. (*Enz.* § 19 A)

These determinations of thought are implicit in all our mental activity. Hegel's examples—magnitude, one, many, etc.—highlight how elementary they are and thereby shed light on what he means when he says that they operate in our thinking even when we are not conscious of their doing so. At the same time, to isolate them, to consider them abstractly, is the extraordinary challenge that the logic takes up.

The problems with attributing this thinking to a transcendent subject become much more apparent in the following paragraph. This (§ 20) is the first of four paragraphs that each take a further step in the elaboration of the thinking at issue: "If we take thinking according to the most obvious notion [*nächsten liegenden Vorstellung*] of it, then it appears (α) first in its ordinary subjective significance, as one spiritual activity or faculty *side by side* with others such as sensation, intuition, imagination, etc., desire, volition, etc." (*Enz.* § 20). Hegel begins the delineation of his conception of thinking by comparing it to a common understanding of thought as one of several mental activities. Despite the inadequacy of this conception, it reveals that "[t]he *product* of thinking, the determinacy or form of thought, is the *universal*,

the abstract in general" (*Enz.* § 20). Thinking proper is initially distinguished from these other mental activities (in which it is implicitly operative) by its abstraction from the particularities and contingencies involved in these other forms; thinking is the universal aspect of these other activities: "Thus," Hegel continues, "*thinking* as *activity* is the *active* universal, and indeed the *self*-actuating universal, since the act, or what is brought forth, is precisely the universal" (*Enz.* § 20). Here again, Hegel focuses on the activity and conceives of it as a universal activity not constrained by anything particular or given.

Then, in the crucial final section of the main part of the paragraph, he states, "Thinking represented as *subject* is *that which thinks* [*Denkendes*], and the simple expression for the existing subject as what is thinking [*Denkenden*] is *I*" (*Enz.* § 20). This activity cannot be attributed to some preexisting subject. To do so would subordinate it to a preestablished set of concepts rather than seeing its role in establishing determinations of thought in the first place. Thus, all that can be said about the agent of this thought is that it is that which thinks. In the Remark to this paragraph, beyond providing a preliminary account of the relations among intuition, representation, and thought, Hegel elaborates on the conception of the I introduced in this sentence, linking it directly to Kant's account of apperception:

> Kant employed the awkward expression, that I "accompany" all my representations—and my sensations, desires, actions, etc., too . . . All other humans have this in common with me, to be "I," just as all *my* sensations, representations, etc., have in common that they are *mine*. But, taken abstractly as such, "I" is pure relation to itself, in which abstraction is made from representation and sensation, from every state as well as from every peculiarity of nature, of talent, of experience, and so on. To this extent, "I" is the existence of the entirely *abstract* universality, the abstractly *free*. Therefore "I" is *thinking* as *subject*, and since I am at the same time in all my sensations, notions, states, etc., thought is present everywhere and pervades all these determinations as [their] category. (*Enz.* § 20 A)

The "I" at issue here, the thinking subject, is Hegel's appropriation of Kant's account of apperception. It cannot be conceived as a thing or reduced to the outcome of mechanistic processes. Taken in itself, this I is the pure activity of self-relation, "*thinking* as *subject*"—an account central to Hegel's understanding of the role of thinking in constituting the object, as he will explain in the following paragraphs. Hegel thus begins his construction of the central elements of the logic with reference to (and modification of) the Kantian conception of that which accompanies all our representations. All thinking (as well as intuiting, representing, and willing) is constituted by this I relating to itself, such that this relationship conditions all these activities—paralleling Kant's account of the role of apperception in undergirding the universality of the categories: "thought is present everywhere" (*Enz.* § 20 A). Although Hegel is explicit earlier in the Remark that this starting point is the result of

philosophical arguments offered elsewhere (i.e. does not stand on its own), the passage makes explicit what the starting point is: the self-relating I that thinks, which Hegel develops from his extension of the Kantian account of apperception.

While this conception of the I considered abstractly comes from highly theoretical philosophy, this I is implicit in our everyday usage of the term "I" and is not to be identified with any *thing* or superhuman entity. In our general usage, "I" functions to distinguish any individual from all others through the process of self-relation itself. "I" does not distinguish one person from others on the basis of any particular properties. It abstracts from all such properties by distinguishing an "I" that exists independently of these properties: "I have brown hair," "I like chocolate," and "I live in Rhode Island," for instance, all distinguish I-ness from the particular qualities predicated of the subject. They are conceptually distinct, since there is nothing contradictory in the claims that "I have black hair" or someone else stating, "I have blond hair." I refers not to these particularities but implicitly distinguishes the subject from these particulars. For Hegel, this usage reflects and suggests (though does not make explicit) the conception of the I that is central to his account of thinking.

While Hegel does not simply identify the "I" with particular human subjects, the Remark reveals that this I is operative in our thinking, that we are not dealing with a superhuman subject. The connection to human thinking is here made explicit precisely where Hegel is setting out the most basic elements of his conception of the logic.

The following paragraph takes the next step in building the account of thinking as constituting the object: "(β) When thinking is taken as active with regard to objects, as the *thinking-over of* [*Nachdenken über*] something, then the universal—as the product of the activity—contains the value of the *matter* [*Sache*], *what is essential, inner, true*" (*Enz.* § 21). Thinking, even the more subordinate form of thinking-over, reveals what is universal in the object, and—as even our conventional conceptions of reflection tell us:

> what is inner, what is essential, and the matter that counts, is not to be found in consciousness *immediately*; . . . it cannot be what the first look or impression already offers us, but . . . we must first *think it over* in order to arrive at the genuine constitution of the object. (*Enz.* § 21 A)

Much as we take careful scrutiny to reveal the truth of a matter more than a first impression does, further thinking determines what is essential and what is merely contingent. The point is crucial to grasping both what Hegel is and what he is not claiming in arguing that thinking constitutes the object. At this early stage in the picture, he makes clear that thinking does not determine all of the particulars. What the universal is, however, remains to be determined. This will ultimately be the activity of thinking giving itself determinate form. For that reason, the comparison to the difference between our first glance and

more careful study is helpful but limited. It makes the point—though in a suggestive, not a philosophical, way—that what we tend to think of as immediate sense impressions are not the ultimate arbiters of truth. Yet Hegel's point ultimately concerns the determinations of thought that make objects possible, rather than simply the correction of mistaken first impressions.

Next, Hegel argues that this thinking-over is not passive or merely receptive but itself "changes" the object: "(γ) Through thinking it over something is changed in the way in which the content is at first [given] in sensation, intuition, or representation; thus, it is only *through the mediation* of an alteration that the *true* nature of the *object* comes into consciousness" (*Enz.* § 22). As we study an object closely, thinking it over in order to develop a better understanding, the object of our consciousness—what we are aware of—is transformed. This point encompasses an expansive range of possible transformations. Hegel's claim is not that the particular features are intentionally replaced by other particular features of the same sort (that red turns green as a result of thinking it so), but one aspect of Hegel's claim may involve the kinds of shifts involved in a Rorschach Test. More significant, however, are other shifts in what we are conscious of, as in the change from an indeterminate object that we have not identified to a table or from being conscious of a table as a solid piece of furniture to a consciousness of this "object" as a collection of atoms. The result, as noted in the second half of the sentence, is that the "*true* nature of the *object*" only becomes an object for consciousness as a result of the activity of thought. (This point marks a step in Hegel's movement toward the claim that the object itself is a product of thinking.)

To object to this passage on the grounds that our impression or conception may be changing, but the object is not, is to posit some essence of the object; and it is crucial to Hegel's project that doing so is precisely the kind of presupposition that we have no grounds to make. The Addition to the paragraph addresses this point specifically and associates the relevant distinction with Kantian critical philosophy:

> But we can say, too, that it has been the conviction of every age that what is substantial is only reached through the reworking of the immediate by our thinking about it. It has most notably been only in modern times, on the other hand, that doubts have been raised and the distinction between the products of our thinking and what things are in themselves has been insisted on. It has been said that the in-itself of things is quite different from what we make of them. This separateness is the standpoint that has been maintained especially by the critical philosophy, against the conviction of the whole world previously in which the agreement between the matter [*Sache*] and thought was taken for granted. The central concern of modern philosophy turns on this antithesis. (*Enz.* § 22 Z)

Hegel here rejects this juxtaposing of what we know with some "thing in itself." In doing so, he sides with what he describes as a more classical view

over against modern skepticism about whether our knowledge can ever attain the object in itself. And yet, as the previous paragraphs make clear, he does so within a conception that takes off from Kant's account of apperception. Ultimately, this will enable Hegel to incorporate a great deal from pre-Kantian philosophy—drawing extensively on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, for instance—without returning to a pre-Kantian metaphysics. Appreciating this point is essential to avoiding the misreadings that take Hegel to be metaphysical in ways that he is not.

In the next paragraph, Hegel articulates the dramatic consequences of the points set out up to now:

> (δ) Because it is equally the case that in this thinking-over the genuine nature comes to light, as it is that this thinking is *my* activity, this true nature is also the *product of my* spirit, and as thinking subject. It is mine according to my simple universality, as of the I simply *being at home with itself* [*schlechthin* bei sich seienden *Ichs*],—or it is the product of my *freedom*. (*Enz.* § 23)[43]

If the true nature of the object only comes about as the result of thinking, then this object must itself be grasped as the result of thinking. The passage highlights that the thinking at issue here is that with which we have been dealing up to this point. Its subject is none other than "that which thinks," the I. Thus, it is *my* product insofar as I am considered merely as an I, the thinking subject. It is this activity of thought—which Hegel links directly to human beings—that produces the true nature of the objects. While this I is active in individuals' thinking, it is not a merely subjective subject determined by particularity and contingency:

> Thinking immediately involves *freedom*, because it is the activity of the universal, a self-relating that is therefore abstract, a being-with-itself that is undetermined in respect of subjectivity, and which in respect of its *content* is, at the same time, only in the *matter* and in its determinations... [T]hinking is only genuine with respect to its content insofar as it is immersed in the *matter*, and with respect to its form insofar as it is not a *particular* being or doing of the subject, but consists precisely in this, that consciousness conducts itself as an abstract I, as *freed* from *all particularity* of features, states, etc., and does only what is universal, in which it is identical with all individuals. (*Enz.* § 23 A)

This thinking, pure thought, is identical in all thinking subjects. Moreover, while Hegel does not make the point in this context, this thinking arises only as the result of an intersubjective process. It is not the work of a solitary subject but the product of social practices. Within the present context, the conception of such thought—which abstracts from the particularities of a given thinking person—derives from the account of the I as self-relating introduced in § 20. In

[43] The "(δ)" is omitted in the English translation but is important to seeing §§ 20–3 as articulating central elements of his project in four steps.

this self-relation, the thinking subject is not determined by categories or determinations given to it from without but is entirely self-determining. Thinking is therefore free; the I can thus be seen as "*at home with itself* [*bei sich*]" in them, rather than beyond or outside of itself. With respect to objects, this entails that their true nature is a product "of my *freedom*." Again, the point is not that we conjure trees, houses, and so forth. Rather, it is that our thinking generates the determinations of thought that are shown to be their "true nature," that make them objects.

Hegel's claims here are strong. They constitute central elements of his idealism and thus of his entire philosophical project. And yet they do not involve any subject other than the I that is active in all of *our* thinking; this I is not a transcendent subject but simply "that which thinks." Viewing Hegel's project from this perspective allows us to see why he views himself as extending Kant's project rather than repudiating it.

More specifically, these claims provide the necessary context for grasping his understanding of the relation of his logic to metaphysics. Having concluded the four steps elaborated in §§ 20–3, noted as (α) through (δ), Hegel turns in § 24 to the consequences of the position:

> In accordance with these determinations, thoughts can be called *objective* thoughts, and among them the forms which are considered initially in ordinary logic and which are usually taken to be only forms of *conscious* thinking have to be counted too. Thus, *logic* coincides with *metaphysics*, with the science of *things* grasped in *thoughts* that used to be taken to express the *essentialities* of *things*. (*Enz.* § 24)

These thoughts are objective because they are determined by thinking itself, not by anything—in the subject or object—that is merely particular or simply given. These objective thoughts include the determinations of thought that are the object of studies of logic; but in such studies they are generally taken to be merely the forms of thought, not to pertain to objects. From the previous discussion of the true nature of the object as itself a product of thinking, however, it follows that these determinations are not merely the *forms* of thinking but just as much the "*essentialities* of *things*." An account of these thought determinations, these objective thoughts, is therefore both logic and metaphysics, *insofar as the latter is understood to concern the true nature of, the essence of, the objects*. Because the preceding paragraphs have informed us how to interpret this claim, it cannot be taken as a revival of the metaphysics that Kant claims to have undermined. It must be understood in the context provided by Hegel's broader appropriation and development of Kant's account of apperception.

Such objectivity is possible, however, only if it can be demonstrated that thinking itself moves and develops on its own. Only in this manner can Hegel make good on his claim that thought is self-determining rather than decisively shaped by something external to it. If the determinations of thought simply stand over against each other, in a static configuration, we will be stuck at the

level of finitude—which Hegel associates with the understanding, rather than thinking proper (*Enz.* § 24). Consequently, one aspect of the task of the logic will be to demonstrate that thinking itself is objective in this manner, not simply a product of the given or contingent.

To demonstrate this self-determining character of thought, the logic proceeds from the simplest determinations of thought—being and nothing—through a long, difficult path toward the completion achieved in its final sections. We begin with what would appear to be the simplest possible determination and then examine it in its own terms, seeing whether it holds up or requires some further determination of thought—and thus generates movement that drives the development further. Crucial to Hegel's argument is that each of these steps is the result of a process of immanent development, in which nothing extraneous is added (see *WL* 1:49/53–4). Thought is thus self-moving. While the details of this development merit careful examination in themselves, such a task is beyond the current project.

Even without tracing the entire development, however, we can meaningfully examine the point at which these developments conclude. Since there is no standard or norm independent of this process toward which it aims, the conclusion of this development will necessarily be of a distinctive sort. This conclusion is precisely the point at which the final divisions and thus finitude are overcome. For this reason, it is the point at which, if Hegel is offering a version of a cosmic spirit, it should appear most definitively. Moreover, Hegel's strong language in the concluding sections might be taken to imply that we are here in the presence of God, understood to mean that the logic leads us to theism, rather than to mean that God-talk should ultimately be understood as a representational expression of a philosophical account of the absolute that unfolds from the preliminary conception traced above. Thus, if we can make sense of this final step from finitude to infinitude without introducing such a subject, we have strong evidence that such a conception is not integral to Hegel's project.

A second issue crucial to the interpretation of Hegel's philosophy of religion is also at stake here. Several of the major concerns about Hegel's philosophy of religion involve its culmination in what he identifies as the "consummate religion": Christianity. The nature of this consummation, however, is difficult to discern. Hegel explicitly links it to the completion achieved at the end of the logic, however, which means that the former must be interpreted in relation to the latter. The conclusion of the logic is therefore essential to grasping the nature of the consummation of religion in Christianity—including both its finality and its open-endedness.[44]

[44] Here I concur with Wendte regarding the centrality of the absolute Idea to the logical background of the philosophy of religion; see Wendte 2007. Nonetheless, our different interpretations of the absolute Idea generate divergent interpretations of the philosophy of religion. In contrast, Keyserlingk (1995) and Schulz (1997) focus on the logic of being.

This conclusion comes in the section he labels the "Absolute Idea." Here the developmental process comes to have itself as an object. Although the movement of thought has in some sense been the object since the beginning, here this becomes explicit to the movement itself. In other words, the conclusion consists in knowing this movement itself. More precisely, it *consists in knowing that thinking itself produces the many determinations encountered through this development*. The development here becomes transparent to itself, knowing itself as self-determining. This transparency to itself constitutes the finality of this point—and does not entail that thinking stops developing. Yet from this point forward, the development will be understood for what it is.

In a sense, this conclusion is formal rather than substantive. It does not introduce new concepts but constitutes a new relationship to the determinations that have been developing all along. Thus, it consists in a new self-relationship. Yet this transparent self-relationship itself generates certain norms, as becomes apparent in both objective spirit and in his interpretation of the consummate religion.

Hegel's way of developing this point—that the conclusion consists in thinking having itself for an object and thus becoming transparent to itself—is to demonstrate that the logic concludes with the articulation of its own method. Method constitutes the central element of the final section, the "Absolute Idea." Before turning to this material itself, however, it must first be situated in relation to the section that immediately precedes it. "The Idea of Cognition," the second section of "The Idea," treats the conception of cognition that Hegel ultimately conceives as finite rather than infinite. Here he revisits aspects of Kant's critique of all previous metaphysics, arguing both for the power of Kant's conception of the I and for what might be retained from Aristotelian metaphysics—though transformed through Kantian critique. The section deals not only with the theoretical, with cognition itself, but also with the idea of the good, addressing elements in practical philosophy. These developments articulate the conceptual transition to the absolute Idea, yet they remain finite; i.e. in each of these conceptions a fundamental dualism remains. At the conclusion of the treatment of cognition itself, Hegel expresses this point in the following terms: Here, in synthetic cognition,

> this subject matter of the concept is not adequate to it; for the concept does not come to be the *unity of itself with itself in its object or its reality*; in necessity its identity is for it; but in this identity the necessity is not itself the *determinateness*, but appears as a matter external to the identity, that is, as a matter not determined by the concept, a matter, therefore, in which the concept does not cognize itself. (*WL* 2:540–1/817)

At this point in the project, the "concept" [*Begriff*] is Hegel's way of talking about the self-determining movement of thinking or the I itself. Since synthetic cognition cannot grasp the concept's self-determining character, even in

its conclusion there appears to be a division between the determining and the determined. Similarly, the dualisms or bifurcation within the Idea of the good are not overcome until the developments that constitute the transition to the "Absolute Idea" (WL 2:547–8/822–3). The second moment of "The Idea" is thus characterized by the dualism and lack of self-determination that will be overcome in the "Absolute Idea." In the present context, we cannot examine all of Hegel's arguments for why a satisfactory conclusion must overcome this division, but analyzing Hegel's account of the overcoming of this division will enable us to determine the kind of conclusion he proposes in his logic.

The absolute Idea "is the sole object and content of philosophy" (*WL* 2:549/824). It overcomes the dichotomies and dualisms that have characterized the developments up to this point; "the absolute Idea alone is *being*, imperishable *life*, *self-knowing truth*, and is *all truth*" (WL 2:549/824). The dramatic inclusiveness of this "Idea," its encompassing so much, helps to illuminate why Hegel makes use of religious language in describing it. Yet his more precise account of this absolute Idea shows that the identity of the absolute Idea overcomes the bifurcations and finitude of previous developments in a manner consistent with the line of interpretation elaborated above. This final section, in which the development comes to have itself as its explicit object, shows this movement to be the movement of thinking itself, demonstrating that the concepts that emerged over the course of the logic were the products of thought's own development rather than generated independently of thought. This absolute Idea "contains *all determinateness* within it"—the various self-determined moments (*WL* 2:549/820). It takes on "existence [*Dasein*]" in the spheres of nature and spirit, but here in the logic these determinations appear as thought rather than as determinate existence (*WL* 2:550/825). The moments traced over the course of the logic are the self-determined movement of the Idea itself. This Idea, however, is not some reified agent but rather the form of thinking itself:

> Thus, the logical Idea has itself as the *infinite form* for its content—*form* which constitutes the opposite to *content* to this extent that the content is the form-determination withdrawn into itself and sublated in the identity in such a manner that this concrete identity stands opposed to the identity explicated as form . . . . More exactly, the absolute Idea itself has for its content merely this, that the form determination is its own completed totality, the pure concept. Now the *determinateness* of the Idea and the entire course followed by this determinateness has constituted the subject matter of the science of logic, from which course the absolute Idea has arisen *for itself*; for itself, however, it has shown itself to be this, that determinateness does not have the shape of a *content*, but exists wholly as *form*, and that accordingly the Idea is the absolutely *universal Idea*. Therefore, what remains to be considered here is not a content as such, but the universal aspect of its form—that is, the *method*. (*WL* 2:550/825)

In the absolute Idea, the entire previous development of the logic is shown to be the self-determining movement of thought, and the determinateness of this movement is simply the form. This is the content of the absolute Idea.

The division or bifurcation that still characterized the previous sphere is overcome precisely because the content is here the form. This form does not stand over against the content but is revealed as constituting the determinations that themselves make objects objects (see also *WL* 2:551–2/826). Without this form, they "would be nothing" (*WL* 2:464/756). The absolute Idea is the form, the movement of thought through these various determinations. No merely "given object [*Objekt*]" can ground this development (*WL* 2:551/826). At this point, then, all that can be left is to demonstrate the general features, "the universal aspect," of this form. This is the method.

As the "universal aspect" of the form of the movement of thought, the method is simply a general account of the movement of thought. The account is a product of this movement itself, the moment in which this movement comes to be for itself. This movement begins with immediacy. Since we are dealing with thought here, it is the immediacy of an abstract universality—the immediacy of thought, not of representation or intuition. Hegel describes it as like a "supersensuous, *inner intuition*" (*WL* 2:553/827–8). Entirely indeterminate, this beginning is "a *simple* [*ein Einfaches*] and a *universal*" (*WL* 2:553/828). Yet the determination of this beginning exclusively as simple and universal is itself unstable: "Even the abstract universal as such, considered in its concept, that is in its truth, is not merely the *simple*, but as *abstract* is already *posited* as infected with a *negation*" (*WL* 2:555/829). Nothing is as immediate as it might initially appear. In this case, even that moment which is determined merely as "simple" and "universal" shows itself to be posited, not immediate. This first moment thus contains within itself the seed of the development to the next (*WL* 2:556/830).

This second moment consists in the determination of what initially appeared as merely abstract universality: "Taken quite generally, this determination can be taken to mean that what is at first *immediate* now appears as *mediated, related* to an other, or that the universal is posited as a particular. Hence the second term that has thereby come into being is the *negative of the first*" (*WL* 2:561/834). This determination of the initially indeterminate is not the result of the external application of a method but is driven by what was already there in the first moment: "The essential point is that the absolute method finds and cognizes the *determination* of the universal within the latter itself" (*WL* 2:556/830). The particularities are initially those of diversity [*Verschiedene*]; then "real difference [*Differenz*]" emerges (*WL* 2:556/830). Hegel does not here retrace the details of this development but gestures back toward the movement traced in earlier sections of the logic. Here, in the absolute Idea, these are revealed as the movements of thinking itself, as reflecting the self-determining movement of thinking. It thereby shows this

method to animate the entire development: "The absolute method . . . does not behave like external reflection but takes the determinate element from its own object [*Gegenstande*], since it is itself that object's immanent principle and soul" (*WL* 2:556–7/830).

This claim that the method itself constitutes the "immanent principle and soul" of the object goes to the heart of Hegel's idealism. It is a clear expression of the position that some take to require a robustly metaphysical interpretation, in which the absolute Idea is a fundamental structure of a reality that simultaneously exists independently of human thinking. Yet this interpretation depends on failing to follow the decisive moves of the entire project. Hegel's point here, as at other key moments in the project, is that the determinations of thought do not simply correspond to the internal structure of a reality that is independent of human thinking (a claim that generally leads interpreters to posit a superhuman, transcendent spirit that is the subject of this thinking) but rather that those objects only are what they are by virtue of thinking, which as far as we can tell is only instantiated in humanity. Thus, as Hegel elaborates a few pages later, "[t]he object, as it is without thinking and the concept, is an image [*Vorstellung*] or even a name; it is in the determinations of thought and the concept that it *is* what it *is*. Therefore these determinations are in fact the sole thing that matters; they are the true object and content of reason, and anything else that one understands by object and content in distinction from them has value only through them and in them" (*WL* 2:560/833; see also 2:568/839–40). As discussed above, the particulars have meaning only by virtue of the activity of thought.

To juxtapose what the object is in this sense (i.e., in terms of the determinations of thought) with what it is "in itself" is to resurrect an ontology (a version of which is represented in Kant's account of things in themselves) whose presuppositions Hegel claims to have undermined much earlier in his own project. While we cannot retrace all the elements of that argument here, appreciating that piece of Hegel's project is essential to grasping how Hegel can make the kinds of claims that he does here—at the culmination of the logic—without positing a cosmic spirit that secures a convergence between human thought and the structure of a world where that structure is understood to be generated independently of that thinking.

In the third moment, the negation of this negation, the concept returns to itself. This movement overcomes the particularity and difference of the second moment. As above, this overcoming has taken different shapes over the course of the logic. The method provides the general account of this movement. The determinations that characterized the second moment reveal themselves to be limited, just as the immediacy of the first moment revealed itself to be posited. Here as well, Hegel emphasizes the self-determined character of this development:

> The *second* negative, the negative of the negative, at which we have arrived, is this sublating of the contradiction, but just as little as the contradiction is it an *act of external reflection*, but rather the *innermost*, *most objective moment* of life and spirit, through which a *subject*, a *person*, a *free being*, exists [*ein* Subjekt, Person, Freies, *ist*]. (*WL* 2:563/835–6)

Here Hegel identifies this overcoming with "the *innermost*, *most objective moment* of life and spirit." It is the spontaneous, self-determining character of this movement that makes subjectivity and ultimately freedom possible, for without an account of thinking that is self-determining in this sense, we would lack the resources to avoid ultimately mechanistic accounts of thought and action. Freedom, as Hegel understands it, would be undermined.

Yet what more can be said about this third moment other than that it is a negation of a negation, a unity that is reestablished by overcoming the contradiction of the first and second moments? Here, "the course of cognition at the same time returns into itself" (*WL* 2:564/836). Now, within the method itself, thinking knows itself as determining the method; it grasps itself as the source of the determinations that initially seemed to be other to it. Although it can appear that we are dealing here with cognition or analysis of an object that is separate from the cognition itself, the absoluteness at this point consists precisely in that difference having been overcome (*WL* 2:566/838). As Hegel puts it in the following paragraph, "It is here that the *content* of cognition as such first enters into the circle of consideration, since, as deduced, it now belongs to the method. The method itself by means of this moment expands itself into a system" (*WL* 2:567/838). Cognition, which is not empty but is itself determinate, is here the object of analysis and thus the method. As we have seen in the movements traced over the course of the logic, this cognition itself contains determinations that together constitute a system: "Through the movement we have indicated, the object has attained for itself a *determinateness* that is a *content*" (*WL* 2:567/838).

As Hegel describes this movement itself,

> cognition rolls onwards from content to content. First of all, this advance is determined as beginning from simple determinacies, the succeeding ones becoming *ever richer and more concrete*. For the result contains its beginning and its course has enriched it by a fresh determinateness. The *universal* constitutes the foundation; the advance is therefore not to be taken as a *flowing* from one *other* to the next *other*. In the absolute method the concept *maintains* itself in its otherness, the universal in its particularization, in judgment and reality; at each stage of its further determination it raises the entire mass of its preceding content, and by its dialectical advance it not only does not lose anything or leave anything behind, but carries along with it all it has gained, and inwardly enriches and consolidates itself. (*WL* 2:569/840)

This is the general character of the development of thinking, the course described by the method. It is not a mystical doctrine but a negation that simultaneously preserves what is negated in a manner that is only possible for thinking.

As Hegel is at pains to stress throughout this section, this cognition is not to be contrasted with a reality that is independent of it: "For since it is the absolute form, the concept that knows itself and everything as concept, there is no content that could stand over against it and determine it to be a one-sided external form" (*WL* 2:568/840). The determinations of cognition, the content of the method, are necessarily the determinations of objects themselves, as we have seen above.

Hegel describes the culmination of this development in striking terms—as "*pure personality* [*Persönlichkeit*]": "The highest, most concentrated point is the *pure personality* which, solely through the absolute dialectic which is its nature, no less *embraces and holds everything within itself*, because it makes itself the supremely free—the simplicity which is the first immediacy and universality" (*WL* 2:570/841). This culmination which is simultaneously the beginning is the spontaneously moving, self-determining thinking—the descendent of the I sketched above and, more distantly, of Kant's account of apperception—not a transcendent, cosmic subject. As Hegel has already indicated in the preliminary sections of the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, only such a "that which thinks" is capable of holding together the various determinacies that are necessary for experience. Only this account, in which thinking is itself self-determining, can overcome the shortcomings he identifies in empiricist accounts of thinking. Drawing this connection back to the beginning,

> logic, too, in the absolute Idea, has withdrawn into the same simple unity which its beginning is; the pure immediacy of being in which at first every determination appears to be extinguished or removed by abstraction, is the Idea that has reached through mediation, that is, through the sublation of mediation, a likeness correspondent to itself. The method is the pure concept that relates itself only to itself; it is therefore the *simple self-relation* that is *being*. But now it is also *fulfilled* being, the *concept that comprehends* itself [*sich* begreifende Begriff], being as the *concrete* and also absolutely *intensive* totality. In conclusion, there remains only this to be said about this Idea that in it, *first*, the *science of logic* has grasped its own concept. (*WL* 2:572/842)

It is not determined by anything other than itself, as was already foreshadowed long ago. What distinguishes this moment from the simple unity with which this development began is that now—in the absolute Idea—the concept grasps itself. It knows itself as self-determining in these determinations. This knowledge is precisely the content of the Idea: "the Idea is itself the pure concept that has itself for object and which, in running itself as object through the totality of its determinations develops itself into the whole of its reality, into the system

of the science, and concludes by apprehending this process of comprehending itself, thereby superseding its standing as content and object and cognizing the concept of the science" (*WL* 2:572/843). The science of logic concludes with the knowledge that the determinations traced over its course are the product of its own movement rather than generated by an object standing over against it.

The conclusion, then, consists in thought's movement becoming transparent to itself. It sublates the previous determinations by coming to know them as determined by itself and thus not other to it. It does not destroy them. More importantly, the conclusion consists in a knowledge of the concept, not the end of the movement of that concept. The concept will continue to move, but this movement will be known as what it is, determined by thinking itself. Hegel therefore describes this stage as an "absolute *liberation*" (*WL* 2:573/843); this moment will not be overcome.

Yet this development has all taken place within the realm of thinking itself, "enclosed within pure thought, and is the science only of the divine *concept*" (*WL* 2:572/843). Hegel's point is not that this is the thought of a transcendent entity—an interpretation that would introduce an extraneous element at this point in the development—but that this movement of thinking itself, of the concept itself, is that for which we should have the utmost awe. It is at the heart of, in some sense, everything and consequently is appropriately referred to as "divine." Here in the logic we have seen this movement in abstraction from its existence in nature and spirit; we have focused on the thinking itself.

3

Locating the Philosophy of Religion

> *What we must take into consideration is first the relation of the philosophy of religion to philosophy as a whole, and second the relationship of the science of religion to the needs of our time. (*VPR *1:61)*

These opening words of Hegel's 1827 lectures on the philosophy of religion frame the subject in terms of two relationships: The first is religion's relationship to philosophy and thus to the philosophical foundations of his system treated in the previous chapter. The second considers what is needed in an intellectually defensible and socially relevant account of religion in his day; while he focuses principally on the relation between his own view of religion and others circulating at the time, this topic also draws in the broader issues regarding religion's role in society that were central to his writings from the 1790s. The rubrics of the introduction, therefore, particularly if we reverse their order, offer a gateway to Hegel's mature philosophy of religion that simultaneously situates it in relation to the previous two chapters.

As we will see, Hegel's developed view of religion involves a significant shift in his appraisal of Christianity's ability to provide social cohesion in the modern world. Where he earlier judged it a source of alienation from the emerging order, projecting reconciliation into a "beyond," the Berlin lectures ultimately attribute to Protestant Christianity the role described for a *Volksreligion*, or civil religion, in his earliest writings. This shift in judgment notwithstanding, Hegel continues to seek a conception of religion that supports social solidarity for the broader populace *and* to hold that the basis for this vision must lie in the confrontation with Kant's legacy. His philosophy of religion builds on the idealism set out in the logic. Thus, his more positive judgment of Christianity derives from a shift in his interpretation of Christianity and its social potential rather than from coming to accept the specific theistic conceptions that he earlier rejected.

The present chapter frames Hegel's mature philosophy of religion by locating it in relation to the previous chapters, the subsequent historical developments, and Hegel's larger philosophical project. It begins by situating the lectures on the philosophy of religion in relation first to the broader

socio-political context (picking up the historical strands from Chapter 1) and then to competing theologies and philosophies of religion. While the connection to the philosophy of religion may not be apparent at first glance, the broader historical context is essential to understanding the significance of religion's social function in Hegel's thought. The second section draws on Hegel's introduction to provide a preliminary overview of some of the defining features of Hegel's conception of religion and elaborates the relationship between the philosophical foundations of Hegel's project (set out in Chapter 2) and what Hegel considers the "religious standpoint," the starting point of the philosophy of religion. To do so it takes up a number of the crucial systematic developments that fall between the logic and the philosophy of religion.

THE RELATIONSHIP TO THE NEEDS OF THE DAY

In Hegel's mature conception, religion is one of the principal practices in which we reflect upon what is of greatest importance to us. It is no mere means to an end.[1] Yet religion also plays a central role in addressing the need for social integration that drove much of Hegel's early writing. Religion links people's conceptions of themselves and what is most important to them, their daily lives, and their participation in social, political, and economic life. Moreover, religion plays this role for the population as a whole, not only for the educated elite. Where conservative critics charged that reforms threatened to undermine religion, Hegel looks specifically to religion to support the broader population's identification with a newly emerging way of life.[2]

As with many of Hegel's "solutions," his proposal is not for something new but rather for appreciating the resources that have already appeared on the scene. The key is to comprehend the significance of the religious practices that characterize the lives of most people in modern societies. Properly understood, religion provides social and political integration without appeal to the particularistic identities championed by romantic nationalists. While it is not hard to see why critics such as Marx could see this Hegelian account of religion as constituting the "opium of the people," swaying them into acceptance of the established order, Hegel's claim is not that religion simply consoles people such that they accept the status quo but that religion—at least the right

[1] The 1821 manuscript offers an excellent discussion of this point: "In general, it is quite correct that the purposes and intentions of individuals, governments, and states [gain] subsistence and solidity only when based upon religion. What is misleading here is that whatever is construed as a *means* is at the same time degraded into something contingent" (*VPR* 1:110; see also 1:109). Hegel draws attention to this function of religion without thereby reducing religion to a mere means to these ends.

[2] On this conservative response, see Sheehan 1989, 302.

religion—leads people to accept the emerging new order precisely because of its rationality.[3]

For these reasons (among others), "religion in general" cannot play this role; only a religion that cultivates and coheres with the modern emphasis on rational, self-conscious, self-determination can. Hegel found this understanding in Protestant Christianity, particularly in the Lutheran emphasis on individual subjectivity. In this picture, Christianity is justified not by authority or intuition but by the ultimate "witness of spirit," reason itself. The specific task this framework sets up for Hegel's account of Christianity is to provide a convincing interpretation of the tradition that fits this bill. Christianity will have to express to and for the population as a whole an understanding of themselves and their deepest commitments that is rationally defensible and supportive of the emerging modern social and political order. It must support their ability to grasp this order as the actualization of freedom.

Hegel's concerns about social fragmentation, so prominent in the early writings, did not disappear in the new century. As Napoleon made his way across German lands—through a combination of treaties, imposed settlements, and outright conquests—he irrevocably altered the political order that was the Holy Roman Empire of Hegel's youth. Napoleon's actions, the immediate responses, and the long-term impact varied tremendously across the former Empire.[4] One aspect of the upheaval and transformation was the dramatic redrawing of the map. Nearly sixty percent of the population gained new rulers during this period, some of them as many as six times.[5] Napoleon established new states (including Westphalia), supported significant expansion of others (such as Württemberg and Bavaria), eliminated others (especially some of the bishoprics and city-states that had formed part of the Empire), and took substantial territory from others (including Prussia). He had a direct role in running some of these new states and a more indirect impact in others. The consequences of his defeat transformed a number of these borders again. Though some had feared the Congress of Vienna—which brought this era to a close in 1815—would bring about a return to pre-Napoleonic arrangements, it endorsed many of the most decisive ones even while undoing certain of Napoleon's changes and adding to Prussia's territory in particular. Though the following period is generally known as the "Restoration," it in no sense restored what had existed before Napoleon's entry into German lands.

In addition to their troops, the French also sought to impose their ideals. Napoleon worked to transform political structures in the direction of the

[3] Marx 1970, 131.

[4] My treatment of this period draws heavily on the excellent discussions in Sheehan 1989, 209–587 and Blackbourn 2003, 35–103.

[5] Blackbourn provides a particularly vivid account (2003, 47–50).

French model, introducing the Napoleonic Code in certain of the satellite countries and generally encouraging the reformation or abolition of older political institutions in favor of a more rationalized bureaucracy. Here as well, the precise nature of the influence and its significance varied dramatically across the German territories. Understandably, German reactions to these influences were mixed. Enthusiasm for the ideals of the French Revolution meant that—at least for a time—many welcomed the French presence; yet others were not convinced that they were being "emancipated" by the French occupation, particularly as they were forced to pay for the occupying troops.

Napoleon's support for the development of more rational administration combined with urgent needs for greater financial resources—as well as a better military—to encourage reforms across significant parts of the former Empire. As James Sheehan writes in relation to Napoleon's victory over the once formidable Prussian army, "Military defeat had made reform possible by making it essential."[6] But the need for greater professionalism, efficiency, and promotions based on competence (rather than social status) was not limited to the military. Most pressingly, the financial concerns that had driven many rulers' interest in administrative reform in the late eighteenth century were dramatically heightened by the military conflicts of the beginning of the nineteenth. Finally, sovereigns frequently supported reforming state administration in order to further consolidate their power. Efforts to "reform" and "rationalize" government often involved taking power away from historically privileged groups, such as the nobility, estates, and guilds, and centralizing it in the hands of the sovereign and his ministers.

The complex interactions with Napoleonic France during this period thus provided a significant boost for reformers in many states. This development did not end with the Congress of Vienna but continued—though not without opposition and setbacks—throughout Hegel's lifetime. In many respects, we can see this as part of a broader movement to "modernize" German political, social, and economic institutions. At the same time, we must remember that much of the pressure to do so came from forces that at least appear at odds with the freedoms often associated with modern political developments. Not only was the movement given a crucial push forward by the demands of a foreign invader; it was often in the service of the consolidation of monarchical and bureaucratic power rather than the expansion of popular sovereignty. For that reason, it frequently had an anti-democratic character, which led some liberal thinkers to align themselves with its opponents.[7] It was a messy, complex process that was by no means homogeneous across the region.

[6] Sheehan 1989, 307. Blackbourn's discussion of "Reform from Above" is also very helpful (2003, 54–68). For a brief but powerful account of Prussia's dire situation and the opening it created, see Pinkard 2000, 418–9.

[7] When Hegel supported the constitutional reforms called for by Württemberg's king, for instance, some critics saw him as favoring the monarchy over democracy (Pinkard 2000, 410).

While the opening for reform was created largely by these forces, an emerging class of educated elites were more than ready to step in. As discussed in Chapter 1, this group had begun to exert a significant influence in German society in the late eighteenth century. Many of these new bureaucrats sought to bring about a new, modern age by updating or abolishing traditional political forms in favor of new ones based in ideals of reason and freedom.

Upon leaving Jena in 1807, Hegel moved to Bavaria, first to Bamberg—where he edited the *Bamberger Zeitung*, a generally pro-Napoleonic newspaper—and then, in 1808, to Nuremberg, where he was rector of the Gymnasium.[8] These years in Bavaria provided him with an excellent vantage point to appreciate this reformist strategy as well as the obstacles it faced. Among the most influential of this new cadre of reformers were Count Maximilian Monteglas in Bavaria as well as Karl Freiherr vom Stein and Karl August von Hardenberg in Prussia. Monteglas conceived the state not principally as defined by common historical traditions but as "a stable set of institutions, a cohesive polity to which citizens—*Staatsbürger*—were joined by bonds of loyalty and self-interest."[9] He was thus well suited for the task of integrating new territories into the Kingdom of Bavaria. The state was to be based on and justified by a shared legal code rather than simply traditions. In this spirit, King Max Joseph issued a constitution for Bavaria in 1808, the first to be based on the French model yet established without direct French intervention.

As in most other parts of the former Empire, reforms in Bavaria and Prussia (where Hegel would move in 1818) were led and largely driven by reform-minded bureaucrats. It was a top-down vision of reform. Even if they supported the eventual establishment of representative governmental bodies, most of these elite reformers were suspicious of the general public. They saw their reforms as grounded in an enlightenment and *Bildung* that they had but most of the population still lacked. If a central concern was to make positions of authority open to the most "enlightened" rather than simply those from privileged backgrounds, for them this also entailed that those without significant education did not have an automatic claim to a voice in governing. Moreover, the French experience highlighted for them how quickly things could slip out of control when uneducated classes become actively involved in bringing about change. Reform could easily transform into revolution.

As a result, the relatively small group driving the reforms had little connection to a popular movement.[10] Even if the reformers saw themselves as increasing opportunities for broad segments of the population, the latter had

[8] For an excellent treatment of this period in Hegel's life, see Pinkard 2000, 221–331. See also Toews 1980, 55–67.

[9] Sheehan 1989, 264.

[10] John Toews describes them as "a professional class in a position of precarious, threatened, and artificial dominance" (1980, 65).

little connection to the reformers and frequently little interest in supporting the reforms. Though this broader public generally did not mount major challenges to the reforms, the lack of support from this quarter left the reformers more vulnerable to opposition from traditional elites whose privileges were at stake (as in the case of ending serfdom and limiting the political privileges of the nobility). Due to this resistance and the lack of popular support, the progress of reforms was slow, uneven, and often compromised.[11]

During his time in Bavaria, Hegel's optimism over reforms was tempered by the resistance they encountered. He was particularly incensed by Catholics who sought to develop a "Bavarian" identity based on a newly created account of themselves as a distinct people with a distinct history. He saw these newly minted traditions—particularly when conceived as the foundation for a political identity—to be neither historically accurate nor inclusive enough to function for a newly expanded state (which now included many Protestants as well as Catholics). More fundamentally, Hegel saw such nationalistic strategies as entirely at odds with the vision of a modern state that grounds the legitimacy of its institutions in reason rather than tradition.[12]

Despite these concerns—and frustration with Bavaria in particular—Hegel saw contemporary events during the Napoleonic period as confirming his claims regarding the character of modern life. After Napoleon's defeat, Hegel—like many supporters of the recent reforms—initially worried that the Congress of Vienna would undo much of the progress.[13] As a result, seeing that the Congress's settlement would leave in place many of the decisive changes wrought by the Napoleonic period helped to solidify Hegel's view that the vision of modern life that he had developed would indeed triumph over the older order. The shift had gone too far, become too much a part of life, to be reversed.

This confidence that the new order had already emerged, even if only in outline, entailed a shift in Hegel's understanding of his own role. Like many of his generation, Hegel had earlier viewed himself as a kind of societal midwife, helping a new way of life to be born. By 1817, now a professor in Heidelberg, Hegel had shifted in the direction of a defender and reformer working to consolidate and demonstrate the rationality of the progress that had already

[11] Efforts to place constraints on the rights of the landed aristocracy, for instance, frequently changed the nature of their titles to land without significantly diminishing their power or increasing the independence of those who worked the land. In Prussia the constitution that Frederick Wilhelm III first promised in 1810 was perpetually delayed. As this example illustrates, even though monarchs generally played a role in driving the reforms and appointed their ministers, they sometimes balked when the reforms could have functioned to limit their own power.

[12] Pinkard 2000, 250–1.

[13] Because Hegel associated Napoleon so closely with the emergence of a new, modern world, he was shocked and initially incredulous regarding Napoleon's defeat. See Pinkard 2000, 309–10, 313–14, and 324–5.

been made.[14] Such a position by no means entailed defending every existing institution or practice, much less defending them simply because they had come to exist. Rather, it shaped the task of identifying and articulating what is rational and essential in the present in order both to defend it from its critics and to facilitate its coming to fruition.[15]

Accepting the chair of philosophy in Berlin in 1818, Hegel moved to the heart of Prussia. Under the leadership of Stein and then Hardenberg, Prussia had seemed to move to the forefront of the post-Napoleonic reforms that Hegel supported. On becoming *Staatskanzler* in 1810, Hardenberg moved quickly to open careers to all who were qualified, to reform the tax system, and to reform the economic system by shifting the authority to license businesses from the guilds to the state. Hardenberg was a strong advocate of reform from above and had even less interest than Stein in increasing popular participation through democratic reforms.[16] Integral to these Prussian reforms was the founding of the University of Berlin in 1810 as a model modern university, whose mission it was to prepare a cadre of educated bureaucrats to carry out the modernization of Prussian society. Though resistance from entrenched interests and a lack of popular support slowed the pace of reform even before the Congress of Vienna, Hegel arrived at the University of Berlin envisioning himself playing a central role in the ongoing actualization of this reformist vision.[17]

In his first years in Berlin, however, Hegel's vision of his role faced significant challenges.[18] Not long after his arrival, the reactionary Karlsbad Decrees of 1819 established more extensive oversight to ensure that professors were not disseminating ideas deemed threatening to the established order, as well as more extensive censorship of publications throughout the German Confederation.[19] While reforms did not thereby end, many saw the Karlsbad Decrees as a significant move against reform.

In this context, Hegel feared for his own position and worried that his vision of the university's role in modern society was itself under threat. Although Hegel was willing to defend his students, his general response was not to

[14] *Briefe* #278, 2:101/341. See also Pinkard 2000, 370–2.

[15] I have discussed this role for theory in Hegel's mature philosophy at length in Lewis 2005, 115–34.

[16] Pinkard 2000, 422–3 and Sheehan 1989, 303–10.

[17] See Pinkard 2000, 425–31.

[18] The resulting worry finds clear expression in the pessimistic closing of the 1821 manuscript of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (*VPR* 3:95–7). See the discussion in Chapter 6 below.

[19] In March of that year, Karl Sand, a supporter of the rising nationalist current and member of the *Burschenschaften* movement, assassinated August von Kotzebue, a political agent working for Russia. Already concerned to take more aggressive steps to combat potential threats to the regime, Austria's Metternich used the assassination as a pretext to convince other members of the German Confederation to adopt a series of repressive measures, the Karlsbad Decrees, to suppress opposition to the existing regimes. See Sheehan 1989, 408.

defend the academic freedom of the accused—who included Hegel's longtime rival Jakob Friedrich Fries and Fries' former student Wilhelm Martin Lebrecht de Wette—but to gently support their removal from teaching positions.[20] Hegel rejected their views of the basis of modern identity (which he linked to the nationalism to be discussed below) and saw their misguided ideas and political provocations as threatening the university's mission.[21] Hegel's attitude led to a particularly ugly incident with Friedrich Schleiermacher, who was himself under threat, causing a rift that never healed.[22] Unsurprisingly, this response was highly unpopular among many of Hegel's colleagues and contributed to the view—already developing during his lifetime—that he was too close to the government and simply an apologist for the powers that be.[23] As a result, he felt himself threatened both by more reactionary forces in the government and more liberal groups in the university.

Despite these frustrations, Hegel's following grew and he came to see himself at the center of the process of completing the realization of a modern, rational way of life.[24] One aspect of this task was that taken up by the *Philosophy of Right*: a philosophical demonstration of the rationality of

[20] Fries and de Wette were dismissed from their university positions. Both were closely connected to the *Burschenschaften* movement, which tended toward a romantic nationalism that Hegel opposed. Several of Hegel's student followers fell under suspicion, and some were arrested. The student he had brought with him to Berlin to serve as a kind of teaching assistant was denied the position on political grounds. With regard to the dismissal of those, such as Fries, who were identified as "demagogues," Hegel wrote to Niethammer, "I then realized the wretchedness and well-deserved fate of the demagogues. And although the action of officials in such a nebulous matter was admittedly not justifiable at the start, I came to realize its eventual justice" (*Briefe* #390, 2271/470). On these developments, see Pinkard 2000, 435–50.

[21] As Pinkard has written, "Hegel did not go over to the side of the reactionaries; but he did more and more come to think that he was simply a better man than others to be leading the university into a more modern, free life, and that those like Fries and de Wette who seemed to threaten the whole enterprise with all their various ill-conceived shenanigans were better left behind" (2000, 468).

[22] The conflict with Schleiermacher became more entrenched over the course of Hegel's time in Berlin. Partly as a result, Schleiermacher allied with another of Hegel's rivals, the much more conservative Karl von Savigny, to keep Hegel out of the prestigious Akademie der Wissenschaften. Hegel took this exclusion as a personal affront. On the dispute with Schleiermacher, see Pinkard 2000, 445–7 and Crouter 1980.

[23] On Hegel's relationship with the minister of culture under Hardenberg, Karl von Altenstein, see Toews 1980, 60.

[24] See Pinkard 2000, 496. In a passage that captures well the (self-)importance that Hegel attached to the project and his role in it, Pinkard writes:

> Hegel [upon his return from his trip to Paris in 1827]—still, as ever, true to his belief in the importance and necessity of the Revolution—was all the more convinced that for Germany, indeed for all the post-Napoleonic European states, only a gradual and inevitable process of reform by degrees was now properly on the agenda, and that the process of reform at least in Germany was essentially going to have to come from the top down, from the civil service, which meant in effect that the focal point of reform lay in the university. The bureaucrats in the civil service, trained in *Wissenschaft* and *Bildung* in the university, would gradually and rationally transform all the German principalities (*Länder*) into modern states, and Prussia would be leading the way. Prussia was the "focal point" of German culture, Berlin was

the emerging institutions, which includes delineating which are integral to the modern state and which are not.

As important as this task was, however, the setbacks to reform, due partly to the absence of broad support, highlighted another crucial need: How might the broader population find itself at home in this new social and political world? As leaders such as Stein and Hardenberg recognized, this involved shifting individuals' senses of identity away from a principal focus on their localities—often the German "hometowns" discussed in Chapter 1—and toward the state.[25] The need was all that much more acute in a historical context where the majority of the population had had their towns transferred to a different state during the last two decades. For Hegel, however, the issue was even broader. It concerned not merely individuals' relations to the political institutions of a centralized state but, more fundamentally, to identifying with a new order that also included new social relations and economic opportunities.

One influential strategy for the transformation of identities was a newly emergent German nationalism. This current grew from romantic roots and became a locus of resistance to Napoleon's presence. Nationalism was by no means a unified movement or ideology during this period; but as articulated in the work of figures such as Jakob Fries, Ernst Moritz Arndt, and Friedrich Ludwig Jahn this current sought to ground a "German" identity in a supposedly shared and continuous past, linked to the Germanic tribes described by Tacitus, that maintained its original purity across the centuries. Schleiermacher, too, championed certain of these sentiments, thereby highlighting that nationalism could not at that time be easily identified as intrinsically "conservative." It bears stressing that at a time when Germany did not exist as a state, nationalist movements were generally perceived as threats to the status quo—particularly once the Napoleonic threat had been removed.[26]

Hegel was entirely unsympathetic to this rising current, seeing it as profoundly at odds with a rational, modern society. The historical falsehoods to which it appealed were patently obvious to Hegel. More importantly, it based identity fundamentally in particularities and thereby placed itself at odds with the conception of self-determining freedom at the heart of Hegel's thought. It seemed to reject a shared reason in favor of particularistic emotional identifications. In Arndt's words, "It is an eternal rule that when one speaks of the highest, of love and friendship, one should not think, but let the heart reign."[27]

Prussia's "focal point," the university was the "focal point" of Berlin, and philosophy—Hegel's philosophy—was the "focal point" of the university. (Pinkard 200, 605)

[25] Pinkard 2000, 419–25.

[26] On German nationalism during this period, see Sheehan 1989, 371–88 and Anderson 1939.

[27] Quoted in Anderson 1939, 87.

Hegel's attitude toward the movement is best summed up in his description of the supporters of *Deutschtum* as "*Deutschdumm*" (*Briefe* #241, 2:43/312).

Admittedly, Hegel had greater concern for these particular, local identities than some. His political thought attributes essential roles to institutions such as the family, estates, and guilds as mediating between the individual and the state. He worries that without such institutions, people's sense of belonging will erode. Nonetheless, for Hegel these mediating institutions must be integrated into—not juxtaposed with—an identification with and commitment to the state.[28]

Hegel was thus deeply committed to a view of reform from above, led by enlightened bureaucrats educated in the modern university. As Hegel understood it, this commitment put him at odds with nationalists as well as with certain liberal reformers (some of whom participated in this nationalist current) who focused greater attention on popular representation and freedom from government interventions such as censorship. Hegel feared that moves in the direction of popular sovereignty were likely to reinforce particularistic, often local identities defined over against the state, rather than to foster an identification with what Hegel saw as the rational, modern state that was emerging.[29]

While these historical developments may initially appear to have little to do with religion, this context frames a central task of the philosophy of religion.[30] It seemed clear to Hegel that new laws and constitutions alone would not bring about this identification. As he argues at length in the Remark to the final paragraph of objective spirit, immediately before the transition to absolute spirit, even the best laws will not make a successful state if the people do not identify with and support the laws and institutions (*Enz.* § 552 A). Pinkard states this well: For Hegel, "attempts to simply impose administrative reform from above could not work unless they were also anchored in the way of life of a people."[31] If the solution could not come from an organic nationalism, neither could art play this role today.[32] For Hegel, religion was essential to the solution.

[28] See Lewis 2005, 166–83.

[29] See Pinkard 2000, 608.

[30] Pinkard 2000, 605–9 offers an excellent account of this task as Hegel understood it but gives relatively little attention to the vital role that Hegel attributes to religion in responding. On 472, for instance, Pinkard notes that Hegel's conception of modern ethical life entailed that "he had to demonstrate that Protestant Christianity, in its reinterpretation in light of his philosophy, was indeed *the* defensible modern religion and compatible with the claims to rationality embodied in modern *Sittlichkeit*." Central to my claim is that Hegel argued for much more than "compatibility." For Hegel, Protestantism has played a vital role in the emergence of modern ethical life and continues to play an essential role in supporting it.

[31] Pinkard 2000, 252.

[32] Toward the end of the previous century, works such as Friedrich Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Mankind* and the writings of a number of romantics had argued for the

The most extensive account of this conception of religion in general and Christianity in particular is found in Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion,* based on the lectures he offered while a professor in Berlin. Hegel lectured on philosophy of religion four times over the course of his years there—in 1821, 1824, 1827, and 1831. From the 1821 lectures, we have principally Hegel's draft manuscript, seemingly composed in haste and not precisely the form that the lectures actually took. From the 1824 and 1827 lectures, we have a number of transcriptions made by students. From Hegel's final lectures on the topic, in 1831, no known transcriptions have survived, so we have principally David Friedrich Strauss' brief excerpts from the lectures. Working together with Peter Hodgson (who edited the English translation) and Ricardo Ferrara (who edited the Spanish edition), Walter Jaeschke has compiled these and other materials in the authoritative three-volume edition of Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*.[33]

Changes among the versions of the lectures illuminate which issues Hegel was still working through as well as the opponents with whom he was most engaged at a given moment. In the present context, my concern is principally with grasping the problems that motivated Hegel as well as his best thinking on the issues. This will often lead to a focus on the last version of which we have a record, i.e. the 1827 lectures, but I will also make significant reference to other versions of the lectures.[34]

The introductions to the lectures situate Hegel's conceptualization of religion in relation to the contemporary alternatives. The contestation over the

political significance of art in response to concerns about social fragmentation. Soon after the turn of the century, however, a number of the romantics turned from art to religion as the source of a response to social fragmentation (see Sheehan 1989, 329 and 336). Although Hegel's view of the limitations of art is different—and he adamantly rejected the Catholicism adopted by romantics such as the Schlegel brothers and Brentano—he shared with these other members of his generation the view that art could not provide social cohesion for the population as a whole. Moreover, art is—for Hegel—incapable of conveying the content needed to justify modern institutions. On its limitations, see *Enz.* § 563.

[33] For detailed discussion of the sources, their compilation and the relation to previous editions, see Jaeschke 1983b, ix–lxxxvi and Hodgson 1984, 8–40. For a valuable treatment of the distinctive emphases of the different series of the lectures as well as the relation to previously published editions of Hegel's philosophy of religion, see Hodgson 2005, 47–51. On the authority of the lectures in relation to Hegel's relatively brief remarks on religion in his own publications, see Jaeschke 1990, 209–12.

[34] Jaeschke (1990, 244) has argued for the "primacy" of the 1827 lectures in the interpretation of the "Concept of Religion," and Hodgson that the treatment of the consummate religion first received "definitive structural resolution at this time" (1988, 5). In his analysis of the lectures, Hodgson argues for the value of "allowing differently nuanced renditions of common themes to stand side by side" so as to properly emphasize the fluid, open character of Hegel's thinking (2005, 51). While I concur with Hodgson's emphasis on this fluid character, this point should not preclude appreciating topics on which Hegel's thinking takes steps forward that bring greater consistency to his project as a whole. Where the latter is the case, I am most concerned with Hegel's most developed version of a solution.

concept of religion is apparent not only within each of the versions of the introduction but also across them, showing in the different ways that he portrays the contemporary religious landscape each time he lectures. The field is unstable.

In highlighting these debates, the introductions elaborate what is needed in a conception of religion that responds to the needs of the day. For Hegel, if religion is to provide social cohesion, it cannot be at odds with the intellectual developments of the age. Though intellectual viability may be unnecessary for some pious individuals, the critical spirit is now widespread. Major segments of society have begun to ask questions of a sort that will not be satisfied until an intellectually defensible conception of religion provides the necessary solid ground.[35] If religion cannot be rationally defended, it will not be capable of serving the social function that he envisions for it. Neither an exclusive focus on piety and immediate faith nor the theologies of reflection can achieve this task (*VPR* 1:41–4, 71–2, 78–9). These alternative conception of religion ultimately collapse upon themselves.

No less importantly, a modern conception of religion must maintain the claim that religion engages our most fundamental concerns. Thus, although he describes religion as taking us away from our daily concerns (*VPR* 1:62), it is not separate from the rest of life but rather deals with what is most fundamental to it as a whole: "Everything that people value and esteem, everything on which they think to base their pride and glory, all of this finds its ultimate focal point in religion . . . " (*VPR* 1:61). Crucially, this entails that the concerns of religion are connected to—not qualitatively distinct from—those of philosophy and politics. Though distinguished from philosophy and politics, religion cannot be seen as fundamentally separate from either.

While an adequate account of religion must be intellectually defensible and cohere with a philosophical vision, it will also have to account for religion's power to console us in a way that philosophy cannot. As Hegel states early on,

> All the griefs of this bank and shoal of life vanish away in this aether, whether in the feeling of devotion or of hope. All of it drops into the past. In religion all cares pass away, for in it one finds oneself fortunate. All harshness of fate passes into a dream. Everything earthly dissolves into light and love, not a remote but an actually present liveliness, certainty, and enjoyment. (*VPR* 1:62)

This florid language comes from Hegel's most general description of religion and points to one of the crucial respects in which it diverges from philosophy. Its emotional power surpasses that of philosophy, not only for those who have no access to philosophy but for philosophers as well. Although religion shares its object with philosophy, this power enables it to play a social role that

[35] For a biting discussion of the problems with trying to impose a faith that is not intellectually defensible, see *VPR* 1:239–40. See also *VPR* 3:95–6 and 3:268–9.

philosophy alone cannot. It shapes our identities and defines our deepest commitments at an earlier age, before we are capable of philosophy. While a satisfactory account of religion must illuminate a philosophical justification for religion, religion's development within the individual or society does not depend upon building up from a philosophical foundation. To the contrary, Hegel emphasizes that religion is typically acquired prior to philosophy and that philosophy does not aim at religious upbuilding; that is the task of preaching (see *VPR* 1:8).

Properly understood, religion has the potential to play this role in society. At present, however, its capacity to do so is threatened by the dominant currents of thinking about religion. Hegel's treatments of "the relationship of the science of religion to the needs of our time" (*VPR* 1:61) focus largely on what he describes as the "unmediated convictions of the age" (*VPR* 1:74). The principal targets of these criticisms—as well as the precise way in which they are characterized—shift over the course of the lectures.[36] Throughout the versions, however, Hegel devotes significant attention to conceptions of religion as immediate knowledge of God, on one hand, and a variety of views of religion that he associates with the philosophy of reflection, on the other. While these two groups often appear to be diametrically opposed—the former rejecting philosophy or at least its significance for religion and the latter accepting it as providing criteria for the judgment of religion—Hegel argues that they share much more than they realize. While neither provides an adequate conception of religion, each plays a role in setting the stage for the more adequate conception that Hegel proposes.

In the 1827 lectures, Hegel formulates one of his principal targets as the view that religion involves an immediate knowledge of God: "Here indeed it is a question of the conviction of the age that religion, that God is revealed immediately in the consciousness of human beings, that religion amounts just to this point, that the human being knows God immediately" (*VPR* 1:70). According to this view, religion is fundamentally distinct from philosophy by virtue of its immediate, unreflective character; our access to God does not run along the channels of the concepts and categories of thought. Hegel associates this conception of immediate knowledge with an emphasis on faith, "though faith in a sense different from that of the church" (*VPR* 1:70). Hegel generally takes Friedrich Jacobi as the most important representative of this position, though in the 1827 lectures he likely has Schleiermacher in mind as well (see *VPR* 1:70). On one hand, Hegel credits this view with laying the groundwork

[36] The 1821 manuscript focuses on "the religion of the pious person" and the standpoints of "reflection," for instance, whereas the 1824 lectures devote more time to theology of the understanding (*Verstandestheologie*) (see, for instance, *VPR* 1:12–13 and 1:40–41). On Hegel's concern in the 1827 lectures with the neo-Pietist challenge represented by F. A. G. Tholuck, see Hodgson 2005, 49.

for the acceptance of the view that he will articulate; it has spread the notion that religion comes from within spirit itself:

> Its effect is utterly to remove all external authority, all alien confirmation. What is to be valid for me must have its confirmation in my own spirit. The impetus can certainly come from without, but the external origin is unimportant. That I believe is due to the witness of my own spirit. (*VPR* 1:71)

Without meaning to do so, this position reveals that religion cannot be vindicated by any authority other than spirit itself, which Hegel will ultimately understand in terms of reason.

On its own, however, this claim to immediate knowledge cannot support any actual content. It is a merely formal and empty faith. What is central is *that* I believe, not *what* I believe (*VPR* 1:72). Hegel will develop this point at length in the body of the lectures, but it is already apparent in the introduction that religion so conceived lacks the content or specificity to do the work that Hegel conceives for religion. It tells us nothing about ourselves, society or what should matter to us.

This focus on immediate knowledge of God easily appears similar to another model of religion that Hegel also discusses in terms of immediacy, yet the two are important to distinguish. Whereas the conception of immediate knowledge sketched above developed in response to challenges to faith—as in Jacobi's response to Kant—another model of immediate religion is that of pious people who have never seriously questioned the faith with which they were raised. This involves "an unreflective, uncontested faith in [*zu*] God (whose known image is presupposed), a trust, an obedience without opposition" (*VPR* 1:12). Hegel describes this position as free of even the reflection that is involved in asserting "I *believe* in [*a*] God" (*VPR* 1:12). Such individuals take for granted the faith they have inherited uncritically, without experiencing a need to scrutinize or justify it. Their lives are unified: "[T]he sundering of religion and the rest of consciousness does not [seem] to take place. Instead, what is most noteworthy *seems to remain in this unity*, precisely because the disjunction between the divine and cognition as self-positing is not [yet] present: not yet eaten of the tree of knowledge" (*VPR* 1:16). Religion is here completely integrated with all of life, not standing over against either practical or philosophical concerns. Whereas the immediate knowledge discussed above lacks content, this unreflectively pious faith can be rich in doctrine and content-laden beliefs. For some people, this faith will provide powerful social glue. From Hegel's perspective, however, they have not participated in the intellectual developments tied to the emergence of the need for a distinctively modern form of social cohesion. Once one departs from this position, however, one cannot return. The position depends upon its never having been departed from, and since it cannot be returned to, it affords no solution to the challenges that Hegel takes up. Insofar as one of the characteristics of the

modern world in Hegel's view is the pervasiveness of a certain kind of critical questioning, those who possess this form of immediate faith can be said to be living in a premodern world. They will be unlikely to engage with political developments, either opposing or supporting them. They may remain marginal to the political processes of the day, but they will not be a source of upheaval. Hegel does not aim to change such people. Although there are Hegelian reasons to hold that such people do not realize their potential, that is not Hegel's concern here.[37] Nor does Hegel think philosophy could play a significant role in bringing about such change.

Once reflection begins, however, we embark upon a path for which Hegel sees his own position as the only viable endpoint. Looking around him, Hegel sees most of his contemporaries standing somewhere along the way, generally failing to realize the instability of their particular resting point. While immediate knowledge is one such resting place, other positions self-consciously incorporate acts of reflection. These strategies may take themselves to be preserving religion but subtly undermine it. Central threads of Hegel's argument here run along now classic paths of arguments for secularization. As the scope of reason and understanding has extended, religion's role has decreased: "The more the cognition of finite things is *expanded*—and the extension of the sciences has now become almost boundless, all fields of knowledge having enlarged [their scope] beyond all compass—the more the sphere of the knowledge of God has contracted" (*VPR* 1:6). The more that philosophy and other sciences can explain, the less is left for religion, so that God becomes nothing more than the "God of the gaps." Although apologists may argue that these developments allow us finally to appreciate the true essence of religion as distinct from philosophy and other spheres of human enquiry, Hegel views this as a religion that has shriveled up into nothing more than a feeling (*VPR* 1:22). In certain versions of this modern theology, reason is brought "into the lists against itself" to claim that "reason can have no cognition of God": "The consequence is that no meaning for the expression 'God' remains in theology any more than in philosophy, save only the representation, definition, or abstraction of the supreme being—a vacuum of abstraction, a vacuum of 'the beyond'" (*VPR* 1:42).

Christian doctrine is consequently deemphasized if not simply rejected: "'Eternal damnation' and 'eternal blessedness' are themselves phrases that may not be used in so-called polite company. . . . Even though one does not disavow them, one would still be embarrassed to have to declare oneself about them" (*VPR* 1:68). Such ideas appear at best quaint to cultivated, modern sensibilities and are therefore treated much like a crazy and mildly offensive uncle at a family gathering. Though Hegel himself will understand such

[37] I have addressed these kinds of concerns in Lewis 2005, 163–85.

doctrines in a manner quite different from much of the tradition, he does not think they can be ignored, for he takes them to carry genuine content.

While such a God may temporarily preserve the illusion that religion has not been abandoned, this God becomes steadily less significant, nothing more than a residue. Religion so conceived becomes less and less relevant to daily life and more and more separated from the rest of one's consciousness. From this perspective, reconciliation is not found in the life and institutions of the present; this conception of religion is thus quite similar to what Hegel holds in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is the highest form of religion—a conception that he has now deemed an inadequate understanding of religion.[38] Though this strategy has undoubtedly been one of the dominant ones for defending religion in the modern West, it renders religion incapable of providing the social cohesion and reconciliation that Hegel attributes to religion. It ultimately contributes to, rather than addresses, the alienation so common in modern life.

Like the claims to immediate knowledge discussed above, however, this theology of reflection or of the understanding also contributes to the emergence of the Hegelian view. As Hegel stresses in the 1827 lectures, theology's increasing indifference toward doctrine renders it less defensive in relation to philosophy:

> If now theology no longer places such importance on the positive doctrines of Christianity, or for that matter if through their interpretation these doctrines are enveloped in such a fog, then one impediment to the philosophical comprehension of the dogmas drops away, which used to arise from the fact that philosophy was considered to be an opponent of the teachings of the church. If those doctrines have declined so sharply in their interest, then philosophy can operate without constraint in regard to them. (*VPR* 1:68)

Beyond simply clearing the way for philosophy's engagement with religion, this deemphasis on doctrine on the part of Hegel's opponents will enable him to claim—through his own defense of doctrines—that he is the genuine defender of the tradition. It thus positions him well to respond to the charges of atheism and pantheism to which he was particularly concerned to respond in the 1827 lectures.[39]

In addition to this largely negative function, however, these recent theological developments also have a positive role in providing an opening for his own philosophy of religion. Vis-à-vis a theology that seeks to found itself on scripture or the history of doctrine, the theology that has emerged from the Enlightenment shares—at least at an abstract level—the Hegelian commitment to the necessity of reason:

[38] See Lewis 2008b.
[39] See Hodgson 2005, 49.

> Since a so-called theology of reason arose and was produced in this manner, we can on the one hand say that we find ourselves on common ground, that reason has to be a factor; and if the interpretation that emerges is supposed to be in accordance with reason, then we can here claim the right to develop religion freely and openly out of reason, without taking as our starting point the specific word [of scripture]. (*VPR* 1:40–1)

Although such theology remains at the level of reflection and the understanding rather than rising to genuine reason, it has spread widely the notion that an adequate conception of religion must be one that can be validated by reason.

Recent theological developments have thus simultaneously conceived religion in a manner that renders it incapable of fulfilling the function that Hegel envisions for it and prepared the ground for a conception that can. In its various forms, modern religious thought has separated religion from the rest of consciousness (*VPR* 1:11); it has thereby contributed to the fragmentation of modern life. And, yet, in the emphasis on the necessity of spirit providing its own witness, in its clearing the way for philosophy to treat doctrine with a relatively free hand, and in establishing thinking as the tribunal for religion, these seemingly divergent elements converge: "What has been stated are the basic characteristics that we can regard as immediate impressions and unmediated convictions of the age relating expressly to religion, to knowledge of God" (*VPR* 1:74–5). While this situation provides only external justification for the philosophical position itself, their prevalence suggests that the groundwork has been laid for the emergence of a view such as Hegel's; the elements are in place. Even the views that "maintain that they are contradicting philosophy, that they are contesting it and are most sharply opposed to it—if we look at their content, the determination [*Bestimmtheit*] they express, then we see that in themselves they exhibit agreement with that which they assail" (*VPR* 1:75).

THE RELATIONSHIP TO PHILOSOPHY AS A WHOLE

Hegel's alternative appears in a preliminary form in the introduction. As important as the introductory sketch, however, is the treatment of the relation between the philosophy of religion and philosophy in general. This relationship reveals the connection between Hegel's conception of religion and the philosophical underpinnings of his larger project discussed in the previous chapter. It therefore constitutes another essential piece of the frame necessary for the proper interpretation of this segment of Hegel's system. The remainder

of this chapter therefore begins by examining several of the defining features of Hegel's conception of religion as set out in his introduction and then turns to the philosophical understructure of this conception.

Preliminary Sketch

Hegel opens each series of the lectures with dramatic, encompassing, and florid descriptions of the nature of religion. Religion is

> the loftiest object that can occupy human beings, the absolute object. . . . Everything that people value and esteem, everything on which they think to base their pride and glory, all of this finds its ultimate focal point in religion, in the thought or consciousness of God and in the feeling of God. God is the beginning and end of all things. God is the sacred center, which animates and inspires all things. Religion possesses its object within itself—and that object is God, for religion is the relation of human consciousness to God . . . Here our concern about the final end can have no other final end than this object itself. (*VPR* 1:61)

These passages seem to entail a highly theocentric conception of religion and thus appear to challenge an interpretation that rejects a notion of a divine entity separate from human beings.

It might be tempting to dismiss this language as the hyperbolic style typical of the first day of a course, in which the speaker seeks to convince the listeners of the import of what will be discussed over the course of the semester. The consistency of Hegel's formulations from 1821 to 1827 also suggest the formulaic character of this account.[40] While these aspects of the immediate context may account for some of the rhetoric, the claims are too well supported by other sections of the lectures and too important to Hegel's portrayal of religion to be ignored; a compelling interpretation must take these claims seriously rather than dismissing them as exaggeration.

These passages make the vital point that religion is not simply a means to social order but rather is *about* what is of most fundamental importance. From the opening paragraphs, however, Hegel makes clear how little this general language about God tells us. These are the broad brush accounts whose precise meaning the philosophy of religion must elucidate. In the 1827 lectures, Hegel concludes this more general description thus: "Such is the universal [or general, *allgemeine*] content of religion among human beings; this content it is our intent to consider" (*VPR* 1:62). "God," for instance, is not a self-evident term but rather the most important term that the philosophy of religion will have to analyze. We cannot uncritically import our preconceived notions of

[40] Compare the 1821 manuscript version (*VPR* 1:3–4), the 1824 lectures (1:31–2), and the 1827 lectures (1:61–2).

this term into the interpretation of Hegel's text. At the same point in the 1824 lectures, Hegel makes the even more specific point that the descriptions of the previous paragraphs have been in the language of representation: "This is the representation that religion has of God generally [*im allgemeinen*], and the philosophy of religion makes this content the content of a particular treatment" (*VPR* 1:32).

Religion's object or end, however, is not uniquely its own. A central claim of Hegel's account of the relation between religion and philosophy is that they share the same object:

> [T]he content of philosophy, its need and interest, is wholly in common with that of religion. The object of religion, like that of philosophy, is the eternal truth, God and nothing but God and the explication of God. Philosophy explicates only itself when it explicates religion, and when it explicates itself it is explicating religion. For the *thinking* spirit is what penetrates this object, the truth; it is thinking that enjoys the truth and purifies the subjective consciousness. Thus religion and philosophy coincide in one. (*VPR* 1:63)

The terms "God," "spirit," and "absolute" all refer to this same, shared object and are in this sense synonyms. "God" is the language typically used for this object in religions, and Hegel frequently uses it to refer to religious representations of this object. In contrast, he generally uses "spirit" to refer to this object as grasped by philosophy; and "the absolute" is a more generic term that encompasses both religious and philosophical accounts.[41] At the beginning of the philosophy of religion, the terms "God" and "the absolute" function largely as placeholders for this object—whose definitive content has not yet been given. Moreover, over the course of history, these terms function to represent that which people have taken to be absolute—that to which they have attributed absolute value. This consciousness—and thus the grasp of this object—has developed over time. Only at the end of this development, in the philosophical account of spirit, is the genuine content of this object revealed. Although "God" initially functions largely as a placeholder for religion's ultimate object, it could not be substituted with "x," precisely because Hegel is arguing that the object at issue here is just what historical and actual religions are about. Thus, in equating the objects of religion and philosophy, Hegel is not subordinating philosophy to religion. To the contrary, it is thinking—which in its technical sense characterizes philosophy rather than religion—that is capable of explicating this object and thus of providing the definitive account of the absolute.

While sharing this common object, then, religion and philosophy are distinguished by the forms in which they cognize God. As Hegel will argue

[41] Note that this use of "absolute" is related to but importantly distinct from the use in "absolute spirit," discussed below.

at length in Part I of the lectures, religion is characterized by representation (*Vorstellung*), an imagistic mode of cognition rooted in the given. Philosophy, by contrast, operates in the self-determining concepts of thought (*Denken*). Already in the introduction, Hegel demonstrates that much of what is often taken for granted under the notion "God" is a result of religion's distinct form: "The spirit that makes itself an object gives itself essentially the shape of a representation, of something given, of something appearing to the other spirit for which it is. This spirit appears for the other as something given, something coming to it in a higher mode" (*VPR* 1:54). Philosophy, however, will overcome this alterity attributed to the absolute by religion's representational form. This difference in forms, Hegel argues, has generated much confusion—specifically, the difficulty in uniting religion and philosophy and the frequently "hostile stance of each toward the other" (*VPR* 1:64).

This combination of common content and distinct form lies at the core of Hegel's strategy for conceiving of a modern, distinctly post-Kantian religion and defines a central task of the philosophy of religion: to provide a philosophical account of religious representations that shows them to share philosophy's content. Where writings from the Jena period held that religion shares its object with philosophy, he held there that the representational form was inadequate to express the full reconciliation that only philosophy could provide.[42] For that reason, religion could not provide an adequate solution to the social concerns that had motivated him from early on. By the time of the later Berlin lectures, however, Hegel argues that although religious representations do not cognize the truth as adequately as philosophical thinking does, these religious representations are still capable of instilling and expressing the reconciliation necessary for social cohesion.

This relationship between religion and philosophy defines a central goal of the *philosophy* of religion: "these lectures have the purpose . . . of cognizing God" (*VPR* 1:7–8; see also *VPR* 1:43). Throughout the various versions of the introduction, the inevitability of thought constitutes a recurrent theme. Claims that faith is a matter of immediate knowledge collapse with the impossibility of remaining in such a state. As soon as we attempt to understand a purportedly immediate experience, to assign it weight or meaning, we engage in the process of reflection that generates thought. And such queries will not be easily stopped.

Hegel makes a similar point in his discussions of the Bible, where he argues against appeals to the Bible as an alternative to thinking:

> One does not take the words [of the Bible] as they stand, because what is understood by the biblical "word" is not words or letters as such but the spirit with which they are grasped. For we know historically that quite opposite dogmas

[42] See Lewis 2008b.

> have been derived from these words, that the most contrasting viewpoints have been elicited from the letter of the text because the spirit did not grasp it. In these instances appeal was to the letter, but the genuine ground is the spirit.
>
> The words of the Bible constitute an unsystematic account; they are Christianity as it appeared in the beginning. It is *spirit* that grasps the content, that spells it out. (*VPR* 1:77; see also 1:39–40)

Although Hegel here develops the point specifically in relation to Christian scripture and the idea that the "the letter kills" (*VPR* 1:77), his underlying argument is that for a text to have meaning for us it must be understood and that the act of understanding requires thinking. It is not a passive act but one in which our own standards are inevitably brought to bear. Consequently, a text cannot itself provide authoritative criteria for judgment; we inevitably judge the text.

In seeking to provide philosophical knowledge of God, Hegel's philosophy of religion appears to be rejecting Kantian claims about the limits of theoretical reason in favor of a return to precritical metaphysics. As he states in the opening lines of the manuscript, the philosophy of religion "in general has the same purpose as the earlier metaphysical science that was called *theologia naturalis*. This term included everything that could be known of God by *mere* reason, as distinct from a positive, revealed religion, a religion that is known from some other source than reason" (*VPR* 1:3). Hegel's philosophy of religion shares with an earlier metaphysics the goal of knowing the absolute through reason. Despite this commonality, the larger transformation of philosophy in the wake of Kant's critiques entails that Hegel does not call for a return to this pre-Kantian metaphysics. Hegel is explicit that the work of Christian Wolff—whom he takes to be a preeminent representative of this *theologia naturalis*—"stays within the bound of the metaphysics of the understanding then current, and is to be viewed rather as a science of the understanding than as one of rational thinking" (*VPR* 1:33).[43]

Hegel's claim to raise philosophy from the level of the understanding to the level of reason brings with it a crucial shift in the understanding of the task of cognizing God. Where Kant's critique is aimed at knowledge of God understood as an object distinct from our own thought and activity, Hegel's appropriation and further development of the Kantian account of the spontaneity of thought—traced in the previous chapter—transforms the object to be cognized. Hegel is not resuming an earlier metaphysical project by claiming our knowledge can reach an object that Kant declared unattainable but rather reconceptualizing the object that is to be known in the act of "cognizing God."

Hegel provides a preliminary account of this point in the introduction through his claims about the limits of the "understanding" (*Verstand*). The

[43] On Hegel's rejection of *theologia naturalis*, see Jaeschke 1990, 230–3.

fundamental problem with the particular form of theology Hegel associates with the Enlightenment, as well as with many of the attacks on this form of theology, is that they presuppose the validity of the categories of the understanding for the treatment of their object:

> These categories are employed entirely uncritically, in a wholly artless fashion, just as if Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* were nonexistent, a book that put them to the test and arrived in its own way at the result that they can serve only for the cognition of phenomena [*Erscheinungen*] and not of the truth. (*VPR* 1:80)

While in this instance Hegel is referring principally to Enlightenment theology, the point applies no less to the *theologia naturalis* he associates with Wolff. To engage with the substance of religion, one must have this mode of cognition well behind one:

> Examples of such categories include the antithesis of the finite and the infinite and of subject and object, abstract forms that are no longer in place in that absolute abundance of content that religion is. They must of course occur in our science, for they are moments of the essential relationship that lies at the basis of religion. But the main thing is that their nature must have been investigated and cognized long beforehand. If we are dealing with religion scientifically, this primarily logical cognition must lie behind us. We must long since have finished with such categories. (*VPR* 1:80)

If one begins Hegel with this introduction to the philosophy of religion, such claims easily appear to be mumbo-jumbo. He offers suggestive allusions, such as the way that "the magnet in the south pole is quite distinct from the north pole, and yet they are inseparable" (*VPR* 1:81). If these comments are taken as an attempt at a proof, Hegel's view appears to be anything but serious philosophical argument. Hegel makes clear, however, that these are allusions to arguments that are made elsewhere. This philosophical work must already be behind us if we are to engage in a scientific study of religion. In other words, this material can only be adequately understood in light of the materials treated in the previous chapter.

For this reason, debate with opponents who raise these kinds of objections is frequently frustrating: "This kind of opposition to philosophy has the tedious consequence that in order to show people that their contentions are self-contradictory one must first go back to the alphabet of philosophy itself" (*VPR* 1:81–2). Hegel is not simply dismissing critics as not worth taking seriously or appealing to a mystical knowledge of unity. Rather, he is making the unsurprising point that these central claims of the philosophy of religion depend upon more fundamental philosophical arguments. Thus, if one wants to dispute those, one has to look to the point where they are taken up—most importantly in the *Logic*.

In briefly discussing the significance of Kant's critique of pure reason, this section of the introduction makes another point vital to understanding his general strategy and why it does not involve simply transgressing the limits to knowledge that Kant has set out. In his response to the critical requirement that "before we embark upon cognitive knowing we must investigate the nature of the cognitive faculty itself," Hegel provides two general responses (*VPR* 1:78). The first is one that he has already made in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*: the only means we have to investigate reason is reason itself, so "[w]e are imposing a requirement that annuls itself" (*VPR* 1:79; see also *PhG* 68–72/46–9). More significant in the present context, however, is a point that pertains specifically to the philosophy of religion:

> [I]n philosophy of religion we have as our object God himself, absolute reason. Since we know God [who is] absolute reason, and investigate this reason, we cognize it, we behave cognitively. Absolute spirit is knowledge, the determinate rational knowledge of its own self. Therefore when we occupy ourselves with this object it is immediately the case that we are dealing with and investigating rational cognition, and this cognition is itself rational conceptual inquiry and knowledge. (*VPR* 1:79)

In the present context, what is most significant about the passage is the way in which it reveals a central aspect of the conception of the philosophy of religion: The principal object of investigation, God, is none other than the actualization of thinking itself. Hegel's philosophy of religion does not ignore Kant's claims about the limits of reason or attempt to do an end run around these limits to attain its object.[44] It avoids the charges precisely through making cognition, thinking itself, the object to be known (and offering extensive arguments to justify why cognition is itself the absolute). The philosophy of religion is thus thoroughly interwoven with Hegel's larger philosophical project and specifically with the account of thinking given in the *Logic*.

Religion having thinking itself as its object intertwines with another feature of Hegel's introductory account of religion. While on one hand he stresses that the object of the philosophy of religion is God, on the other he argues that our relation to God is itself part of the object. In philosophizing religion, we are cognizing not merely God but also our relation to God. This point may be self-evident once we grasp that the philosophy of religion involves the cognition of cognition, but Hegel makes a further point. The impossibility of considering God, or spirit, in abstraction from our relation to spirit can be expressed in both philosophical and specifically theological language:

[44] Walter Jaeschke, for instance, describes Hegel's task in terms of "provid[ing] a basis for philosophy of religion in a philosophical theology—provided one could offer reasons to show that the comprehensive critique of prior speculative theology did not necessarily embrace the critique of *all* speculative theology" (1990, 7, emphasis in original).

> According to the philosophical concept God is spirit, concrete; and if we inquire more precisely what spirit is, it turns out that the basic concept of spirit is the one whose development constitutes the entire doctrine of religion. If we ask our consciousness for a provisional account of what spirit is, the answer is that spirit is a self-manifesting, a being for spirit. Spirit is for spirit and of course not merely in an external, contingent manner. Instead it is spirit only insofar as it is for spirit. This is what constitutes the concept of spirit itself. Or, to put the point more theologically, God's spirit is [present] essentially in his community; God is spirit only insofar as God is in his community. (*VPR* 1:73–4; see also 1:33–4)

Hegel has by no means defended this account of spirit here, but he has indicated the way that this conception—which he sees represented in doctrines regarding the religious community—entails that the absolute is only actual in the community. As a result, what might appear to some as a relation external to that object is, for Hegel, neither external to the object nor susceptible to separation from other aspects of the object. We can give no adequate account of God that is separated from the relation to humans.[45]

Hegel provides further indication of his own conception through the views he rejects. In distinguishing his position from what he takes to be atheism, Hegel rejects theories of religion that posit God as simply a product of individual emotional needs. Such views

> have regarded spirit and thought as something merely material, a combination of material forces; they have reduced spirit and thought to feeling and sensation, and accordingly taken God and all representations [of God] as products of feeling, and denied objectivity to God. The result is then atheism. God is thus a product of feeling, of my weakness—a product of pain, hope, fear, joy, cupidity, and so forth. (*VPR* 1:51)

God, spirit or the absolute, cannot be thought of as merely a result of emotional needs. That toward which religions have been directed is not a figment, though this does not entail that the accounts provided by religious representations are not misleading. To the contrary, the representational form characteristic of religion reifies its objects such that they appear other to us. Thus, in critiquing theories of religion that conceive of God as merely a figment generated by our emotional needs, Hegel does not critique them for rejecting the presentation of God as other. Rather, their problem is that by tying them to emotional needs, they render God subjective. As the passage continues, "[w]hat is rooted only in my feeling is only for me; what is in my

[45] Insofar as we characterize religion as the consciousness of God, as Hegel sometimes does, this entails that religion cannot be treated separately from God; nor can God be treated separately from religion. It therefore precludes the possibility of developing a theory of religion that abstains from judgment regarding the character of God. In this sense, a theory of religion cannot be separated from theology, but the concrete meaning of that claim hinges on Hegel's distinctive account of God.

feeling is what is mine, but it is not what is his [*das Seinige*], is not independent in and for itself" (*VPR* 1:51). Hegel provides an alternative to this view not by conceiving of God as an entity beyond us but through his account of the self-determining character of thinking itself. God's "objectivity," then, will consist not in standing over against us but in the account of objectivity whose elementary aspects are articulated in the logic.

In a similar vein, Hegel stresses that God is not "an invention of human beings" (*VPR* 1:46). Rather, the representation of God is a necessary product of reason, or the self-determining thought analyzed in the previous chapter. As Hegel states in the larger passage,

> Human reason, human spiritual consciousness, or consciousness of its own essence, is reason generally, is the divine in humanity. Spirit, insofar as it is called divine spirit, is not a spirit beyond the stars, beyond the world; for God is present, is omnipresent, and as essentially spirit God is present in spirit. God is a living God who is effective, active, and present in spirit. Religion is a begetting of the divine spirit, not an invention of human beings but an effect of the divine at work, of the divine productive process within humanity. (*VPR* 1:46)

God is thus a product of reason, and this is not a "merely" human reason but the only reason there is. Hegel conceives of "divine" principally in terms of reason and holds that the self-determining movement of this thinking animates this world—just as the discussion of Hegel's idealism in the previous chapter would lead one to expect. As that discussion indicates, Hegel does not view this reason merely as an artifact of human biological mechanisms; this thinking is genuinely self-determining. And yet that does not mean that it takes place anywhere but in human beings.

While these elements of the introduction partially illuminate what it means for religion and philosophy to share an object, Hegel also seeks to show that the philosophy of religion simultaneously deals with actual religions. Unlike a philosophical approach that tries to build up the essential features of religion in pure abstraction from historical traditions, Hegel's project depends on being able to demonstrate agreement between what philosophy can generate on its own—the religion that philosophy can "develop . . . freely and openly out of reason" (*VPR* 1:41)—and existing religious traditions. We can consider the need for this convergence at at least two levels. As we saw above, if religion is to provide the social cohesion that Hegel envisions, it must be intellectually defensible; otherwise it will fall prey to too much criticism to serve that role. Consequently, the existing, actual religion must agree with the philosophical account. While this suggests that the agreement will be necessary for Hegel's strategy to be successful, it does not in itself supply a reason why they should concur.

Hegel's conception of spirit, however, brings with it a reason why they will ultimately agree. Spirit exists as spirit only when it is for spirit. In order to exist

for spirit, spirit must manifest itself. Returning to the passage quoted above, "If we ask our consciousness for a provisional account of what spirit is, the answer is that spirit is a self-manifesting, a being for spirit. Spirit is for spirit and of course not merely in an external, contingent manner. Instead it is spirit only insofar as it is for spirit" (*VPR* 1:73–4). From this self-manifesting character, Hegel derives the need for spirit's consciousness of itself to exist in determinate form, and—due to the nature of cognition, which Hegel discusses at length in Part I—this will involve the historical religions with their representations of the absolute. That is, actual historical religions are expressions of the self-determining activity that is spirit. Hegel's claims regarding this need for manifestation in determinate form raise some of the most difficult questions about his philosophy of religion, and we will take these up in Chapter 5. In the present context, however, the crucial point is that the existing religion and the philosophical account of God will—in the end, after much struggle—agree because they are both manifestations of the same spirit and the philosophical cognition of this object can only emerge in the wake of the religious representations of it.

While the introductions provide us with important insight into Hegel's account of religion, they can also be seen as a series of promissory notes. Hegel offers little argument to support his claims, and the support he does provide is typically anecdotal rather than philosophical. Yet he does not claim to offer more than that here. We grossly misread Hegel if we treat the introductions as attempting to offer more support for Hegel's position than they are intended to. These introductions delineate defining features of his approach, but—like his other introductions—indicate that we must look elsewhere in his corpus for the arguments that defend this approach. Moreover, even if key elements of the strategy are already in place, such as the equation of God and spirit, they are typically introduced in such a way that ambiguity about their ultimate significance is—at times deliberately—preserved. An adequate interpretation of such placeholders must locate them in the larger philosophical argument. How, then, does Hegel support the edifice of the philosophy of religion?

Arriving at the Standpoint of Absolute Spirit

This question brings us to the crucial issue of the starting point of the philosophy of religion. Hegel struggled with this question over the course of the lecture series.[46] In the 1827 lectures, Hegel suggests two ways of conceiving

[46] Jaeschke emphasizes this point well (1990, 223, 239, and 246–51). Where the manuscript and the 1824 lectures suggest the need to demonstrate the necessity of the religious standpoint at the beginning of the philosophy of religion itself, the 1827 lectures maintain that this standpoint must be the result of earlier developments in the system. Jaeschke argues convincingly that the

the starting point of the philosophy of religion. To provide a point of entry for the lecture's audience, Hegel claims that "[i]n regard to this initial content . . . we can also appeal to the general consciousness and in that way take hold of a starting point that is generally valid at least empirically" (*VPR* 1:266). In some sense, Hegel here invites the audience to use their general understanding—of Christianity as well as of religion in general—as a starting point and thereby validates those presuppositions. The claim is that this general understanding is sufficient to enable the audience to take for granted the lectures' starting point and to follow them. Yet Hegel is clear that this starting point is not a properly philosophical one—and thus neither definitive nor authoritative. It is explicitly presented as a concession necessary to address a broader audience. For our own reading, then, we need to beware of how misleading our presuppositions can be.

The justification and the authoritative account of the starting point of the philosophy of religion come not from this general consciousness but from philosophical developments earlier in Hegel's system. Hegel begins Part I of the 1827 lectures, "The question with which we have to begin is: 'How are we to secure a beginning?' " (*VPR* 1:265). He stresses the difficulty, given that "[i]n philosophy we are not allowed to make a beginning with the phrase 'there is' or 'there are'; for that would be the immediate" (*VPR* 1:265). Yet the problem is not as grave at this point as at earlier points in the system:

> In the present case, however, we are not beginning philosophy afresh. The science of religion is one science within philosophy; indeed it is the *final* one. In that respect it presupposes the other philosophical disciplines and is therefore a result. In its philosophical aspect we are already dealing with a result of premises that lie behind us. We have only to begin from religion, and to make sure that this standpoint of religion has been proved and that we can advert from it to our own consciousness . . . The original content, the foundation of the philosophy of religion, is a result, namely a lemma or subsidiary proposition to the effect that the content with which we begin is genuine content. (*VPR* 1:265–6)

The developments of Hegel's system up to the philosophy of religion justify that which the philosophy of religion presupposes. This account of the starting point contrasts with that provided by general consciousness: "Whatever is to be valid in science must be something proved; something conceded is what is presupposed in a subjective way, so that the beginning can be made from it" (*VPR* 1:266). The appeal to general conscious discussed above is just this subjective aid to his audience, a provisional "hand up" instead of the secure

1827 formulation of the arrival at the religious standpoint "is the only one that does justice to the position the philosophy of religion occupies within the system. For it does not seek to make the proof an element in the systematic exposition of the concept of religion; after all, such a demonstration 'lies already behind' the philosophy of religion. A further argument in favor of this conception is that the 1831 lectures take it over apparently unchanged" (1990, 247–8).

basis provided by actual philosophical argument. In this sense, the philosophy of religion is not freestanding; it coheres with Hegel's larger philosophical project.

While Hegel's chief point here concerns the *validity* of this starting point, another aspect of the claim is no less significant: Crucial terms such as reason, thinking, and spirit must be interpreted in relation to these more fundamental elements of Hegel's system. Thus, while it is undeniable that in the philosophy of religion Hegel repeatedly stresses the centrality of "God" to his larger philosophical project, we have to be careful what we make of such claims. To treat them as self-evidently showing that his entire system is conceived theistically (in any conventional sense) is to fail to appreciate that Hegel's ultimate understanding of terms such as "God" is controlled by elements of the system that preclude such theistic claims. Other elements of the system provide the keys for interpreting these concepts within the philosophy of religion, not the contrary.

Though Hegel refers back to the development of the philosophical system up to this point, he remains vague about precisely what elements are crucial for interpreting the philosophy of religion. In the 1827 lectures, he refers briefly to the development from logic, through nature, to finite and then absolute spirit (*VPR* 1:266–7). The earlier developments he has in mind are thus the earlier stages of the system principally as set out in the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences*.[47] The first segment of this system consists in the account of self-determining thought developed most extensively in the *Science of Logic* and treated in the previous chapter. As I will argue in the following chapters, this account is vital less for the triadic structure that is so prominent in the philosophy of religion than for three other elements: First, the account of idealism developed there is essential to the interpretation of Hegel's most fundamental claims about the character of religion. Only with this idealism in mind can we properly interpret claims such as that God "is the truth of all things" (*VPR* 1:266). Second, the self-determining character of thinking will play a crucial role in demonstrating that any "absolute" that appears to come from outside of thinking itself is necessarily conditioned by thinking. Consequently, the only possible path to an adequate conception of the absolute must lie through thinking itself. Third, the open-ended closure of the logic,

[47] Peter Hodgson argues for the centrality of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as the relevant background in the 1821 manuscript and the 1824 lectures and does not note the references to the *Encyclopaedia* structure in 1827 (2005, 83–4). While the 1821 manuscript does seem to refer principally to the *Phenomenology* (see *VPR* 1:135–9, especially the material from alternate editions on 138), the 1824 version seems closer to the *Encyclopaedia's* structure (*VPR* 1:225), and the 1827 lectures make explicit reference to this structure (*VPR* 1:266–7). This increasing emphasis on the *Encyclopaedia's* presentation of the system highlights the central role played by the logic. The 1824 lectures are also very clear on the centrality of the logic to the background of the religious standpoint (*VPR* 1:205 and 213).

characterized by self-transparency rather than an end to movement, will provide the key to the interpretation of Hegel's account of the consummate religion.

Between the end of the logic and the religious standpoint itself, however, lie the sphere of nature and the first two sections of the sphere of spirit—subjective and objective spirit. Although it is impossible to retrace this entire course without working one's way through the entire system, the present project requires us to identify the developments essential to grasping the concept of religion with which the body of the philosophy of religion begins.[48]

The treatment of the logic in the previous chapter provides the key to the interpretation of Hegel's philosophy of nature. He portrays the sphere of nature as the externalization of the concept (*Enz.* § 247). The determinations of thought considered abstractly in the logic here, in the philosophy of nature, constitute—in the manner analyzed above—the objects of nature. By conceiving thought's externalization in (and constitution of) nature in the terms dictated by our interpretation of the logic, we can grasp why Hegel sees his philosophy of nature preserving an element of contingency (*Enz.* § 248). This constituting does not manufacture particulars. As we saw above, the concept does not determine the number of species of parrots. While the Idea is manifest, externalized in nature, in nature this Idea is external to itself. Nature does not exist for itself; that is, qua nature, it has no consciousness of itself.

In the sphere of spirit, the concept returns, out of this externality, to itself. The subject has itself as an object. More specifically, the concept, which refers back to the self-moving thought treated in the logic, is both the subject and the object of spirit (*Enz.* § 381). Put more concretely, the sphere of spirit deals with the activities in which subjects achieve a relationship to that which appears as merely given in nature. These activities include feeling, representation, thinking, and willing, as well as their embodiment in the institutions of social life and in the reflective activities of art, religion, and philosophy. In each of these cases, the activity involves the subject's taking up of what is given, relating to it—though this relationship takes many different forms.[49] Consciousness is a paradigmatic form, but the realm of spirit also encompasses simpler forms of relation. Spirit is this self-relating activity.

As Hegel indicates in the overview of the "Concept of Spirit" at the beginning of the third part of the *Encyclopaedia* (*Enz.* §§ 381–4), spirit is not initially conscious of its being both subject and object—i.e. spirit does not initially appear as thought thinking itself. Rather, the entire third part of the

[48] I have dealt with many of these developments in *Freedom and Tradition in Hegel*. For a brief analysis of the sphere of nature, see 2005, 31–4. Regarding the concept of spirit, see 2005, 34–9. For the reading of subjective spirit, see 2005, 39–113.

[49] Note that such a conception of spirit does not require the introduction of an immaterialist ontology. See Pippin 1999.

Encyclopaedia traces the process through which spirit becomes fully self-conscious and attains self-knowledge—a process that culminates in absolute spirit.

In its overcoming of nature, spirit cancels the seeming givenness of nature and demonstrates its freedom in relation to any apparent given: "The *essence* of spirit is therefore formally *freedom*, the absolute negativity of the concept as identity with itself. On account of this formal determination, spirit *can* abstract from all that is external and even from its own externality, its determinate being [*Dasein*]" (*Enz.* § 382). The self-determining and thus free movement of the concept entails that spirit is not determined by anything other than itself—again, in the sense set out in the previous chapter. This "negativity of the concept" thus concerns its cancelling of the apparently given and its—eventually—coming to grasp the role of thinking itself in constituting the object.

Spirit, however, is not merely this abstract freedom but rather manifests itself in the world. That is, thinking activity takes determinate, actual forms—such as in the various forms of theoretical spirit (intuition, representation, and thinking)—and the subject acts practically in the world to actualize itself (*Enz.* § 383). This revelation of spirit, however, includes not only its actualization in particular human beings and obviously human creations but also nature itself, the "*positing* of nature as *its* world" (*Enz.* § 384). As always, such claims must be understood in terms of the philosophical conception already set out earlier in Hegel's system.

In the Remark to the final paragraph of the "Concept of Spirit," Hegel states clearly that this conception of spirit is the ultimate object of both religion and philosophy:

> *The absolute is spirit;* this is the highest definition of the absolute. It may be said that the discovery of this definition and the grasping of its meaning and content was the ultimate purpose of all education and philosophy. All religion and science has driven toward this point, and world history is to be grasped solely from this drive. The word and the *representation* of spirit was an early discovery, and it is the purport of the Christian religion to make God known as spirit [*der Inhalt der christlichen Religion ist, Gott als Geist zu erkennen zu geben*]. That which is here *given* in representation and which is *implicitly* the essence, is to be grasped in its own element, the concept. This is the task of philosophy, and so long as the concept and freedom do not constitute the general object and soul of philosophy, it is a task which is not truly and immanently accomplished. (*Enz.* § 384 A)

The spirit whose concept Hegel has been setting out in the previous paragraphs is the authentic object of all religion and philosophy. As in the lectures on the philosophy of religion, "God" is the representational expression of that which philosophy grasps as spirit. The content of Christian doctrine as a whole is none other than this spirit. To cognize the absolute in this

(philosophical) manner can be seen as the fruit of the entire development of religion, philosophy, and world history more generally. The larger development is only completed insofar as this final stage of the process—rendering representations into philosophical concepts—has been completed. Only then is spirit fully cognized as manifesting the freely self-determining concept.

Following this introduction of the concept of spirit, the body of part three of the *Encyclopaedia* traces spirit's complex path toward the realization of its self-knowledge. The first section, subjective spirit, begins with spirit submerged in nature. It then turns to the emergence of self-consciousness, portrayed in the second section of subjective spirit, "The Phenomenology of Spirit: Consciousness."[50] In the first section of the "Phenomenology," Consciousness (*Enz.* §§ 418–23), the content that in an earlier stage had been identified with the subject is posited as distinct from the subject. This subject of the "Phenomenology," the I, is constituted precisely by this movement of self-differentiation. The content that is posited as distinct from the self comes to make up the subject's world.

Crucial aspects of Hegel's intersubjective conception of spirit emerge in the transition from consciousness to self-consciousness. This transition occurs as the I recognizes the object at issue to be another I, or self. For Hegel, it is only through having another I as an object that the self comes to grasp itself as a self. First here does the subject begin to understand herself as not determined by the given. Yet this is a gradual and arduous process. Hegel famously describes this development as the outcome of a life-and-death struggle for recognition between two subjects. The subject who initially becomes the slave to the other learns to subordinate her immediate desires and interests (*VPGst* 172). Through this process, the slave begins to grasp herself "as one in whom the determination of sensuous particularity and selfishness is negated" (*VPGst* 173). A decisive step toward the knowledge of spirit's own self-determination has been taken. Through recognizing another self and being recognized by another self as not determined by immediate desires and interests—that is, as an I—the basis for the next stage has been attained. In what Hegel terms "universal self-consciousness," we are all recognized as I's, and what we have in common is precisely our freedom from the given. The conception of the I whose development is being traced here, of course, is the same I that has been central to the project of the logic. Thus, here in the "Phenomenology"—as in Hegel's 1807 book—we are dealing with the developments in consciousness through which the standpoint of the logic has been reached—the

[50] *Enz.* §§ 413–39. See also Hegel's further discussion of this material in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit* (*VPGst* 138–78). For an extended treatment of this section of subjective spirit, see Lewis 2005, 61–77. While this section shares a great deal with sections of the 1807 book, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, this section of the *Encyclopaedia* has a more circumscribed task and concludes with the development of reason, thus stopping well before the final stages of the book version.

consciousness of the thinking subject as self-determining. The account of mutual recognition thereby shows the I itself to be intersubjectively constituted.[51]

In Reason, the final section of the "Phenomenology," the subject moves beyond grasping other subjects as other I's to grasping that the concept it shares with other selves is the same concept whose determinations constitute the objects of consciousness and thus objectivity itself. Hegel here brings into the development of spirit one of the guiding threads of the logic: "it is in the determinations of thought and the concept that it [the object] *is* what it *is*" (*WL* 2:560/833). The subject itself becomes certain "that its determinations are just as much objective, determinations of the essence of things, as its own thoughts" (*Enz.* § 439). With the conclusion of the "Phenomenology," the subject has certainty—though not yet knowledge—of its commonality with other subjects and of their (our) common, self-determining concept constituting the objectivity of the world. It has thereby entered the realm of spirit as such.

In the third section of subjective spirit, "Psychology: Spirit," this certainty is raised to knowledge and is actualized in the world (though this action is still only considered in abstraction, not in the actual institutions treated in objective spirit).[52] The first subsection, theoretical spirit, analyzes the forms of cognition that Hegel identifies as intuition (*Anschauung*), representation (*Vorstellung*), and thought (*Denken*). These will provide the basis for the different forms of absolute spirit (art, religion, and philosophy), but here in subjective spirit they are analyzed in the abstract rather than explicitly in relation to the cognition of spirit. In the highest form of thinking itself, however, thought comes to have self-determining thinking as its object, finally knowing that its object is completely determined by itself. Thought has thus returned to itself, having only its own self-determining freedom as its object (*VPGst* 228). Insofar as we have reached the level of spirit and this spirit has itself for its object, we have in one sense already reached the standpoint of absolute spirit and thus of religion.

These developments in theoretical spirit, however, take place in tandem with spirit's practical activity. In part for this reason, the system cannot proceed immediately from the culmination of theoretical spirit in thinking to absolute spirit. In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit*, Hegel argues that the reconciliation achieved by the culmination of thinking remains one-sided in that it does not actualize its freedom in the world (*VPGst* 237–8). Practical

[51] The struggle for recognition is perhaps the most discussed element of Hegel's work in the secondary literature. On the emergence of self-consciousness and the intersubjective character of this development, see in particular Pippin 1989, 143–71; Pinkard 1994; Williams 1998, 46–92; and Redding 1996, 99-181.

[52] For a more extensive treatment of the "Psychology," see Lewis 2005, 79–113. There I devote particular attention to the complex relationship between theoretical and practical spirit.

spirit comes to transform the world in accord with the subject's self-determination. Though Hegel presents theoretical and practical spirit sequentially, he repeatedly stresses that the will and intelligence—though distinguishable—are not separable. The development from intuition, through representation, to thinking could not occur without the practical activity considered in practical spirit.

After practical spirit traces this actualization in the abstract, the second major section of the philosophy of spirit—objective spirit—examines the actualization of the will in the world in the institutions of social, economic, and political life. Thus, here we are studying spirit's externalization in the world, not its consciousness of itself. These objective forms of spirit culminate in Hegel's account of the state, by which he means not merely the institutions of the government but also the consciousness of its citizens and the practices that surround it.[53] This treatment defends the rationality of a social and political order that he sees emerging—even though the account of the state in both the *Encyclopaedia* and the *Philosophy of Right* diverges in important respects from existing political arrangements.

Like most transitions in Hegel, the portrayal of the culmination of this objective actualization of spirit in the state contains within it the sources of its own sublation. Given our interests, we should be particularly attentive to the justification that Hegel offers for the transition to absolute spirit, the systematic locus of religion. Although absolute spirit includes art, religion, and philosophy, Hegel holds that "this highest sphere can in general be referred to as" religion (*Enz.* § 554).[54] He does not thereby subordinate philosophy to religion: Religion is simply the context in which reflection on the absolute most often takes place; philosophy is rarer than religion. The description of this sphere as a whole in terms of religion, however, suggests that the standpoint of religion—the starting point of the philosophy of religion—will be precisely the point achieved by the transition from objective to absolute spirit. Although art precedes religion within the sphere of absolute spirit, it does not thereby advance the starting point of the philosophy of religion beyond the standpoint of absolute spirit in general.[55] So, how does Hegel present this crucial transition?

[53] See Lewis 2005, 178–82 and Chapter 7 below.

[54] In his interpretation of this paragraph, Jaeschke argues that "[i]t is an easy matter to interpret this living identity of the first moment as God in his immanent-trinitarian life, and likewise the 'division' as the act of creation of the world" (1990, 241). As he indicates in the footnote, his target is Michael Theunissen (1970). While my reading shares with Jaeschke's the claim that philosophy provides the more adequate and more authoritative account of these points, we must also appreciate that the ease of this "theological" reading is no coincidence. Hegel's argument is that Christian doctrines provide representational expressions of this same content.

[55] As he states in the manuscript, "this standpoint is a *universal standpoint*, common to *art*, *religion*, and *science*" (*VPR* 1:142).

The transition to absolute spirit involves a double movement. One path proceeds up, out of ethical life in the community's reflection on this life (*Enz.* § 552). The other descends below the actual world of ethical life to reveal its underpinnings in religious representations.

In both the *Philosophy of Right* and the account of objective spirit in the *Encyclopaedia*, Hegel turns from the state to international relations and then to world history. In the progression of history, Hegel sees the actualization of ever more complete conceptions of spirit. Particular peoples are bearers of a particular stage in this progression. That is, their self-consciousness is constituted by a particular conception of spirit (*Enz.* § 550). (We will return to the concerns raised by such a teleological conception of history in Chapter 5.)

Spirit is only freed from this otherwise endless progression insofar as it achieves knowledge of this process itself—i.e. returns to itself—and actualizes this knowledge. In the final paragraph of objective spirit (*Enz.* § 552), Hegel portrays the achievement of this cognition in two steps: In the first, the spirit that is present in ethical life comes to reflect upon itself; it "raises itself to knowledge of itself in its essentiality" (*Enz.* § 552). Initially, this cognition is limited to the consciousness of its own particular ethical life. Quite simply, people come to reflect on their collective life. Hegel does not here introduce a superhuman subject but rather refers to the group's practices of reflection.

This cognition does not end with a group's reflection on their own way of life, however, but develops into consideration of spirit more generally, attempting to abstract from the particularities of its own society:

> The thinking spirit of world history, however, in that it strips away the limitations of the spirits of particular peoples [*der besonderen Volksgeister*] and its own worldliness, grasps its concrete universality and raises itself to *knowledge of absolute spirit* as the eternally actual truth, in which knowing reason is freely for itself, and necessity, nature, and history are only ministrant to its revelation and the vessels of its honor. (*Enz.* § 552)

The movement to the level of absolute spirit consists in spirit's turn toward itself, which entails stripping away the particularities of any given manifestation or revelation. In doing so, it takes as its object that which it knows as the "eternally actual truth," that which has generated these manifestations. The infinitude of absolute spirit consists in this self-transparency. This object is free reason—whose close connection to the concept from the logic we saw above—and its manifestations. Hegel is not here directing us to a superhuman realm but to the practices of reflection on what the system itself has been articulating philosophically. Spirit here makes these practices and subsequently its own essence an object of reflection. As Hegel writes in the Remark, "Truthful religion and truthful religiosity issue only from ethical life; it is ethical life that is thinking, i.e. becoming conscious of the free universality of its concrete essence" (*Enz.* § 552 A [pages 354–5/283]). Without this reflection

on itself, spirit cannot grasp the state as the actualization of freedom; its freedom is thereby not yet fully conscious and therefore incomplete.

While this elevation alone seems to be sufficient to drive the transition, Hegel offers another path. The Remark to *Enz.* § 552 provides an extended treatment of the relation between religion and the state.[56] After making the point that "the Idea of God as free spirit" can only be known on the basis of ethical life, Hegel then observes that, in another sense, the order is reversed: What appears as the result is actually its presupposition, "the absolute *prius*" (*Enz.* § 552 A [page 355/283]). The state is not freestanding in relation to conceptions of spirit. Rather, any state actualizes—and thus depends upon—a particular consciousness of spirit. Since the state is itself an expression of the consciousness of spirit, both religion and the corresponding state are expressions of the same consciousness. Yet because religion is the principal bearer and expression of this consciousness, political order must be in some sense grounded in a religion: "According to this relationship, the state is based on the ethical disposition, which is itself based on the religious" (*Enz.* § 552 A [page 355/283]). This explains, Hegel thinks, why it does not work to simply change the laws if a people's dispositions are not so shaped that they support the new laws. Reform requires support "from below" as well. In this sense, religion precedes politics.

These two movements, from ethical life to religion and from religion to ethical life, are brought together in the idea that a state only develops on the basis of a particular religious consciousness of spirit, but the actualization of that consciousness in the world also acts back upon that religious consciousness to develop it further.[57] In *PR* § 359, for instance, Hegel argues that even the Christian consciousness of the absolute initially juxtaposed this absolute with the existing world. It is only in tandem with the increasingly adequate actualization of this conception of the absolute in the actual world of the Germanic states that Christianity itself can achieve its consummate form.

Although most people experience this consciousness of spirit preeminently through religion, the highest knowledge of it is that achieved by philosophy (*Enz.* § 552 A [page 358–9/285–6]). Moreover, true freedom is only attained when all three coincide:

> In the state, the self-consciousness finds the actuality of its substantial knowledge and volition in organic development; in *religion*, it finds the feeling and representation of this truth as ideal essentiality; but in *science* it finds the free and comprehended cognition of this truth as one and the same in all its complementary manifestations, i.e. in the *state*, in *nature*, and in the *ideal world*. (*PR* § 360)

[56] We will consider this issue at greater length in Chapter 7. Here I focus on the implications for the transition to absolute spirit.

[57] This movement characterizes the relation between theoretical and practical spirit as a whole in Hegel; see Lewis 2005, 79–113.

These concurrences have been made possible by the developments that define the modern world for Hegel, perhaps most prominently the Reformation and the French Revolution. This conclusion thus makes all the more evident the connections that Hegel draws between contemporary social and political developments and his treatment of religion.

At the same time, the transition as a whole reveals the defining feature of the sphere of absolute spirit: Spirit has itself for an object.[58] Throughout this sphere, we are dealing with the variety of practices through which spirit reflects on itself. The final level of the philosophy of spirit, absolute spirit, is defined by spirit thinking itself. Moreover, in this standpoint we know from earlier moments that this spirit is the absolute, in that nature as well is posited by spirit in its self-determining freedom. Nothing stands over against spirit without being posited there by spirit. Construing absolute spirit in this manner precludes conceiving of absolute spirit as any sort of superhuman entity. Hegel does, however, at points contrast absolute spirit within finite spirit in a manner that might suggest such an interpretation.[59] Avoiding this misreading requires a proper grasp of the sense in which absolute spirit is infinite spirit. This infinitude lies in this self-relationship itself. Spirit is infinite insofar as it grasps itself, becomes transparent to itself. This is the same conception of the infinite developed toward the end of the logic—one that avoids the contradictions of a "bad infinite" that stands over against the finite. Hegel's conception of absolute spirit thus does not require a transcendent God who stands over against human beings, understood as merely finite spirit. To the contrary, the philosophy of spirit traces the development of human beings from a merely natural, immediate existence through necessarily intersubjective practices of self-knowing.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

These developments—though only sketched here—bring us to the point in the system where the philosophy of religion begins. With them in some sense behind us, we are almost ready to turn to Hegel's elaboration or further development of this religious standpoint in the body of the philosophy of religion. In all versions of the lectures, Hegel divides them into three major parts, and—despite many other changes in the structure—this division remains constant.[60] These consist in The Concept of Religion, Determinate

[58] As Walter Jaeschke states it, the "absoluteness [of absolute spirit] consists in the very fact that it thinks itself. In this alone resides the concept of absolute spirit" (1990, 238).

[59] See, for instance, *VPR* 3:122.

[60] For a very helpful diagram regarding the changes to other parts of the structure, see the English edition of the 1827 lectures (Hodgson, ed. 1988, 492–501).

Religion, and The Consummate Religion.[61] Hegel justifies this structure in terms of the movement of the concept itself:

> There can be but *one* method in all science, in all knowledge. Method is just the self-explicating concept—nothing else—and the concept is one only. Here too, therefore, the first moment is, as always, the concept. The second moment is the determinateness of the concept, the concept in its determinate forms . . .
>
> We consider in the third place the concept as it comes forth to itself out of its determinateness, out of its finitude, as it reestablishes itself out of its own finitude, its own confinement. This reestablished concept is the infinite, true concept, the absolute Idea or the true religion. (*VPR* 1:83–4)

The structure of the philosophy of religion is thus said to be determined by the concept itself, the same concept whose self-determining movement we have been following since the logic. Its correspondence to a Trinitarian structure, however, is no coincidence; as we will see in more detail below, Christianity is the consummate religion for Hegel precisely because its doctrine (e.g., the doctrine of the Trinity) expresses in representations the content that philosophy thinks in concepts (e.g. the self-determining movement of the concept). Importantly, when Hegel justifies this structure to the philosophy of religion, he does so by appealing not to Christian doctrine but to the philosophical justification offered by the logic.

Already in the introductions, Hegel elaborates significantly on these three moments. In the present context, however, a brief overview will set the stage for more extensive consideration in the chapters on the respective parts of the lectures. The first moment, the concept of religion, presents the elements of religion in their abstract universality, not in their determinate or actually existing forms. Using a favorite metaphor, Hegel states that the concept contains the entire development "like the seed from which the whole tree unfolds" (*VPR* 1:83). Like a seed, the content is not simply there in miniature form; it has "not yet emerged into existence, is not yet explicated, not yet displayed" (*VPR* 1:84). While this section will tell us a great deal about the basic elements of Hegel's account of religion, they do not have actual existence in this abstract form.

The second moment, determinate religion, unfolds from the concept of religion: "Religion in its concept is not yet the true religion. The concept is true within itself, to be sure; but it also belongs to its truth that it should realize itself, as it belongs to the soul that it should have embodied itself" (*VPR* 1:84). Though Hegel merely sketches this point here, it draws upon earlier arguments regarding the on-going movement and self-manifestation of the

[61] To avoid a cumbersome overuse of quotation marks, when referring to these three main parts of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, I capitalize them but omit the quotation marks. I use quotation marks to indicate subsections within each part. Hegel does at points refer to the third part as "revealed religion"; see *VPR* 3:1.

concept. The concept becomes itself only by virtue of its actualization, which is itself determined by the concept. In taking determinate form, the concept embarks upon an extended journey back to itself. Over the course of this journey, it traverses many shapes inadequate to its concept. These claims raise important difficulties that we will take up in Chapter 5.

The progression comes to an end only when the determinate form becomes adequate to the concept—which consists in the determinate form having the concept and its entire development for its object. Hegel refers to this third and final moment as the absolute or consummate religion. While spirit itself is religion's object throughout the course of determinate religion, only in the consummate religion is spirit fully revealed and known (*VPR* 1:85). The consummate religion concludes the development because at that stage spirit fully represents itself. Its concept is reconciled with its actuality. As in the logic, the consummation consists in a self-transparency that does not terminate movement. Attending to this connection will enable us to grasp the consummate religion as itself an open-ended closure to the philosophy of religion.

4

The Concept of Religion

Hegel's God and the Relation Between Religion and Philosophy

The Concept of Religion, Part I of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, provides the closest Hegel offers to a general theory of religion. The account begins with religion's object, "The Concept of God." Religion's object cannot, for Hegel, be left out of an adequate account of religion. While this object is represented as "God," however, the term is not a license to import one's preconceptions but rather—initially—a placeholder yet to be filled with authoritative content. He next turns to "Knowledge of God," investigating the various forms of our cognition of the absolute. Here Hegel identifies notions of immediacy and feeling as central to religion but incorporates them within a larger conception; they are essential to an adequate grasp of religion but cannot stand on their own. Religious cognition of the absolute takes place principally in the form of representation, and much of the section concerns the transformation of religious representations into philosophical thought that preserves the essential content of the former. As much as Hegel emphasizes knowledge of the absolute, religion also necessarily encompasses a practical dimension, as Hegel elaborates in "The Cultus." Devotion and ritual are not peripheral to religion but essential to it.

Of course, these three sections are not merely a collection of important topics but the unfolding of the concept of religion itself. In Hegel's conceptual account, the section moves from undifferentiated unity, through the self-differentiation of consciousness and cognition to the reunification achieved practically in the communion with the absolute in the cultus. While Hegel at points stresses the second moment as that of division and the third as that of union, the relationship between the second and third parts is complex and draws upon the treatments of theoretical and practical spirit developed in subjective spirit. Both the theoretical and practical sides move toward a mediated unification with what earlier appeared to be other. The theoretical side traces this overcoming of difference in cognition, while the practical

side—in the cultus—deals with the actualization of this unity through practical activity. Complexly interwoven, neither of these developments can be completed without the other.

By placing these essential elements in relief, the concept of religion reveals the breadth of Hegel's definition of religion. It incorporates a number of features that in other conceptualizations are taken to uniquely constitute religion's essence and encompasses a great deal more than what we typically think of as "religion." Moreover, as Hegel moves from the mere concept of God through the determinate forms treated later in the section, he develops the argument that "God" cannot be ultimately grasped as other to human beings. More specifically, when read in relation to his thought as a whole, the Concept of Religion reveals that the absolute can be nothing other than the self-moving activity of thinking and its actualization as spirit. Finally, the abstract account developed in this section provides the essential context for the interpretation of Hegel's treatment of particular religions. Viewed from the other end of the *Lectures*, however, the study of particular religions will also be essential to his complete view of religion. In this sense, Hegel's Concept of Religion cannot be viewed as constituting the entirety of his conceptualization of religion, even in outline.

The tripartite conception of the Concept of Religion sketched above follows the 1827 lectures and constitutes the most conceptually adequate formulation of this material. It proceeds on the basis of the religious standpoint reached through previous systematic developments. The 1821 manuscript and 1824 lectures devote much of the body of the Concept of Religion to the derivation of this standpoint.[1] By 1827, Hegel recognized that the developments preceding this standpoint do not belong within the concept of religion itself (*VPR* 1:266–8). This recognition enabled him to develop a more adequate concept of religion. As Walter Jaeschke notes, whereas Hegel revised this part of the lectures extensively between 1821 and 1824 and again for 1827, the 1831 version seems to have much the same structure as the 1827 lectures (though the 1831 lectures add a fourth section, dealing with the relation of religion and the state).[2] Hegel's apparent satisfaction with the structure of the three

[1] See *VPR* 1:130–42 and 1:222–7. Both note, however, that the more extended treatment of this material is found elsewhere in the system.

[2] Jaeschke 1990, 244. For the definitive treatment of the developments in the Concept of Religion between the different lecture cycles, see Jaeschke (1990, 218–65). His treatment highlights the central issue of the justification of the religious standpoint. For additional perspective on the developments from 1821 to 1827, see Merklinger 1993. Merklinger argues that these developments are predominantly shaped by Hegel's responding to the first edition of Schleiermacher's *Glaubenslehre* as well as, later, to Tholuck's accusations of pantheism; moreover, Merklinger holds that this development "is to be understood as an inner development that parallels Spirit's Trinitarian self-development" (1993, 191). Although Merklinger's attention to this immediate context valuably supplements our understanding, the coherence of the 1827 version with other elements of Hegel's system strongly supports Jaeschke's argument that Hegel

sections of Part I lend further support to the view that the 1827 lectures offer the most adequate surviving elaboration of the Concept of Religion. For this reason, I treat their account of the Concept of Religion as authoritative for Hegel's mature thought.

THE CONCEPT OF GOD

In interpreting the concept of God, it is essential to appreciate how much saying so little says. Its few pages not only refer to the developments that have led up to it (but that do not belong to the subject itself) but also devote significant space to the charges of pantheism circulating at the time. That leaves remarkably little material devoted directly to elaborating the concept of God. This brevity, however, is entirely appropriate for a concept that is the purely abstract form of the yield of earlier developments, whose significance is yet to be unfolded. The concept of religion as a whole is this precipitate, and the concept of God—its first section—deals with this result in a purely abstract form. At the same time, from the beginning Hegel develops his argument that the material considered here philosophically already finds representational expression in widespread religious consciousness. He therefore connects his own treatment to religious representations of the concept of God.

Part I, the Concept of Religion, begins with an introduction to the part as whole. As we saw in the previous chapter, this brief treatment addresses the role of earlier systematic developments in providing the starting point of the philosophy of religion. Those developments—and only those developments—provide the authoritative account and justification for this starting point. Nonetheless, particularly for those not fully versed in those developments, "general consciousness" regarding the nature of God provides a basic point of reference that should provide a grasp of this starting point sufficient to enable following the subsequent developments (*VPR* 1:266).

Immediately following this introduction, Hegel begins "The Concept of God." The opening paragraph merits quoting at length:

> The beginning of religion, more precisely its content, is the concept of religion itself, that God is the absolute truth, the truth of all things, and subjectively that religion alone is the absolute true knowledge. For us who have religion, what God is, is something well-known, a content that can be presupposed in subjective consciousness. Scientifically regarded, the expression "God" is, to begin with, a

was driven predominantly by the needs of his own philosophical project. Wendte endorses Jaeschke's argument that the 1827 lectures offer the treatment most appropriate to the project and, referring principally to the German-language scholarship, notes that this judgment has become a consensus (Wendte 2007, 184–5 n.).

> general, abstract name that has not yet received any genuine import, for only the philosophy of religion is the scientific development and cognition of what God is. Only through it do we come to a cognitive awareness of what God is, for otherwise we would have no need at all for philosophy of religion. (*VPR* 1:266)

The concept of God with which the philosophy of religion begins is the absolute, what is known to be "the absolute truth, the truth of all things." What this is, however, remains indeterminate at this point. Insofar as "God" refers to this truth (whatever it may be), "God" is at this point a placeholder. Although the religious consciousness that Hegel ascribes to most of his listeners provides some content to this term, philosophy cannot rely upon or take as authoritative that determination of the content. Rather, the task of the philosophy of religion is to provide its own, justificatory account of the content. With respect to this task, Hegel's point is that we have not gotten very far yet. We have only an abstract name to refer to the truth, which is yet to be unfolded in determinate form. Thus, Hegel's point is not that some presupposed "God" is in fact "the absolute truth, the truth of all things." Rather, it is that "God" must be understood to be this truth as it is elaborated philosophically.

With "God" established as this placeholder, Hegel proceeds to link it explicitly to the results of the previous developments: "Our starting point (namely, what we generally call 'God,' or God in an indeterminate sense, is the truth of all things) is the result of the whole of philosophy" (*VPR* 1:266). Hegel then refers to the systematic developments from logic through the earlier stages of spirit.

Consistent with the approach above, Hegel then reiterates his dual approach: On one hand, the philosophical justification depends on developments that take place elsewhere and can only be referred to here; in the present context he can offer only his "assurance" that this is philosophy's result. On the other hand, we can also "appeal to the religious consciousness" (*VPR* 1:267). And—as before—Hegel qualifies the appeal to "religious consciousness" by reiterating both the authority and—up to this point abstractness—of the philosophical account:

> At the same time we must notice here that, however full one's heart may be with this representation, the beginning remains scientifically abstract. In the scientific domain we are not dealing with what is in feeling, but exclusively with what is outside it—and indeed is set forth for thought—as an object for consciousness, more explicitly for the thinking consciousness, in such a way that it has attained the form of thought. To give this fullness [of content] the form of thought or of the concept is the business of our science. (*VPR* 1:267–8)

Hegel is explicit, emphatic, even redundant: The authentic content of terms such as God is that given by philosophy, not religious representations or feelings. Religious consciousness itself does not provide the measure of

philosophy. Consequently, presuppositions regarding the nature of God imported uncritically from general consciousness cannot determine the interpretation of Hegel's philosophy of religion. Hegel will further elaborate the relation between these religious representations and philosophy in the second section of this part, but his repetition of this point throughout this section highlights the danger of treating his initial references to "God" as references to any sort of conventional or otherwise presupposed notion rather than as the abstract placeholder that Hegel explicitly conceives it to be.[3]

What, then, *can* be said about the concept of God at this point? What is the result of the previous developments? Even Hegel's description of the religious consciousness' version of this starting point remains highly abstract: This is "the conviction that God is really the midpoint, the absolutely true, that from which everything proceeds and into which everything returns, that upon which everything is dependent and apart from which nothing other than it has absolute, true independence. This then is the content of the beginning" (*VPR* 1:267).[4] The object of consideration is thus the absolute, considered in its abstract universality and thus simplicity.

While this concept constitutes the beginning, the starting point, it is never left behind: "we never step outside this universality" (*VPR* 1:268). The diverse content and actuality that appear in the unfolding of this concept do not stand over against the universal with which we began; they are not other to it or in this sense beyond it. Rather, this universality is active within all concrete content. Expressed more theologically, the plenitude of creation does not stand over against God in a way that limits God: "In God's creating of the world, as one usually says, no new principle makes an appearance, nor is something evil established, something other that would be autonomous or independent. God remains only this One; the one true actuality, the one

[3] Jaeschke makes this point effectively: "there is little point in imputing to the Hegelian conception, whether with positive or critical intent, another idea of God than that which it develops in philosophical terms" (1990, 302). See also 1990, 250. My reading shares with Jaeschke's the view that Hegel rejects any conventional theism. Because my reading of the systematic background—particularly the logic—differs from Jaeschke's, however, the interpretation of spirit differs accordingly. Whereas Jaeschke designates the resulting conception as "the new—albeit still metaphysical—theology," I take Hegel to have more radically critiqued this tradition (1990, 22).

[4] In contrast, Peter Hodgson concludes from this and related passages that "Hegel is in effect starting with the ordinary meaning and use of the word God, which is confirmed by philosophical analysis" (2005, 103). In addition to the extreme ambiguity introduced by Hodgson's phrase, "ordinary meaning and use of the word God," this formulation undervalues the significance of Hegel's repeated exhortations that the genuine content must come from philosophy (which at this point means the results of parts of the system not treated in these lectures); this result constitutes the starting point of the *philosophy* of religion. Moreover, Hodgson does not attend sufficiently to how abstractly Hegel conceives of the relevant "religious consciousness." The consequences of this interpretive difference are vast: By interpreting the opening in this manner, Hodgson frames the entire project of the lectures in terms of the philosophical confirmation of the "ordinary meaning and use of the word God."

principle, abides throughout all particularity" (*VPR* 1:270). God encompasses this self-manifestation within Godself.

Hegel's point here is the same one we traced in logical terms in Chapter 2. Central to Hegel's idealism is that all of nature, all actuality must be understood as constituted by thinking. While that claim easily conjures a metaphysical vision at odds with Hegel's goal of extending Kant's critical project, interpreting this aspect of Hegel's logic in relation to the Kantian background has shown that it is best understood in less cosmological terms. As Hegel articulates this point in the present context,

> The things and developments of the natural and spiritual world constitute manifold configurations, and endlessly multiform existence; they have a being differentiated in rank, force, intensity, and content. The being of all these things is not of an independent sort, however, but is quite simply something upheld and posited, not genuine independence. If we ascribe a being to particular things it is only a borrowed being, only the semblance [*Schein*] of being, not the absolutely independent being that God is. (*VPR* 1:268)

If all existence is dependent upon this absolute, then only this absolute stands on its own, independently: "God in his universality, this universal in which there is no limitation, finitude, or particularity, is the absolute subsistence and is so alone. Whatever subsists has its root and subsistence only in this One. *If we grasp this initial content in this way*, we can express it thus: 'God is the absolute substance, the only true actuality'" (*VPR* 1:268–9, emphasis added). This aspect of the concept of God thus articulates in religious language one of the central elements of Hegel's idealism as developed in the logic.[5] Moreover, in the phrasing of the last sentence, Hegel suggests how misleading these kinds of claims, namely that "God is the absolute substance, the only true actuality," can be if not understood in the appropriate context. His language thus highlights the need not to take them as self-evident but to attend to the context in which Hegel articulates them.

If this point entails that "God is the absolute substance," Hegel moves immediately to demonstrate the way in which his own view differs from claims about absolute substance, particularly Spinoza's, that have provoked charges of pantheism. The crucial distinction, Hegel argues, lies in that his philosophy grasps the absolute as not only substance but also subject. God as subject and not merely substance belongs to the results of the earlier philosophical developments: "It belongs to the presupposition made: God is spirit, absolute spirit, the eternally simple spirit, essentially present to itself [*wesentlich bei sich seiende*]" (*VPR* 1:269). Here we see the significance of developments subsequent

[5] These points also highlight the stakes for Hegel's philosophy of religion of divergent readings of the logic. For instance, Martin Wendte also argues that the logical background is essential to the interpretation of this passage (2007, 161). Nonetheless, his interpretation of that logical background in ontological terms generates a different conception of the philosophy of religion as a whole.

to the logic. The concept of God is not merely the concept as articulated in the logic but incorporates the emergence of spirit itself, as traced in the third part of the *Encyclopaedia*. In those movements, spirit develops into self-consciousness and implicitly knows itself in its self-differentiation. As a result, already in the concept of God, the absolute is implicitly self-differentiating, and this differentiation will take the form of a conscious, cognitive relation to itself.

Hegel's discussion up to this point sets out the basic elements of the concept of God: it is absolute substance and subject, and thus spirit. It alone is self-subsistent, the truth of all actuality. It is self-differentiating, so that it relates to itself and develops in this relation. The object of religion is thus the absolute, the ultimate, yet conceived in such a way that it cannot stand over against us but rather encompasses us. Even insofar as Hegel sometimes describes religion as the relationship to this object, religion itself falls within this absolute—a complexity made possible and necessitated by the self-differentiation intrinsic to this absolute. Though many people are not conscious of these fundamental elements of religion, they are implicit in all religions. (Hegel does not strive for a conception of religion that will be agreed to by all religious people.)

Without clearly articulating the connection to what has just been said, Hegel next turns to a brief consideration of the manner in which this content exists for us. He begins with the question, "Who then are 'we' who have the content within us?" and further refines it to, "for which of our spiritual capacities or activities is this one, this utterly universal being?" (*VPR* 1:270). Because thought alone of our mental activities deals with the universal, it must be thought:

> For thought is alone the soil for this content, is the activity of the universal—the universal in its activity and efficacy. Or, if we speak of it as the apprehending of the universal, then it is always thought for which the universal is. The product of thought or what is engendered by means of thought is a universal, a universal content. (*VPR* 1:271)

In that the universal is a product of thought, we can begin to glimpse Hegel's claim that thinking is not merely the means of knowing some object, God, but rather integral to the account of God itself. Hegel continues,

> We can also express this process thus: When human beings think of God, they elevate themselves above the sensible, the external, the singular. We say that it is an elevation to the pure, to that which is at one with itself. This elevation is a transcending of the sensible, of mere feeling, a journey into the pure region; and this region of the universal is thought. (*VPR* 1:271)

To be elevated to God, then, is to be elevated to thought, to participate in thinking. This elevation involves the achievement of a thinking self-relationship through abstraction from the sensible. Given Hegel's conception of thinking, this can also be expressed as an elevation from the finite to the infinite—to a self-determining self-transparency. Thought's role in religion will be central to the

discussion of "Knowledge of God," the next section of Part I; the treatment of thought's role in our cognition of God belongs there. The present brief discussion, however, already draws the connection between the absolute and thinking itself, a connection in which thinking is not merely a means to know this absolute but constitutive of the absolute itself. As our earlier analysis of the logic has already shown, Hegel's entire project is conceived in such a way that the adequate conception of the absolute must be such that the absolute emerges from thinking itself.

The remainder of "The Concept of God" elaborates on Hegel's response to the charges of pantheism leveled against various stands of modern philosophy. Though the charge is often framed against Spinozism and the philosophy of identity associated with Schelling, Hegel appears most concerned with the accusation—recently made by Tholuck—that his thought falls into this category.[6] The false presuppositions operative in the accusations themselves show that countering these views will require returning to what he earlier called the "alphabet of philosophy" (*VPR* 1:82). As Hegel puts it here, "the objections are so shallow that philosophical instruction must begin from the primary elements" (*VPR* 1:276). While Hegel critiques the critics, however, he does not defend Spinoza or the philosophy of identity. The philosophical illiteracy of which he accuses the critics is most apparent in their conflation of philosophy in general—and most pertinently Hegel's philosophy—with the philosophy of identity. The critics "neglect the point on which everything hinges, namely the determination of this unity in itself" (*VPR* 1:276). Hegel concedes that God is the truth of everything yet takes this claim to be less significant than the determinations of this simple, abstract universality. On this determination turns the distinctiveness of Hegel's thought. The discussion of these charges thus provides the transition to the first stage of this self-determination.

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Though the first moment was distinguished by the absence of differentiation, the differentiation implicit within it became apparent as we probed the content of this simple concept of God—specifically in the contrast between spirit and mere substance. Hegel initially defines the second moment in terms of self-differentiation. The progression follows—and is justified by explicit appeal to—the spontaneous movement of thought set out abstractly in the logic:

[6] On F. A. G. Tholuck's criticisms of Hegel, see Merklinger 1993, 141–4.

> The concept judges [*urteilt*], that is, the concept or the universal passes over into primal division [*Urteil*], diremption, separation. Because it is one of the logical determinations and these are presupposed, we can express it here as a fact that this absolute universality proceeds to the internal distinction of itself, it proceeds to the primal division or to the point of positing itself as determinateness. (*VPR* 1:278)

As in the logic, Hegel construes this movement as spontaneous rather than imposed from without. Here, insofar as this movement is driven by thinking about the concept, this movement is spontaneous precisely because thinking is not other to this concept but rather constitutive of it.

The movement to the second section, "Knowledge of God," however, is not a movement toward self-differentiation in general: "The distinction is a spiritual distinction, it is consciousness. In general the spiritual, universal relationship is the knowledge of this absolute content, of this foundation" (*VPR* 1:278). The distinction at issue is that of the relation of consciousness and cognition: "Thus we arrive at the standpoint for which God (in this general indeterminateness) is object of consciousness" (*VPR* 1:278). That the distinction must initially take this form follows from the conception of spirit itself. In the realm of absolute spirit, we are dealing with spirit that has itself for an object, and—as Hegel has already concisely indicated in "The Concept of God"—this relationship must have its basis in thinking.

Accordingly, "The Knowledge of God" focuses on the analysis of four forms of human consciousness of the absolute: immediate knowledge (*unmittelbare Wissen*), feeling (*Gefühl*), representation (*Vorstellung*), and thought (*Denken*). It provides the heart of Hegel's account of the theoretical (as compared to practical) side of our relationship to the absolute. Prior to its elaboration of these forms, however, Hegel considers the differentiation or determination of the initial unity from a more abstract perspective. This brief discussion makes the essential point that the forms of consciousness considered in the heart of the section pertain not merely to finite human beings standing over against the absolute but are themselves moments of this absolute, of spirit as a whole.

In this preliminary discussion, Hegel notes that in the distinction effected, consciousness, is both the relationship and one of the terms in the relationship. Insofar as we consider consciousness one term in the relationship, it stands over against God as the other term. The diremption has thus produced two: "God and the consciousness, for which God is" (*VPR* 1:278). Considered from this perspective, we can engage the relationship from either side. Starting from the side of God, we have God or spirit manifesting itself in determinate actuality. It posits the world as an other that is not other.[7] Picking

[7] "[E]xpressed concretely, this is the creation of the world and of the subjective spirit for which God is object. Spirit is an absolute manifesting. Its manifesting is a positing of determination and a being for an other. 'Manifesting' means 'creating an other,' and indeed the creating of

up threads prominent in "The Concept of Spirit" in *Enz.* § 383, Hegel presents this self-manifesting as integral to the conception of spirit. Because not only nature but also particular human subjects must be grasped as manifestations of spirit, this manifestation means that spirit comes to be an object for another that is ultimately not other. Religions tend to express this manifestation in terms of God's creation of the world and—in the case of Christianity—in terms of God's appearance as the Christ. Expressed philosophically, the self-determining development of thinking traced in the logic continues through the philosophy of nature and the early parts of the philosophy of spirit to develop the concept of spirit, which attains concrete actuality in human beings. Insofar as human beings reflect on these developments, this absolute exists for itself and is thus absolute spirit. Because God is manifest, God is a revealed rather than hidden God. In being known, "God is as spirit for spirit. Spirit is essentially to be for spirit, and spirit is spirit only insofar as it is for spirit" (*VPR* 1:279). God is only fully God insofar as it is known as such.[8] The relation of consciousness is thus integral to the conception of spirit itself.

We can also begin from the other side, from consciousness itself considered as an element in this relationship. In doing so, we are starting with human beings:

> On the other hand, if we take the human being as our point of departure, in that we presuppose the subject and begin from ourselves because our immediate initial knowledge is knowledge of ourselves, and if we ask how we arrive at this distinction or at the knowledge of an object and, to be more exact in this case, at the knowledge of God, then in general the answer has already been given: "It is precisely because we are thinking beings [*Denkende*]." God is the absolutely universal in-and-for-itself, and thought makes the universal in-and-for-itself into its object. (*VPR* 1:280–1)

Insofar as we begin the consideration from the side of consciousness itself, we are dealing with human consciousness, and to investigate that we deal with our capacity to know an object. As Hegel has already argued, the foundation of this activity lies in thinking itself. Most significantly, since thinking itself provides this foundation, it enables us to know God, who is "the absolutely universal in-and-for-itself." In making this universal its object, thinking will ultimately be making itself and its manifestations into its object. This concurrence underlies simultaneously the possibility of knowing this object and its being absolute.

subjective spirit for which the absolute is. The making or creation of the world is God's self-manifesting, self-revealing" (*VPR* 1: 278).

[8] In his discussion of this passage, Hodgson states that "This is what it means to say that God is 'spirit'" (2005, 93). He thereby overstates the point and does not adequately attend to the systematic background to the conception of spirit. Because such a reading imports preconceptions of "God" into the interpretation without adequate attention to Hegel's larger philosophical framework, it generates a much more theistic reading than is justified.

The following paragraphs elaborate this knowledge of God, tracing the development from immediate certainty, through feeling, to representation, and finally to thought. Central to Hegel's view of religion is the claim that these determinations constitute interrelated but hierarchically ordered forms of cognition. They can be distinguished yet not conceived in opposition, and the content expressed in the more elementary forms can also be expressed in the higher forms: as we try to think through and get a clearer account of the content of any particular stage—to articulate just what it is we feel, for instance—we pass into another mode of cognition, without losing what is significant in the content of the previous level.

Hegel's treatment of "Knowledge of God" is closely related to the account of theoretical spirit, or intelligence, developed in the first section of the "Psychology."[9] Both consider the development of knowledge or cognition from more immediate, particular forms toward self-determining thought. In general, the *Encyclopaedia* and the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit* provide more extensive and foundational treatments of these materials than those offered in the philosophy of religion.

Whereas "Knowledge of God" consists of immediate knowledge, feeling, representation, and thought, theoretical spirit contains intuition, representation, and thought. Given the larger commonalities between the two sets of developments, why does Hegel use immediate knowledge and feeling rather than intuition in the philosophy of religion?[10] Both sets of development begin with immediacy. The intuition with which theoretical spirit begins is closely linked to sensibility (see *Enz.* §§ 399–402 and *VPGst* 68–87). Knowledge of God is distinguished from cognition in general, however, in that its object is not sensible. Even its immediate form, then, does not involve immediate sensibility (*VPR* 1:283–4). Correspondingly, while Hegel's account of intuition is closely connected to feeling, and feeling emerges out of the sensible, his treatment of feeling with regard to knowledge of God emphasizes the *form* of feeling, which can apply to any content, not only sensible content.[11]

Additional considerations also come into play: Hegel repeatedly points out that immediate knowledge and feeling concern the subjective side of knowledge of God, whereas representation and thinking deal principally with the objective side (*VPR* 1:282, 285, 291, and 297). The subjective side concerns the nature of our relation to the object, whereas the objective side considers the content or determination of the object itself. In theoretical spirit, the treatment of intuition shares with that of representation and of thought that it attends to

[9] Hegel was deeply engaged with these materials during the same period. He lectured on the philosophy of religion in summer semester 1827 and on subjective spirit (the *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Geistes*) the following semester.

[10] The question is more pointed because the 1821 manuscript uses intuition (*VPR* 1:143–7). The later formulations thus represent a deliberate shift.

[11] See Hodgson 2005, 108.

the objective side. Moreover, insofar as intuition has the absolute for an object, we are dealing with art, rather than religion (which has its content principally in representation). Consequently, to include intuition among the central developments in the concept of religion would obscure the distinction between art and religion as forms of absolute spirit. Immediate knowledge and feeling in the philosophy of religion thus play a different role from intuition in theoretical spirit, even though feeling will share a good deal with Hegel's account of intuition simply because feeling plays such an important role in the account of intuition.

Incorporating immediate knowledge and feeling also enables Hegel to demonstrate how his philosophy of religion handles influential alternatives. His conception of immediate knowledge corresponds directly to Friedrich Jacobi's work, while his use of feeling implicitly critiques the conception of religion being developed by Friedrich Schleiermacher.[12] This connection to his contemporary context is even more evident in the 1824 lectures (*VPR* 1:165–83). The 1827 formulation thus grows out of the 1824 treatment of contemporary alternatives and therefore coheres particularly well with his larger strategy of arguing that his own view simultaneously accounts for the alternatives, shows that they cannot stand on their own, and locates them within a larger context that overcomes their limitations.

Immediate Knowledge

The analysis of knowledge of the absolute begins with a form of consciousness that appears to be the simplest and most immediate, what Hegel identifies as "immediate knowledge." In response to Kant's critique of the boundaries of reason, Jacobi located the heart of religion in an immediacy construed so as to provide an alternative to reason and a bulwark against Enlightenment and Enlightenment-inspired critiques of religion.[13] While Hegel treats immediate knowing as more than a product of Jacobi's own religious project—i.e. as a basic determination of the knowledge of God—he simultaneously seeks to

[12] In evaluating Hegel's criticisms of Schleiermacher, both in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* and the "Forward to Hinrichs' *Religion and Its Inner Relation to Science*" ("Vorrede"), we must keep in mind that Hegel was responding to the first edition of Schleiermacher's *Glaubenslehre*, not the currently more familiar second edition. Olson suggests that the more nuanced treatment of topics such as the feeling of dependence in the second edition is developed partially in response to the criticisms of Hegel and Hinrichs: "Therefore, far from being a misunderstanding of Schleiermacher, it seems more likely that the position with which he becomes identified historically is very directly the result of coming to terms with the criticism of Hegel and Hinrichs . . . " (1992, 202 n. 12). On Hegel's response to Schleiermacher in the "Forward," see Merklinger 1993, 43–111 and Von der Luft 1987.

[13] See Friedrich Jacobi 1998. On Hegel's mature view of Jacobi, see especially Pinkard 2000, 384–8.

undermine a conception of religious faith that is widely circulating at the time—and today.

"Immediate knowledge" consists in a simple certainty that God is. Its content is almost entirely indeterminate, just that "God is in and for himself . . . God is this universality having being in and for itself, outside me and independent of me, not merely having being for me" (*VPR* 1:282). By minimizing content, defensive conceptions of religion that focus on immediate knowing appear to avoid rational criticism by offering virtually nothing determinate to criticize. We are, purportedly, dealing with the certainty *that God is* and nothing more.

While the object of this immediate knowledge is supposed to exist independently of me (the subject who is certain), the form of certainty is intrinsically connected to the self: "vis-à-vis myself, this actual being that is in-and-for-itself is at the same time my own, is in my I or self" (*VPR* 1:282). For Hegel, certainty means that my being and the other's being are caught up with each other. Rather than a reflective relationship in which I have some distance from the object, the object here is so close to me that I cannot separate myself from it or focus on it. With content so minimal, immediate knowledge really concerns the relationship between the object and myself, not the nature of the object itself.

Needless to say, certainty is powerful. Because the object is tied up with myself, "[i]f I wish to express this relation forcefully, then I say, 'I know this as certainly as I myself am'" (*VPR* 1:282). Yet the power of this immediate certainty does not in itself demonstrate its validity. Simply put, "it is another question whether it is true" (*VPR* 1:283). Justification or authority do not derive from the strength of my attachment to this knowledge. In many cases, faith (which Hegel takes as the principal form of this immediate knowledge of God) is conceived precisely as offering an alternative to a conception of knowledge grounded in reason or evidence. For thinkers such as Jacobi, this difference means that faith is juxtaposed with knowledge. Using the term in this circumscribed sense, Hegel agrees that "faith is a certainty that one possesses apart from immediate sensible intuition, apart from this sensible immediacy, and equally without having insight into the necessity of the content" (*VPR* 1:284). For Hegel, however, this does not entail that faith and knowledge are juxtaposed. Although faith in itself does not possess the grounds that characterize most other forms of cognition, precisely because it contains some content—even though minimal—it is not other than knowledge. Faith or immediate certainty constitutes one limited aspect of a more encompassing conception of knowledge.

Despite the claims to immediacy, Hegel argues that this form of faith also has a sort of "ground":

> The main ground, the one ground for faith in God is authority, the fact that others—those who matter to me, those whom I revere and in whom I have

> confidence that they know what is true—believe it, that they are in possession of this knowledge. Belief rests upon testimony and so has a ground. (*VPR* 1:284–5)

What appears to the person of faith as immediate, Hegel argues, has a basis quite different from what the faith itself can acknowledge.

Being unable to recognize this role of authority, however, this notion of immediate knowledge has a remarkable effect: "utterly to remove all external authority, all alien confirmation" (*VPR* 1:71). Authority is rejected in principle, even though not in actuality. As a result, its blindness is also its contribution: By challenging the authority of scripture, religious institutions, and so forth, this conception of immediate knowledge opens the way for the reconciliation that Hegel hopes to effect in his own philosophy of religion. It removes the obstacles to a philosophy of religion that can be posed when such external entities—rather than the "witness of spirit" itself—are viewed as ultimately authoritative. More specifically, it will function to undermine conceptions of God as other to our self-consciousness.[14]

Immediate knowledge thus presents an initial form of cognition of the absolute, characterized by being connected to me, by not being sensible, and by not grasping the necessity of the content. While it may seem to provide a solid foundation, Hegel presents it as a preliminary form, unauthoritative in itself. Insofar as it is taken to comprise the essence of religion, it is profoundly misconceived; but insofar as it is grasped as a merely preliminary form, it can play an important role in the development of cognition of God. It is ultimately unstable, however; as soon as we probe it, we promptly move beyond it.

Feeling

The first step beyond is what Hegel denotes as feeling. Like immediate knowing, feeling concerns principally the subjective aspect of the relation to the absolute rather than the content itself (the objective side). Yet where immediate knowing—to the extent that it remains immediate—contains only the content that "God" exists, feeling relates to a more expansive content. Because feeling can stand in relation to any content, feeling itself cannot be distinguished as either religious or non-religious. Specific feelings are religious only by virtue of the content to which they attached, but insofar as we are dealing with the content we are dealing with representations rather than with the feeling as such.

Hegel's account of feeling builds upon the more elaborate treatments in subjective spirit.[15] Despite the differences, the more immediate forms of

[14] See Jaeschke 1990, 245.

[15] The 1824 and 1827 lectures use the term "feeling [*Gefühl*], where the 1821 manuscript refers to "sensation" [*Empfindung*]. Peter Hodgson suggests that Hegel makes this shift in response to Schleiermacher's publication of *The Christian Faith* in 1821–22. The shift enables

feeling treated there illuminate the discussion in the philosophy of religion. When I "feel" the chair against my back or the keys against my fingertips, that feeling is not separate from me. The feeling is intrinsically connected to me. This feature of the form of feeling applies even when the feeling does not originate from an external impingement but rather arises from within spirit, as in the case of love, right, and ethical life (*VPGst* 83).

In the treatment of feeling in the philosophy of religion, this connection to the self is central: I have a content in such a way that it "is my own, and indeed is my own as this particular individual—the fact that it belongs to me and is for me, that I have and know it in its determinateness and that at the same time I know myself in this determinateness. It is the feeling of a content and the feeling of oneself—both at once" (*VPR* 1:285–6). This is not an abstract or reflective relationship but a being tied up with my own particular being. Feelings make up my being such that I may well identify myself with them, "for that is the way I am" (*VPR* 1:287). Like certainty, feelings are powerful. They generally determine the course of action we take, and we take pleasure in acting in accordance with them.

Despite their power, however, these feelings are not self-justifying. Feelings may be in accord with the right, but they need not be, for "[a]ny content can be in feeling" (*VPR* 1:286). Feeling cannot itself be the arbiter of the goodness or rightness of its content:

> If feeling is the justifying element, then the distinction between good and evil comes to naught, for evil with all its shadings and qualifications is in feeling just as much as the good. Everything evil, all crime, base passions, hatred and wrath, it all has its root in feeling. The murderer feels that he must do what he does. Everything vile is the expression of feeling. (*VPR* 1:291)

Feeling cannot tell us what is right, but this does not entail that feeling as such is intrinsically wrong or evil.[16] To the contrary, it is vital that the right content be present not only in thinking but also in feeling if it is to be effective in our lives, to actually guide our actions (*VPR* 1:287).

Having feelings in line with the right is not a matter of being born that way but of being properly cultivated: "The content must be true in and for itself if the feeling is to count as true. For that reason it is also said that one's feelings or one's heart must be purified and cultivated; natural feelings cannot be the

Hegel to argue where Schleiermacher's position is encompassed in his own—as well as the limits to the former. See volume 1 (p. 268 n. 20) of the English translation of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, which Hodgson edited. Yet Hegel's use of "feeling" here also appears much more consistent with the distinction between sensation and feeling developed in the first part of subjective spirit. Even in these early stages, knowledge of God already involves the minimal sense of self distinct from sense impressions that distinguishes feeling from sensation. On the emergence of the "feeling soul" from sensation, see *Enz.* §§ 399–405.

[16] See *Enz.* § 400 A and *VPGst* 71.

proper impulses to action" (*VPR* 1:291). Our first, "natural" feelings are generally not disposed toward the good but can and must be transformed or displaced by an order of feelings that aligns with what is true (a process in which the religious community plays a vital role).[17]

While our most "natural" impulses need to be supplanted, Hegel simultaneously emphasizes that "the heart is the initial mode in which such content appears to the subject" (*VPR* 1:289). We do not first grasp this content in thought or even in representation but rather through having our feelings (re)shaped so as to respond in the manner our immediate context takes to be appropriate. As Hegel's early writings hint and his discussion of the cultus elaborates, bodily practices transmitted by the religious community instill these feelings at an early age. Consequently, feeling may *appear* to the individual as the root of religion. In this context, Hegel says, "I can even grant that for me the heart is the seed, root, and source of this content, though that is not saying very much" (*VPR* 1:289). It appears in the individual in this form first, but just as the seed is as much a product of another plant as the source of a new one, so the feeling in one individual is just as much as a product of the representations and practices of the community (and thus the historical context) that forms her as it is the source of her own thoughts and representations. To treat feelings as offering unmediated access to a divine is to forget this mediating context. Insofar as we consider this context, we necessarily enter the realms of representation and thinking.

Hegel's larger strategy is thus well exemplified here: In response to claims that feeling is at the core of religion, Hegel seeks to incorporate the competing view into his own by simultaneously validating it and showing the partialness or one-sidedness of this view. Its genuine significance only becomes clear when it is located within a more complex conception. Feeling thus remains essential in Hegel's conception of religion, but it is not the essence.

Representation

With representation, we enter the form of cognition of the absolute that Hegel associates most closely with religion. The most obvious examples of representations consist in images, symbols, and allegories, but its defining characteristic is that it presents objects as independent or freestanding rather than in necessary relation to each other; it is "a consciousness of something that one has before oneself as something objective [*als Gegenständliches*]" (*VPR* 1:292). It may be a sensible image, as in the case of a tree of knowledge, or a nonsensible, more abstract conception, as in the case of God "creating" the world. Although the account of representation offered in the 1827 lectures coheres

[17] I have treated this issue at length in Lewis 2005, 96–106 and Lewis 2007–8.

with that given in his treatments of theoretical spirit, the philosophy of religion's account focuses less on elaborating the distinguishing features of this form of cognition itself. Instead, these features are brought out in the course of setting out some of the most important elements of his conception of religion as a whole. He provides the theoretical basis for an approach to religious doctrine that preserves its content by demythologizing it. In doing so, he lays the groundwork for the subsequent account of the transformation of representation into thought. And while he defends the content of doctrine by arguing that it can be elevated to and defended by thought, he simultaneously defends the representational form by arguing that most of humanity cognizes the absolute through representation.

As elaborated in theoretical spirit, representation stretches between intuition and thought. It begins with the sensible content that characterizes intuition and moves from finding itself determined in this manner toward the free self-determination of the most developed forms of thought. Throughout its stages—and the *Encyclopaedia* and the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit* offer many more of these than the philosophy of religion does—representation involves a combination of heteronymous givenness and self-determination (*VPGst* 195). Much of the development consists in progress in the manner in which the content is linked—a movement toward greater determination by the subject. Despite this progress, however, representation as a whole is characterized by these connections not being freely and self-consciously determined by the subject.[18]

The account of representation in the philosophy of religion identifies two principal divisions: sensible and nonsensible forms of representation. The more basic, sensible forms of intuition begin with images [*Bilder*]:

> Those sensible forms for which the principal content or the principal mode of representation is taken from immediate intuition can in general be termed images. We are directly conscious that they are only images but that they have a significance distinct from that which the image as such primitively expresses—that the image is something symbolic or allegorical and that we have before us something twofold, first the immediate and then what is meant by it. (*VPR* 1:293)

Even in the most elementary forms of representation, there is a distinction between the inner and the outer. In this case, the outer, sensible form represents an inner content or meaning that is more significant.

The treatment of images lays an important foundation for the interpretation of religious representation as a whole. In the case of images, symbols, and allegories, it is relatively uncontroversial that the images function metaphorically: "Thus there are many forms in religion about which we know that they

[18] For further discussion of the treatment of representation within theoretical spirit, see Lewis 2005, 86–92; deVries 1988, 119–75; and Fetscher 1970, 156–82.

are only metaphors. For example, if we say that God has begotten a son, we know quite well that this is only an image; representation provides us with 'son' and 'begetter' from a familiar relationship, which, as we well know, is not meant in its immediacy, but is supposed to signify a different relationship, which is something like this one" (*VPR* 1:293). This simple representation places in relief a central motif of this section: Representation misleads if it is taken literally. Taking them literally both leads us to think that religious doctrines are making (indefensible) claims that they are not and, no less importantly, causes us to overlook their genuine meanings.

Hegel proceeds to give a number of examples of "representations that derive from immediate sensible intuition as well as inner intuition" that should not be taken literally:

> Thus we soon know that talk of God's wrath is not to be taken in the literal [*eigentlichen*] sense, that it is merely an analogy, a simile, an image. The same holds true for emotions of repentance, vengeance, and the like on God's part . . . Thus we hear of a tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When the story arrives at the eating of the fruit, it begins to become dubious whether this tree should be taken as something historical, as a properly historical tree, and the eating as historical, too; for all talk of a tree of knowledge is so contrary that it very soon leads to the insight that this is not a matter of any sensible fruit, and that the tree is not to be taken literally. (*VPR* 1:293–4)

Hegel also mentions Prometheus and Pandora's box, locating the Christian descriptions in contexts readily recognized as "mythical." The outward symbol taken from intuition—the tree or wrath—is linked to meaning that is not immediately given by the symbol itself. The link itself is not given by the image either but rather comes from spirit. Even though the connections come from spirit, they are not yet determined by spirit's own essence and are therefore contingent or accidental rather than necessary. Representation will include material that is not sensible in this way and is less obviously metaphorical, but the distinction between the external form and the inner meaning—set out most vividly here at the beginning—characterizes representation as a whole.

Though images provide the most obvious example of sensible forms of representation, Hegel also includes here "things that are to be taken as historical [*was als Geschichtliches zu nehmen ist*]" (*VPR* 1:294). Like images, histories contain a meaning that is beyond what we might think of as the surface of the events. In this type of representation, we are dealing with "a content that primarily presents itself in sensible form, as a series of actions and sensible determinations that follow one another in time and then occur side by side in space. The content is empirical, concrete, and manifold, its combination residing partly in spatial contiguity and partly in temporal succession" (*VPR* 1:295). As part of the sensible form of representation, history presents its

content articulated in the forms of sensibility—in time and space. "But," Hegel continues, "at the same time this content has an inner aspect" (*VPR* 1:295).

Hegel's elaboration of this point is profoundly important for his account of religion as a whole. He first mentions examples where we might find the general point most obvious: "We enjoy the narratives [*Erzählungen*] of Jupiter and the other deities, but we do not in the main inquire further about what Homer reports of them to us, we do not take it in the way we do something else historical [*Geschichtliches*]" (*VPR* 1:294). Such stories may have a meaning or "moral" that is more significant than the particular events portrayed and—more importantly—whose validity does not depend upon the historical veracity of the events. Their genuine significance is thus revealed by treating them as allegories rather than as historical reports.

Hegel then proceeds to consider a slightly different case in the same category: an account that explicitly purports to portray actual historical events. His point is clearer if we keep in mind that the German "*Geschichte*" refers to both "history" and "story" in English. He does not trade on ambiguity but directs our attention to what these different senses of *Geschichte* share. The remainder of Hegel's paragraph focuses on what histories share with the "stories" considered above. Following the discussion of Jupiter and Homer's narratives, Hegel continues: "Still, there is also something historical that is a divine history—indeed, that is supposed to be a history in the proper [*eigentlichen*] sense: namely the story of Jesus" (*VPR* 1:294). In this case as well, Hegel's account of representation functions to distinguish its genuine import from the historical events. On one hand, in this case there may be actual historical events that are conveyed in the narrative: "This does not merely count as a myth, in the mode of images. Instead, it involves sensible occurrences; the nativity, passion, and death of Christ count as something completely historical" (*VPR* 1:294). These events stand before us, much as an image does. On the other hand, however, the historical events are not themselves what is divinely significant:

> Of course it therefore exists for representation and in the mode of representation, but it also has another, intrinsic aspect. The history [*Geschichte*] of Jesus is something twofold, a divine history. Not only [is there] this outward history, which should only be taken as the ordinary story [*Geschichte*] of a human being, but also it has the divine as its content: a divine happening, a divine deed, an absolutely divine action. (*VPR* 1:294)

We have here, then, two aspects to the story: the representations that are the historical events and the divine action. Appreciating this distinction is essential to Hegel's entire approach to religion. The history *represents* these divine activities, so that these events are representations of the absolute activity: "This absolute divine action is the inward, the genuine, the substantial dimension of this history, and this is just what is the object of reason. Just as a myth has a

meaning or an allegory within it, so there is this twofold character generally in every history [*Geschichte*]" (*VPR* 1:294). Representation expresses this divine activity in a manner that places it before us as an event. The divine, the absolute, however, is not a sensible object; it is an object of reason, not of sensibility. The history represents the divine activity but is not this activity itself.

Insofar as our concern is the character of the absolute, the literal truth of this history is not decisive; what matters is the way that spirit is represented in this history. Hegel's view does not preclude inquiries into particular historical events but entails that those inquiries will not give us access to spirit; to hope that they will—and particularly to seek to ground faith in history—betrays a very limited, still sensible understanding of spirit. To focus in that manner on the historical events—on their veracity or falsity—both attributes to them an importance they do not possess and obscures the true nature of the absolute, which can only be known by reason.[19]

In a passage that appears almost as an aside, Hegel elaborates on this conception of history in a manner particularly pregnant for thinking about religion today. Hegel explicitly connects the account of history just given to the history of a people and of a state. As the acts of human beings and thus spirit, the histories of peoples are not simply a sequence of events but also have this kind of inner meaning: "If we take this superficially, we can say that from every history a moral may be extracted. The moral encapsulates at least the essential ethical powers that have contributed to the action and have brought about the event, and they are the inner or substantial element" (*VPR* 1:295). Within this collection of external, particular events, "the universal laws and powers of the ethical are also recognizable within it" (*VPR* 1:295). The "universal" in this context refers to what is not merely idiosyncratic or accidental but constitutes an individual or group. The history that a group tells of itself expresses its self-understanding. These are not random events but rather reflect spirit as actualized in this group, in its ethical views, its political institutions, and its religion. As above, Hegel is here concerned not with the external factuality of this history but with the implicit "substantial element" that is universal. Crucially, "These universal powers, however, do not exist for representation as such; for representation, history exists in the mode in which it presents itself as a story [*Geschichte*], or the way in which it exists in appearance" (*VPR* 1:295). These representations consist in sensible events, not a "moral" but a series of happenings that stand before us in time and space. As above, these events represent the spiritual content that is expressed in them.

[19] Hegel's view thereby anticipates the outcome of debates that consumed a great deal of Protestant theology in both the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries: the relationship between history—and specifically the historical Jesus—and faith. On this history and the difficulties of grounding faith in history, see Harvey 1996.

Concretely, Hegel is dealing here with the kinds of narratives that often play vital roles in the formation of national identities. Accounts of a nation's history are inevitably selective (as is any history) and function both to express and to form a people's sense of who they are. It is because these histories are tied up with people's senses of themselves—the particular events with the more universal significance—that debates about national history curricula are so fraught. One of the most striking aspects of Hegel's treatment, however, is how closely he connects communal narratives to religion. Such narratives share a form and significance with much more conventionally "religious" narratives. Moreover, these narratives are similar to more conventional religions in that they provide a less than fully articulate but widespread and emotionally powerful expression of our sense of who and what we are.

This multivalent quality of Hegel's account of histories is both well illustrated in and illuminates recent discussions of community, tradition, and identity. In the Protestant theological context, Stanley Hauerwas writes of the "story-formed community" and develops an account of Christianity focused on the formation of character through participation in communities defined by shared narratives.[20] Though Hauerwas rejects the Hegelian notion that these representations can be raised to the level of conceptual thought, Hegel attributes to a community's narratives much of the role that Hauerwas does in forming character. Hegel's view can thus be seen as incorporating key elements of Hauerwas's position in much the way it does Jacobi's and Schleiermacher's: their thought brings to the fore one essential feature of religion but concentrates so exclusively on this point that they fail to see its limitations. Moreover, in this case, Hegel's conception of representation provides a different overall context for the interpretation of the narratives than any Hauerwasian would accept.

At the same time, in linking explicitly "religious" histories to other community-defining histories, Hegel illuminates the depth of the parallels between Hauerwas's account of tradition and Jeffrey Stout's. Where Hauerwas juxtaposes a story-formed Christian community with what he sees as a modern polity that rejects the need for narratives, Stout defends American democracy as a tradition. In Stout's reading, this tradition is elaborated and expressed in the works of figures such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, and Ralph Ellison.[21] He highlights the import of telling the country's history in relation to this tradition—both in terms of the tradition's development, as in Abraham Lincoln's writings and actions, and in terms of the moments where it has fallen short of that ideal. In Stout, as in Hauerwas, histories represent our ethical visions and self-understandings. Whether these histories are connected to a

[20] Hauerwas 1981, especially 9–52 and Hauerwas 2001. I have examined Hauerwas's conception of community in Lewis 2006a.

[21] Stout 2004. See especially chapters 1–2.

belief in a transcendent being is irrelevant in this context. Beyond highlighting that this history need not be conventionally religious to have this function, Stout's work also highlights that narratives that define a community—or even a country—are not intrinsically jingoistic. Though such narratives play a role in the most virulent forms of nationalism, they play no less a role in the efforts to imagine our community in constantly more inclusive terms.

This connection or commonality reveals that Hegel's conceptualization of "religion" includes more than what we conventionally designate as "religion." Where the discussion of the "Concept of God" has shown that religion's object matters, the key is that this object is taken to be the absolute, even if this is not ultimately conceived as a transcendent being. Here in the "Knowledge of God," Hegel makes the form of representation central to the conceptualization of religion and shows that representation is engaged in a wider range of activities than those conventionally recognized as "religious."

Following Hegel's vivid treatment of sensible representations, his remarkably brief account of nonsensible forms functions principally to lay the groundwork for the contrast between representation and thought elaborated in the next section. For this reason, it will be fundamental to addressing some of the most contested issues regarding the transformation of religious representations into philosophical thought. One way to frame the stakes of this matter is to note that even in a tradition such as Christianity, in which history plays such an important role, a great deal of the content of religious teachings is not sensible even in this broad sense. What relevance does representation have for the rest of its content or doctrine? More specifically, what aspects of that doctrine will be left behind as merely part of the representational form rather than the essential content in the elevation to thought? Answering these questions requires attending to the nonsensible forms of representation.

Nonsensible representations differ from sensible ones as one might expect: Whereas sensible forms of representation present objects and events in space and time (the forms of sensibility), other forms of representation do not. While we are no longer dealing with objects or events in time and space, these nonsensible representations are distinguished from thought by virtue of the objects and actions being portrayed as standing only in external and contingent relationships to each other. Thinking will demonstrate the necessary interrelationship of the determinations, but representation presents merely contingent occurrences:

> [T]o the extent that they are not yet analyzed internally and their distinctions are not yet posited in the way in which they relate to one another, they belong to representation. What we say is, "something happens," "change occurs," or "if it is this, it is also that, and then it is in this way." Thus these determinations have, to begin with, the contingency that gets stripped away from them only in the form of the concept. (*VPR* 1:296)

The determinations appear to stand independently of one another, even if not in time and space. They are connected, Hegel notes, merely by "and" and "also" (*VPR* 1:296).

Hegel's first example of such a representation is God's creation of the world. Such an event cannot be in time and space (since it creates these, or at least space), but it is nonetheless a representation because it presents both God and the world as finite entities standing over against each other (*VPR* 1:295–6). Similarly, "[i]n saying, 'God is all-wise, wholly good, righteous,' we have fixed determinations of content, each of which is simple and independent alongside the others" (*VPR* 1:296). When presented in this manner, these determinations are representations, with the capacity to mislead if taken literally. When presented as a self-subsisting entity standing over against others, "spirit itself is a representation" (*VPR* 1:296). The activity of thinking will elevate these determinations from their apparent self-subsistence, standing in only contingent relations to one another, to demonstrate their necessary interconnectedness.

The final paragraphs of the section make several observations regarding religion's role in the formation of our deepest commitments and in thereby providing social cohesion. Despite the limitations of representation, it plays a central role in shaping our grasp of the absolute—of our sense of ourselves, our basic orientation toward others, and our encompassing sense of what is most important. Such histories have a particularly powerful role for those who have not advanced to the stage of conceptual thought: "[e]ven for those whose thoughts and concept have not yet attained any determinate formation, that inner power is contained in history of this kind. They feel it and have an obscure consciousness of those powers" (*VPR* 1:295). Although the inner, universal content is distinct from the representations, the latter convey an "obscure [*dunkles*] consciousness" of this content. This is the way in which most people experience this content (and, as we will discuss below, even philosophers only develop a conceptual comprehension of the content on the basis of the representations). Representation thus plays an essential role in inculcating in the population as a whole a powerful but vague consciousness of who they are and, inseparably, of what they take to be absolute.

For this reason, Hegel can say that "[f]or human beings God is at first [*zunächst*] in the form of representation" (*VPR* 1:291). This claim appears to stand in direct tension with his earlier statement, in the discussion of feeling, that "the heart is the initial mode in which such content appears to the subject" (*VPR* 1:289). Hegel addresses this issue directly, asking whether "religious feelings [are] awakened and determined through" representation or "religious representations proceed from it" (*VPR* 1:297). Within the individual, Hegel seems to say, the feelings may appear first, but initially with only a very indeterminate content. The content appears first in the form of representation, but this develops on the basis of feelings that are already present. He seems to

have in mind the development of a child who experiences reverence and awe in a setting populated by religious representations. Thus, "Regarding the necessity of representation and the path through representation to the heart, we know that religious instruction begins with representation. By means of doctrine and teaching [*Lehre*, *Unterricht*] the feelings become aroused and purified; they are cultivated and brought into the heart" (*VPR* 1:298). These feelings may be provoked by representations—the prayers and other practices of a church service, for instance—even though the child initially has only a vague sense of the content. From this perspective, the child's feelings develop only because of the representations of the community in which she is raised. With time, however, these feelings are coupled with the representations of that tradition, providing the content characterizing the objective aspect. Considered from this angle, feeling precedes representation.

Overall, the combined roles of feeling and representation in religion do much to explain its power. While neither of these forms can provide its own justification (for that we need thought), they are the way in which we gain our initial orientation to the absolute. In this sense, religion is for everyone; it is "the consciousness of absolute truth in the way that it occurs for all human beings" (*VPR* 1:292; see also *Enz.* § 573 A). Because of the close relationship of feeling and representation, Hegel argues that attitudes toward the absolute—which encompass ethical views—only become incorporated into our feelings and thus effective in our lives by virtue of representation (*VPR* 1:298).[22] Moreover, because Hegel thinks few people will rise to the level of philosophy, much of the population will grasp the absolute almost exclusively in the form of representation. Hegel is explicit that we are dealing here with not only conventionally religious doctrines but also the representations that play an important role in shaping our sense of identity as a people, including our ideals. Insofar as we identify all of these with religion, we begin to grasp the central role that Hegel thinks religion can play in providing social cohesion. Religion—in this broad sense—can instill and undergird identification with the larger purposes and ideals of the society as a whole—precisely what he saw lacking in his day. As history displays all too horribly, such identifications can be extremely dangerous—particularly for those seen as not belonging in the society. Yet Hegel is not arguing for solidarity with just any society or state. To the contrary, the concern with the consummate religion functions to articulate a specific form of religion that supports not just the state in general but the modern state he saw as emerging.

[22] Religion's role as a starting point enables us to understand the precise significance of Fackenheim's important claim that religion is the condition of possibility for both philosophy and political life (see 1967, 22–3).

Thought

While these features of religion explain much of its power, they constitute only an aspect of Hegel's defense of religion against Enlightenment-inspired challenges. For a conception of religion to successfully meet the needs of the day, it will not only need to provide for social cohesion within complex modern societies; it will need to do so in a way that is intellectually compelling—that can withstand the critical spirit circulating ever more widely. As much as Hegel conceives of religion as the way in which truth is present for the general population, he does not see this as discontinuous with the truth as grasped by philosophers. Religion is much more than an "opiate for the masses" of instrumental value for social cohesion.

The key to this aspect of Hegel's strategy lies in the relation between representation and the highest mode of cognition: thought. More than half of "The Knowledge of God" falls in the subsection designated "Thought," which includes the discussion of the relationship of representation and thought. The space dedicated to the treatment of thought highlights Hegel's concern to demonstrate that the contents of representation can be raised into a philosophical form. It is thus integral to one of the central tasks of the lectures as a whole: to philosophize religion.[23]

Essential to this strategy is the claim that the contents of representation can be raised to the level of thought. What is universal, not merely particular, in the representations—i.e. the genuine content—can be preserved through a transformation that renders this content in the form of thought: "Philosophy does nothing but transform our representations into concepts. The content remains always the same" (*VPR* 1:292). Hegel's view of the close connection between form and content will require us to reexamine this claim later, but in the immediate context the point is that all of representation's content can be conveyed in the philosophical concepts of thought. To describe this process as a "translation" can be misleading; it is not the result of applying a code or procedure to the representations; it is simply a matter of thinking them through. Because the particulars of the representational form—the images, the historical portrayals, and so forth—are stripped away, this process is often seen as the "destruction" of religion, so that philosophy is viewed as an enemy

[23] Although he acknowledges that "Hegel thinks that the highest form of the witness of spirit is found in philosophy" (Hodgson 2005, 94) and that the project involves a "friendly demythologization" (99), Hodgson's reading often seems to take religious representations as definitive rather than pursuing the manner in which Hegel seeks to raise their content to the level of thought; see, for example, 2005, 89 and 97. On this notion of "Christian-friendly" demythologization, see also O'Regan 1994, 334, discussed below.

of religion (*VPR* 1:293).[24] Hegel seeks to remove this appearance of conflict by demonstrating that, far from destroying religion, philosophy reveals its true meaning and provides its only successful defense.

Though Hegel's more elaborate treatment of thought in subjective spirit will illuminate the argument further, the presentation in the lectures provides a valuably concrete point of entry to the issues.[25] As we saw above, "Representing . . . holds all sensible and spiritual content in the mode in which it is taken as isolated in its determinacy. Under the sensible content we have sky, earth, stars, color, and the like, and with respect to God we have wisdom, benevolence, etc." (*VPR* 1:299). The move beyond this form comes from the entirely ordinary impulse to think further in order to better grasp an object: "We have an instance of this as soon as we ask, 'What is that?'" (*VPR* 1:299). Doing so consists in asking how the object's various attributes or determinations are related:

> In representation, however, the distinct determinations stand on their own account; they might either belong to a whole or be placed outside one another. In thought the simple character is resolved into distinct determinations, or else those determinations that lie outside one another are compared in such a way that what comes to consciousness is the contradiction of the very factors that are at the same time supposed to constitute a unity. If they are mutually contradictory, it does not seem that they could belong to *one* content. The consciousness of this contradiction and its resolution belongs to thought. (*VPR* 1:300)

Thought undermines the appearance of independence of objects and determinations. Striking here is that the development takes place simply by virtue of thinking the object. The different determinations—e.g. "God is just, omnipotent, wise, and gracious" (*VPR* 1:300)—are reflected upon in such a way that the contradictions between them become apparent, and our thinking works to overcome this contradiction. Hegel's language merits quoting at length:

[24] "The difficult thing is to separate out from a content what pertains only to representation. In its paring away of what pertains to representation, philosophy is reproached for removing the content, too. This transformation is therefore held to be a destruction" (*VPR* 1:292–3).

[25] By simultaneously attending to the structure of the philosophy of religion and considering the different discussions of thought in relation to each other, we are able to treat the transition from representation to thought in the philosophy of religion in the larger context of Hegel's view. By contrast, Cyril O'Regan argues that the question of the relation between representation and philosophical thought can only be answered on the basis of answers to a number of other questions about Hegel's relationship to Christianity (1994, 6–7). As a result, he roughly reverses Hegel's ordering and does not formally address the relation between representation and philosophical thought until the final chapter. The problems with this approach are twofold: First, *this* background does not provide the background necessary for an adequate analysis of the transition from representation to thought in religion (see O'Regan 1994, 338–9). Second, by trying to treat Hegel's relationship to Christianity prior to careful analysis of the relation between representation and thought, one is left without the keys to interpreting his treatment of Christianity.

> When we say that God is both gracious and just, we require no deliberation to come to the conclusion that benevolence contradicts justice. It is the same when we say that God is omnipotent and wise, the power in the face of which everything disappears or does not exist—this negation of everything determinate is a contradiction of the wisdom that wills something determinate, the wisdom that has a goal and is the limitation of the indeterminacy that omnipotence is. It is this way with many things. In representation everything has its place peacefully alongside everything else: the human being is free and also dependent; there is good in the world and there is evil as well. In thought, on the contrary, these things are drawn into mutual connection, and thus contradiction becomes visible. (*VPR* 1:300–1)

In spontaneously seeking to resolve these contradictions, the intelligence passes from representation to thought.

Working over the material to conceptualize a more coherent object involves distinguishing merely accidental or contingent attributes from essential ones and demonstrates not only how the essential ones are compatible but how they are intrinsically connected, not just contingently coexistent:

> But when we think them, different determinations should be given of which the unity, their sum so to speak or more exactly their identity, constitutes the object. The determinations of this unity exhaust the object. But if we say that God is just, omnipotent, wise, and gracious, we can go on in this way without ceasing . . . If we are therefore supposed to grasp God's concept, then distinct determinations have to be given and this multitude of characteristics has to be reduced to a restricted set, so that the object may be completely exhausted by means of this restricted set of distinct characteristics and their unity. (*VPR* 1:300)

The movement toward thought thus does not merely overcome the images and allegories typical of sensible representations. The fundamental issue is overcoming the appearance that the determinations stand independently over against each other—the aspect of representation placed in relief by the treatment of nonsensible representation.

The stakes of the interpretation of this point come out in the contrast between two important readings. Emil Fackenheim attributes the otherness of the absolute to the genuine content of religion rather than to the representational form. He therefore concludes that this otherness must be preserved in thought. By contrast—but in agreement with the interpretation I am developing—Martin Wendte argues that representation is characterized by the represented appearing as other to the representer and to other objects represented. As a result, the otherness of God is left behind in the transition to thought.[26] The interpretation of this point is thus

[26] See Wendte 2007, 165 and 167 and Fackenheim 1967, 53, 120, 122, 163, and 187.

crucial for understanding the fundamental character of Hegel's philosophy of religion.[27]

In place of this indifference of the determinations vis-à-vis one another, thought articulates the necessary connection between the determinations. The category of necessity definitively distinguishes representation and thought. As Hegel states in simple terms, "In representation there is [the content] 'God is.' Thought requires to know why it is necessary that God is" (*VPR* 1:301). The requirement for necessity is entailed in the discussion above. Moving beyond the appearance of freestanding objects consists in grasping the objects as necessarily existing in relation to others: "We call something 'necessary' when, if one [element] exists, the other is thereby posited. The first only exists determinately insofar as the second exists, and vice versa" (*VPR* 1:301). Insofar as thought renders the distinct determinations in internal relations with each other, it demonstrates that one does not exist without the other. In other words, they stand in necessary relation to each other. As Hegel states it in the 1821 manuscript, "Primarily, therefore, it is not a question of proving some such proposition [as]: 'God is thus and so,' 'Religion is this and that.' Such propositions contain the *representation* of 'God,' of 'religion,' as a presupposition. It is a question of the *necessity of the content* in and for itself, or of discovering in the cognition what it is that is the true" (*VPR* 1:131). This need for necessity can only be satisfied by thinking itself: "Once we have begun with *thought and the relations of thought*, we must above all seek and demand the *consistency* and *necessity* that *properly belong to it*, and set them up against the standpoint of contingency" (*VPR* 1:19). This necessity cannot be determined by anything merely given or contingent.

In these comments, the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* identify crucial elements of Hegel's conception of thought that distinguish it from representation. He moves quickly over the material, however, and the strength of the argument depends on the more developed account of thought offered earlier in Hegel's system—in the "Psychology," the third section of subjective spirit. That treatment of thought valuably illuminates the connection to the culmination of the logic and shows that important support for this account of thought has already been provided there.

[27] In his relatively brief treatment of thought, Hodgson argues that because thought arises from thinking through these representations, "it is evident that thought continues to be fructified by the imagistic materials thrown up by representation; without representation there could be no thought, and a dialectic between representation and thought is constantly taking place—a point about which Hegel is not sufficiently clear" (Hodgson 2005, 114). Everything turns, however, on how one interprets this dialectic between representation and thought. Although Hodgson is not specific, his interpretation does not seem to do justice to the manner in which thought sublates representation. Compare Jaeschke 1990. Nor does Hodgson's statement encompass the culmination of the development in thought thinking itself; see below.

In both the *Encyclopaedia* and the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit*, Hegel's account of thinking centers around theoretical spirit's grasping itself as self-determining. Where intuition and representation both involve degrees of heteronomy, of content appearing to spirit as given, in thought spirit grasps its content as entirely its own (*Enz.* § 468). As in the lectures on religion, this involves overcoming particularity to raise the content to universality. In theoretical spirit, however, Hegel focuses on the overcoming of the difference between being and thought.[28] As in the final stages of the logic, what appear to be other to thought are grasped as determined by thinking itself: Intelligence's "product, the *thought*, is the matter; simple identity of the subjective and objective. It knows that what is *thought is*, and that what *is* only *is* insofar as it is thought" (*Enz.* § 465; see also *VPGst* 224–5). Hegel's claim here is closely related to the point on which we spent so much time in Chapter 2: What an object is cannot be determined in abstraction from the concepts that are produced by thinking itself. Here in thought, the developments that were treated in the abstract at the culmination of the logic are treated as they appear in actuality, that is, as the activity of thinking subjects (*Enz.* § 467 A).

In thought, then, the object is grasped as thinking itself. Insofar as it grasps the determinations as its own product (*VPGst* 235), thought is no longer thinking another, but thinking itself. Thought has itself as its explicit object. This point's consequences for the interpretation of Hegel's philosophy of religion are decisive. The self-determining character of thinking entails that anything that is meaningfully an *object* is constituted by thinking. Theistic conceptions that posit a deity independent of our thinking thus ultimately posit a God that is subordinate to thinking itself, which entails that it is not properly seen as absolute. The only conception of the absolute that is not relativized in this manner—by Hegel's account of self-determining thought—is one that conceives of this absolute in terms of thinking itself.

Hegel is consistent on this point throughout the different cycles of the lectures. The 1821 manuscript articulates the transition from representation to thought in precisely these terms: At the culmination of representation, the content has been made mine, but

> I *am not in it* nor identical with it. This is what constitutes the *need* and *drive* of rational insight. All that is meant by the indeterminate word "*reason,*" "*rational* insight," is, not that within me there is anything that is certain and stands fast, but that there is within me that which stands fast for itself, objective in and for itself, established within me, i.e. it is grounded within itself, is determined in and for itself. Such, however, is the pure concept. Whatever further determinate content it may have in relation to will or intelligence, *the substantive point is that such*

[28] In the highest form of thought, the intelligence "*determines content* out of itself, in that it sublates this difference of form. In the insight into necessity, the final immediacy . . . has disappeared" (*Enz.* § 467).

> *content should be known by me to be grounded within itself*, that I have in it the consciousness *of the concept*. (*VPR* 1:159)

Religion's object is revealed by philosophy to be nothing other than the self-determining concept itself.[29] Hegel is explicit about the same point in 1824:

> The subject is within the universal precisely in its relation to this universal object, which it recognizes as being, defined as nothing other than thinking, the activity of the universal; or, it has a universal, the universal generally, as its object, and this universal is supposed here to be the strictly absolute universal. (*VPR* 1:208)

The critical implications of Hegel's account of thought undermine any alternative, showing it to be subordinate to thinking itself: as we think through each of these other proposals for the absolute, we realize that thinking is the ultimate arbiter of the justification and can be said to qualify any results.[30]

This point underscores why Hegel's project can be seen as threatening religion. On one hand, Hegel sees himself as defending Christianity by showing and justifying the genuine meaning and significance of the tradition; any interpretation of his work needs to take this claim seriously. On the other hand, his strategy for doing so interprets the tradition's content in ways to which many members of the tradition will undoubtedly object. Hegel's response to such objections must be encouragement to think through the implications and presuppositions of the view one holds (which may require time spent studying the "alphabet of philosophy"); his claim is that no other position will hold up in the face of scrutiny.

This suggests an aptness to Cyril O'Regan's phrase that O'Regan himself does not highlight. He characterizes Hegel's project as a "demythologization" that is "Christian-friendly."[31] The term is fitting in that Hegel sees himself as preserving the content. Yet the phrase may be even more revealing in another sense: One person's friend may be another's foe. The fact that Hegel sees the elevation of religious representations into thought as a "friendly" process does not mean that everyone will. The transformation does abandon aspects of religion that some view as a matter of content rather than form.[32] For that

[29] Hodgson arrives remarkably close to this point in writing that, "[t]he connection between immediacy and mediation is consummated when what is known corresponds fully to the act of knowing, when thought knows itself in the objects of thought," but his commitment to "the ordinary meaning and use of the word God" seems to hold him back from pursuing the implications of this passage (2005, 115). See note 4 above.

[30] See *VPR* 1:239.

[31] 1994, 334.

[32] Thus, Desmond and Wendte ultimately find theological fault with Hegel because he does not preserve the otherness of God. Desmond states this concisely: "some sense of transcendence as other to human self-transcendence and nature as a totality of finite beings is essentially entailed by this monotheistic God" (2003, 6; see also Wendte 2007). Mirroring this response, Fackenheim argues that Hegel preserves the content of religion only because this otherness of the absolute is preserved in thought (1967, 163 and 187).

reason, it will appear to some as a threatening, unfriendly demythologization—and perhaps as the Trojan Horse of demythologization. This seems to be the implication of Desmond's talk of Hegel's God as "a counterfeit double."[33] In relation to other interpreters, the implications are slightly different: Just because it is friendly from Hegel's perspective (in that it preserves the content he deems essential) does not mean that the strategy should be taken to preserve all the content that others may deem essential. Failing to appreciate this point can lead to using Hegel's claim that philosophy preserves the content of religion as a warrant for a more theistic reading than is justified.

These objections should lead us to revisit Hegel's claim, quoted above, that "[p]hilosophy does nothing but transform our representations into concepts. The content remains always the same" (*VPR* 1:292). Hegel qualifies this point precisely in the 1821 manuscript: The inadequacy of the representational form drives the transition to philosophy, and only philosophy provides "the truth *as* truth *in the form* of truth—*in the form of* the absolutely concrete and of that which *harmonizes* within itself purely and simply" (*VPR* 1:159).[34] Thought's infinite form stands in unity with this infinite content in a way that representation's finite form does not.[35] Specifically, a defining feature of the representational form is that objects appear as freestanding rather than in necessary relation to each other. Insofar as we have moved from representation to thought, a shift has been made, such that—for instance—the absolute can no longer be seen as other than human beings. In certain respects, this shift thus appears as a change in content. At the very least, it means that one's understanding of the representational content cannot function as the arbiter of the interpretation of the philosophical account of the absolute. Rather, thought is the arbiter of the genuine content of representations. Thought grasps the genuine significance of the representations by distinguishing what is essential and universal from what is merely accidental. For Hegel, the commonality of the content can only be fully grasped from the perspective of thought.

[33] Desmond 2003.

[34] For valuable discussion of this point, see Jaeschke 1990, 228 and 238. Jaeschke stresses that thought provides a more adequate expression of the absolute than representation and pursues the implications for the authority of philosophy vis-à-vis religion. My interpretation, then, concurs with his on major points. His reading, however, gives relatively little attention to religion's role in providing social cohesion. Jaeschke also contrasts the inadequacy of religious representation at this point in the philosophy of religion with what he takes to be a more positive portrayal of religion in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. By contrast, I have argued elsewhere that the transition from religion to "absolute knowing" in the *Phenomenology* is driven by an even more negative view of religion than that of the Berlin lectures (Lewis 2008b). At least by the 1827 lectures, religion provides a greater degree of reconciliation than in the *Phenomenology*.

[35] For an excellent discussion of form and content in this context, see Wendte 2007, 174–5; see also 166.

Hegel's conception of thought and its relation to representation frames his analysis of proofs for the existence of God.[36] Strikingly, he reaffirms the proofs in the face of recent critiques, particularly those of Kant, and easily appears to be reviving a pre-Kantian rational theology. He does not defend them at face value, however. They are best understood not as philosophical proofs but as "nothing more than a description of the self-elevation to God" (*VPR* 1:312).

Religion as a whole concerns the relation of human beings to "God," and the movement within the sphere of religion consists in overcoming the difference between these (*VPR* 1:308). This elevation to God involves a double passage, from the finite to the infinite and from the subjective infinite to the objective infinite; and each of these passages is known in both religion (through representations) and philosophy (through thought). More concretely, "First it is a passing over from finite things, from the things of the world or from the finitude of consciousness and from this finitude in general that we call 'we' or 'I,' this particular subject—to the infinite, to this infinite more precisely determined as God" (*VPR* 1:308). Hegel's system expresses this passage philosophically in the movement from finite to infinite spirit over the course of the philosophy of spirit. It is the attainment of the religious standpoint that constitutes the background to the philosophy of religion. Through this process, we come to know our own essence as the absolute. This process is not a mystery but precisely the movement whose philosophical and authoritative account Hegel has been developing over the course of the system.

In the second passage, "the one aspect is defined as God or the infinite in general as it is known by us (therefore as a subjective content), and the other aspect, to which we pass over, is determinacy as objective in principle or as being" (*VPR* 1:308–9). The content at issue is not merely "for us" but rather has objectivity. The philosophical account of this movement is provided in *Enz.* §§ 19–83, where Hegel undermines the appearance that objectivity should be juxtaposed with the product of thought.

The classic proofs for the existence of God portray these same passages or elevation in the form of the understanding, a mode of cognition that distorts this content by remaining trapped in finitude. The cosmological and teleological proofs treat the finite starting point as the foundation on which to build the argument (*VPR* 1:316, 321). Thus, "we make the result dependent on given determinations already present. What we arrive at is represented as something dependent upon assumptions" (*VPR* 1:312). As a result, "the being of God appears as a consequence, as dependent upon the being of the finite. This is the

[36] Hegel was fascinated by the proofs. He delivered a separate lecture course on them in 1829 and had recently signed a contract to publish a work on the proofs when he died unexpectedly in 1831 (Hodgson 2007, 1). Peter Hodgson has assembled materials from this course as well as other surviving treatments of the proofs in his recent translation, *Lectures on the Proofs of the Existence of God* (2007).

distortion, that this progression that we call 'proving' is unsuited to what we represent to ourselves under 'God'—for God is, of course, precisely the non-derivative, he is utterly actual being in and for itself" (*VPR* 1:312). Though the ontological proof does not use finite existence as a foundation, it too proceeds at the level of the understanding.[37]

Even though the proofs cannot fulfill the task they claim to, they nonetheless describe the elevation to God that is at the core of religion. For this reason, they should not be thrown out (*VPR* 1:312). Because they express this elevation, the problem with the proofs is not their content but their form, which distorts their genuine significance. The goal of Hegel's treatment of the proofs is therefore to "restore [them] to a position of honor by stripping away that distortion" (*VPR* 1:310). Doing so, however, reveals them to be descriptions of that which Hegel's system demonstrates philosophically.[38]

To interpret the elevation in this manner decisively rejects theistic interpretations of Hegel's philosophy of religion. Doing so then easily appears to fall into the left-wing interpretation powerfully portrayed by Fackenheim. Distinguishing my interpretation from that one therefore places crucial issues in relief.[39] Fackenheim defends what he describes as the "Hegelian middle" against both the right and left wings. Where the right-wing interpretation portrays Hegel as a transcendent metaphysician, the left-wing, "immanentist" interpretation contends not only that "the world of human experience *exhausts* Reality" but also that "[a]ll aspects of that world of experience have, as *humanly experienced*, one thing in common: they are shot through with contingency, externality, factual givenness."[40] While my interpretation rejects the otherness of the absolute that Fackenheim incorporates into his notion of the Hegelian middle, it is distinguished from the left-wing option by virtue of the idealism established in the logic. In its conception of "factual givenness," in particular, Fackenheim's Left Hegelianism does not incorporate thought's role in the constitution of reality. Fackenheim's typology, then, has not exhausted the options. What

[37] *VPR* 1:323–8 and *VPR* 3:109–19. As Jaeschke crisply expresses, "[t]he ontological proof is indeed for Hegel only the reflective shape of the metaphysical concept, which itself is properly speaking nothing other than the identity of concept and reality" (1990, 299). Consequently, the proof must be interpreted in more philosophical terms and cannot function as the anchor of the interpretation of the consummate religion (*pace* Trawny 2002 and Calton 2001).

[38] Hegel holds that such proofs will always be with us, because they express a movement intrinsic to cognition (*VPR* 1:313). This point bears noteworthy similarity to Kant's argument in the *Prolegomena* that thought has an inherent tendency to claim knowledge of that which it cannot know (*Prol.* 4:333). Hegel accepts what we might think of as the broadly Kantian point that the proofs seek to apply determinations (such as being) that properly apply only to one realm (phenomena for Kant, the finite for Hegel) to a realm in which they do not apply (noumena for Kant, the infinite for Hegel).

[39] For the present purposes, Fackenheim's conceptualization highlights the relevant issues more clearly than the original division in the 1830s of Hegel's followers into Left and Right Hegelians.

[40] Fackenheim 1967, 81–2.

appears to be a left-wing reading by virtue of the rejection of the otherness of the absolute avoids the position he describes by attending to Hegel's idealism.

More fundamentally, the limitations of Fackenheim's typology derive from the way in which he identifies the "simply-finite" and the "purely-human" and juxtaposes these with something beyond the human.[41] This presupposition is often implicit in accusations that Hegel—or at least Hegel as interpreted here—reduces God to humanity and thus theology to anthropology. To pose the interpretive questions in terms that juxtapose the human and the infinite, however, occludes the Hegelian option.[42]

Admittedly, there is some truth in the accusation: The transformation of religious representations into philosophical concepts reveals that what religion presents as other than human beings is not. This othering, or projection, results from the representational form. Many of the crucial features of Feuerbach's theory of religion as projection are already present here.

Yet the charge misleads when it takes for granted an understanding of humanity at odds with Hegel's. The humanity that is identical with the absolute—spirit—is not humanity in its immediacy but rather humanity that has developed its implicit potential, that is raised to spirit. More specifically, it is the self-consciousness and self-knowledge treated abstractly in subjective spirit and actualized in art, religion, and philosophy. This is the "essence" of human beings to which Hegel here refers (see *VPGst* 6–7). Given Hegel's account of consciousness and cognition, this entails that humanity is not conceived as a merely finite being; for Hegel, one does not have to leave the human realm to encounter the infinite. Rather, the elevation of the human above the sensible, above the merely given to an infinitude that consists in a self-determining self-transparency is central to Hegel's project. The contrast between immediate humanity and humanity that actualizes its potential is crucial; it enables Hegel to make philosophical sense of language contrasting the (merely) human and the divine, while still seeing these as implicitly reconciled—and reconciled in actuality through the work of religion.

With these considerations in mind, the accusation can be productively recast, in more Hegelian terms, as the reduction to biology. That is, when the accusation is made, it frequently presupposes a naturalistic, purely biological conception of human beings under the rubric of "anthropology."[43] To reduce his philosophy of religion to biology is to treat spirit as a merely natural phenomenon, and this is clearly at odds with central strands of Hegel's thought. But the difference between such a reduction to biology and Hegel's

[41] Fackenheim 1967, 49; see also 1967, 162 and 165.

[42] See Fackenheim 1967, 162–5.

[43] In his discussion, Robert Williams is clear that he uses "anthropology" as a gloss for "a purely immanent anthropology" that is limited to the finite (2005–06, 30). Insofar as we conceive of "anthropology" in this narrower sense, equivalent to what I have called biology, we can concur with his claim that Hegel does not reduce theology to anthropology (2005–06, 32).

actual view must be understood in terms of his philosophical account of the difference between the spheres of nature and spirit—not in terms of some other form of "supernaturalism" or some uniquely "religious" insight.

In achieving thought, "Knowledge of God" has reached its culmination. The alterity posited between humans and God in earlier stages of knowledge of God has been overcome. In the thinking that characterizes philosophy, spirit becomes transparent to itself such that the absolute is grasped as spirit and thus our own essence.[44] The appearance of independent existence intrinsic to representations of God has been overcome, and human beings have thereby been elevated to the divine.

THE CULTUS

At this point in the Concept of Religion, Hegel has already set out a great deal of his conception of religion. Religion has for its object the absolute, initially functioning as a kind of placeholder for that which results from previous developments in the system and whose content will be filled out over the course of the philosophy of religion. While the first section concerns religion's object, the second addresses our knowledge of that object—though it becomes apparent that this topic is not separate from the determination of the object itself. Examining the distinct modes of knowledge of God, we have considered the role of feeling in religion, the representational form of religious content, and the transformation of this representational content into the pure concepts of philosophical thought. As Hegel's discussion of the proofs for the existence of God makes explicit, this entire development constitutes an elevation of humanity to God—that is, an overcoming of the difference initially posited between humans and the absolute. The absolute is revealed as none other than our spirit. Insofar as we have an abstract account of religion's object and our relation to this object, it might appear that Hegel has already provided a comprehensive account of religion.

In "The Knowledge of God," however, this elevation has been treated from a theoretical perspective—that is, with regard to cognition's grasping of the absolute. The practical aspects of this relationship and elevation—no less important though perhaps more easily overlooked—constitute the final section, "The Cultus." Hegel provides the most systematic account of the complex interdependence of theoretical and practical aspects of spirit in the third part of subjective spirit, where theoretical spirit is followed by practical spirit and

[44] "Thus the nature of thought lies in this likeness with itself, this pure self-transparency of the activity, which, however, simply *is* . . . " (*VPR* 1:209–10).

both of these are united in free spirit.[45] Just as "Knowledge of God" is closely related to theoretical spirit, "The Cultus" is closely linked to practical spirit, and the relation between theoretical and practical spirit profoundly informs the relation between knowledge of God and the cultus.[46]

Practical spirit concerns practical activity in the world. In theoretical spirit, Hegel conceives of the intelligence as moving to match itself up with the object, developing to the point where—in the highest form of thought—this object is thinking itself (*VPGst* 239–40). Practical spirit, by contrast, involves action to shape or determine the world according to the subject's own determinations (*VPGst* 240; *VPR* 1:330–1). The subject acts to transform the world according to its will. Whereas the developments of the intelligence overcome the apparent difference between the subject and object by grasping this object as the determinations of thinking itself, the developments of the will (or practical spirit) overcome the apparent difference between the subject and object by imposing the subject's determinations on the world. Importantly, this action also transforms the subject; in Aristotelian terms, it is both *poiesis* and *praxis*.[47] Where this is portrayed in the abstract in subjective spirit, objective spirit presents this actualization of the will in the social and political institutions of the modern world.

Although theoretical and practical spirit are presented sequentially, in actuality they develop in tandem. The developments in theoretical and practical spirit could not have taken place without each other. Correspondingly, the developments in knowledge of God traced in the second section of the Concept of Religion could not take place without the activities of the religious community treated in the third section. The cultus both supports and expresses in practical activity the developments in cognition traced above. It thus provides another aspect of the reconciliation with the absolute; without this

[45] On the complex relationship between theoretical and practical spirit, see Lewis 2005, 79–113.

[46] By contrast, Jaeschke argues that "[t]he two relationships ought not therefore to be designated primarily as those of knowledge and cultus, but of consciousness and self-consciousness. Then the distinction between the 1824 and 1827 lectures disappears" (1990, 259). As I argue below, however, the connections between knowledge of God and the cultus, on one hand, and theoretical and practical spirit, on the other, are extremely close. Drawing this connection enables us to undermine Jaeschke's justification for his position. He argues that the theoretical relationship's "orientation to something objective makes it impossible to conceive God as spirit. For this latter requires the inclusion of the knowing subject—and hence the relationship of self-consciousness" (1990, 259). One of the distinctive characteristics of thought, however, is that the object is grasped as thinking itself. For this reason, the theoretical relationship becomes self-consciousness. Further, the relationship between theoretical and practical spirit explains away another problem he notes: that if the second relationship is understood as practical, then it could not be a relationship of self-consciousness (1990, 260). Hegel's account of the complex interweaving of the theoretical and the practical entails that the practical cannot be juxtaposed with self-consciousness. In stressing continuity with the 1824 lectures, Jaeschke's treatment downplays Hegel's shifts on this point.

[47] See Planty-Bonjour 1983, 24 and Lewis 2005, 131.

aspect, the reconciliation would not be made actual in individuals' lives. These two interrelated paths constitute distinct, but inseparable, aspects of our elevation to the absolute, our recognition of our fundamental identity with what is highest (*VPR* 1:337–8).

Hegel introduces the cultus's task and movement in relation to the theoretical relationship already examined. In the latter, consciousness is filled with its object, such that there is initially no consciousness of the self (*VPR* 1:330). While the subject and the object stand in relation—and even implicit identity—from the beginning, this relationship is not apparent to consciousness because it is occupied solely with its object and does not yet grasp its identity with this object.

The cultus enters here—not at the endpoint of the theoretical development but at a point where reconciliation has not yet been achieved: "At this point the practical relationship commences, in which I am for myself, I stand over against the object, and I now have to bring forth my own union with it . . . To bring forth this unity is action, or the aspect of the cultus" (*VPR* 1:330). Whereas much of Hegel's discussion of the will focuses on transforming the world in accord with the subject's own determinations, the treatment of the cultus frames action in terms of the movement of reconciliation. The subject and the object need to be brought into unity—the identity in difference expressed in "know[ing] myself as filled by this object, . . . know[ing] it as within me and likewise myself as within this object" (*VPR* 1:330).[48] This reconciliation is possible precisely because this object—the absolute—is spirit, which is my own essence. We are dealing with a reconciliation that is already in principle achieved but must be realized—made actual—in individuals:

> The presupposition of the cultus is that the reconciliation of God with humanity is implicitly and explicitly consummated, that it is not a matter of first having to bring this reconciliation about absolutely; instead it only needs to be produced for me, the particular person, because I am actual in the practical domain as this single individual. Participation in this reconciliation that is implicitly and explicitly accomplished is the action of the cultus. (*VPR* 1:332)

Making this identity actual involves not merely cognition but also the practical activity that both furthers this consciousness and gives it an existing reality in the world. This is the task of the cultus.

This passage also illustrates Hegel's larger strategy. At one level, it refers to the reconciliation of God and humanity accomplished in Christ, which now must be expressed in the church. Those are the Christian representations of this point, and the resonances are not simply coincidental. But these

[48] "In the cultus . . . God is on one side, I am on the other, and the determination is the joining, within my own self, of myself with God, the knowing of myself within God and of God within me" (*VPR* 1:331).

resonances do not entail that Christian doctrine provides the definitive formulation of these points. To the contrary, the philosophical articulation is the most authoritative, and it is this formulation that Hegel has been setting up and laying out in this passage.[49] For Hegel's larger project to be successful, however, the content that philosophy expresses in concepts must also be represented in the doctrines of the consummate religion. The concurrence is neither accidental nor indicative that religious representations are not sublated in philosophical concepts.

Thus, when Hegel notes that "[i]n dogmatic theology the traditional chapter *de unione mystica* deals with the cultus," his point is not that the reconciliation with the absolute is to be understood as in any sense going beyond philosophical reason or that reason is to be understood in terms of religious mysteries (*VPR* 1:333). Philosophy provides the key for the interpretation of the religious expressions, not the reverse: "As a whole the mystical is everything speculative, or whatever is concealed from the understanding [*Verstand*]" (*VPR* 1:333). The doctrine *de unione mystica* shares with the philosophical conception of reason that it passes beyond the limits of the understanding. But whereas religious expressions of this union involve a kind of obscurity, Hegel's philosophical system attempts to set it out with explicit, philosophical transparency.[50]

Although the cultus finds expression in religious doctrines, Hegel notes that at present this practical side of religious life is often neglected in favor of a focus on "faith," understood in principally inward terms (*VPR* 1:332). Though Kant might be seen as linking religion to the practical in his argument regarding the connection between morality and religion, Hegel's conception begins with those activities classically associated with the cultus: prayer,

[49] Alan Olson's illuminating study of Hegel's thought as pneumatology argues for the influence of Hegel's Lutheran upbringing—and specifically the impact of Luther's *Small Catechism*—on his entire conception of spirit. The parallels between Luther's account and Hegel's philosophical account of spirit are significant (despite my differences with Olson's interpretation of spirit); this should be no surprise. Nonetheless, the crucial issue is that Hegel's project is committed to giving an account of the philosophical concepts that does not depend for its justification on the religious representations. For Olson to suggest that the "catechetical formula might be determinative in the formulation of" Hegel's philosophical conception of spirit, then, fails to adequately address Hegel's claims that a) religious representations may provide the individual with a path to the philosophical concepts, but b) this does not entail that the philosophical conception is itself determined by the representations (1992, 28).

[50] Peter Hodgson, by contrast, argues that "reason may penetrate the mystery but not exhaust it" and that "no finite human being can achieve such a knowledge [of the determinations of the absolute]; only God knows absolutely" (2005, 80). Such readings fail to account adequately for Hegel's treatment of the contrast between representation and thought. As much as Cyril O'Regan emphasizes Hegel's connections to mysticism, he argues that this does not entail a negative theology or hidden God; rather, Hegel generally ignores the apophatic elements in mystics. For Hegel "it is Christianity's keynote that the very nature of divine reality is disclosed, and disclosed to a being capable of both comprehension and appreciation" (1994, 42).

confession, church ceremonies, and so forth. Their marginality within the thought of many of Hegel's contemporaries is no accident: Protestant concerns about what was seen as a Catholic overemphasis on ritual were accentuated by Enlightenment critiques of "superstitious" practices. In response, those "defending" religion from these critiques frequently minimized ritualistic aspects. Much recent work on the history of the study of religion in the modern West has argued for the pervasiveness of this Protestant privileging of faith and/or belief over practice.[51] While these histories at times overstate the case, they effectively testify to a widespread discourse marginalizing practice's role in religion. Against this backdrop of both Hegel's context and our own, the central role he attributes to religious practice bears stressing. At the same time, his attention to practice does not displace a concern with beliefs; beliefs and other practices function together in a complex relationship.

Hegel's concern with practice centers around the transformation of the individual through participation in the religious community. Accordingly, he considers the historical origin—its initial evocation—peripheral to the study and focuses instead on the existing religious community.[52] The Christian cultus, then, is "essentially a teaching church" (*VPR* 3:257). The treatment of the cultus thus highlights the practices through which a religious tradition is transmitted through the formation of particular subjects.

Hegel identifies three moments of the cultus, which are necessarily dealt with only briefly and abstractly here in the Concept of Religion. (Hegel will fill out the discussion of the communities of particular religions—particularly in his rich account of the Christian cultus.) He designates the first form of the cultus as "devotion [*Andacht*] in general" (*VPR* 1:333). Like the account of practical spirit, the practical side of religion begins with an interior moment: "Devotion is not the mere faith that God is, but is present when faith becomes vivid [*lebhafter*], when the subject prays and is occupied with this content not merely in objective fashion but becomes immersed therein; the essential thing here is the fire and heat of devotion" (*VPR* 1:333). The core of Hegel's conception of devotion lies in an inner excitation. This first moment is the initial inward aspect of the practical. Hegel seeks to portray its "practical" or "active" dimension in the contrast between a merely "objective" or observational relation to the content and "vivid" "fire and heat" as well as movement.[53] Although devotion is expressed in prayer, speech, and so forth, devotion itself is this fundamentally inward moment.

[51] For two prominent examples, see Asad 1993 and Dubuisson 2003.

[52] "But it is something outside of religion [altogether], if one wants to elicit it [faith] for the first time" (*VPR* 1:333). See also 1:336 n.

[53] "Devotion is the self-moving spirit, preserving itself in this movement, this object. This inwardness is devotion in general" (*VPR* 1:333).

It therefore corresponds closely to the first moment of practical spirit, "practical feeling," and the connection to the latter enables us to elaborate on the brief treatment in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*.[54] Practical feeling involves "immediate" determinations: "they are felt thus, but also as belonging to the essence of the subject itself, stepping forward out of it—not externally found, but based in the subject's own essence . . . " (*VPGst* 244). They appear as immediate within the individual, not as taken on from the outside. As such, they correspond closely to faith on the theoretical side, as the passage quoted above confirms (*VPR* 1:333).[55] Moreover, practical feeling is inseparably tied to my own, individual subjectivity (*Enz.* § 472). This connection underlies the cultus's broader function of making the reconciliation with the absolute actual for particular individuals.

In the treatment of practical spirit, Hegel expresses the sense of excitation vis-à-vis what exists in terms of an ought that is oriented toward activity that transforms the world to bring it into accord with the determinations of practical feeling (*Enz.* § 472). In devotion, because of the character of the object, this activity takes the form of satisfying the excitation—relaxing the tension—by transforming the self to overcome the distance between the subject and object. More specifically, this will involve overcoming the subject's immediate particularity, making explicit its identity with the universal. Bringing about this transformation—as Hegel articulates in the following moments—requires a variety of activities, many of which do not have this transformation of the self as their explicit purpose.

The second moment of the cultus—paralleling the second moment of practical spirit—involves the expression or actualization of that first, inward moment; it is given objective existence: "To the cultus belong, in the second place, the external forms through which the feeling of reconciliation is brought forth in an external and sensible manner, as for instance the fact that in the *sacraments* reconciliation is brought into feeling, into the here and now of present and sensible consciousness" (*VPR* 1:333–4). The second moment concerns the process of expression or externalization prominent in Hegel's thinking as a whole. In line with deep threads in his project, this expression is not a mere application or contingent communication of the content. Rather, something only becomes what it is through this actualization; the content itself develops through this process of expression. Though this process characterizes practical spirit as a whole, language provides the preeminent form of expression in theoretical spirit as well as some of the most concrete examples: As we

[54] On practical feeling, see *Enz.* §§ 471–2 and *VPGst* 244–51.

[55] Note that in the 1824 lectures, Hegel identifies this first moment as faith (*VPR* 1:237). As his conception of practical spirit develops, by 1827 Hegel distinguishes faith from devotion precisely in terms of the practical dimension. Given the inseparability of the theoretical and the practical, they are unlikely to appear separately; but they can be conceptually distinguished, and doing so enables Hegel to articulate the moments of the cultus.

try to express our views in language, these views develop and transform. They become what they are only through the process of giving them determinate form, i.e. expressing them in language.[56]

Hegel thus interprets religious practices such as prayer, sacraments, sacrifices, pilgrimages, and so forth as expressions of the practical relationship to the absolute. These activities externalize an inward moment and thereby develop it. One's relationship to the absolute is formed and continually reformed through these ritual activities. More concretely, these practices play a vital role in cultivating character. Our sense of ourselves, of others, and of what matters most is shaped by these practices:

> Every individual is accustomed to live within these representations and sensations, and so a spiritual contagion spreads among the people; education plays its part, so that the individuals dwell within the atmosphere of their people. Thus the children, suitably attired and adorned, go along to worship; they share in the rites or have their own role to play in them; in any event they learn the prayers and attend to the representations of the community and of the people, taking their own place within these contexts and accepting them in the same immediate way in which standardized styles of dress and the manners of everyday life are transmitted. (*VPR* 1:336 n.)

This aspect of Hegel's thought advances the concerns championed by virtue theory regarding the formation of character through activity.

Though this understanding of practical activity follows from Hegel's broader account of practical spirit, the second moment of the cultus focuses on a kind of activity distinctive of religious community. Because the overall significance of cultic activity concerns the overcoming of particularity vis-à-vis the universal, the relevant activities comprise "all the manifold actions embraced under the heading sacrifice. The same negation as in theoretical consciousness, about which we observed that the subject rises above the finite and consciousness of the finite, is now consciously accomplished in the cultus, for here the subject is concerned chiefly with itself" (*VPR* 1:334). "Knowledge of God" traced the elevation above the finite with regard to cognition; drawing on the developments in the logic, it rises to a cognition that has overcome particularity and demonstrates itself in its universality and self-determination. The account of the cultus portrays the overcoming of finitude and particularity in terms of overcoming the individual's sense of a particular subjectivity standing over against the absolute. It concerns coming to experience ourselves as sharing an essence with this universal rather than being fundamentally

[56] Charles Taylor makes Hegel's expressivism central to his reading. For his general account of expressivism, see 1975, 14–29. On language as expression, see Lewis 2007–2008, 33–5. On the centrality of expression to practical spirit, see Lewis 2005, 94–101.

other. "Sacrifice" encapsulates the practices that express the overcoming of particularity and finitude:

> The subject renounces something or negates something in relation to itself. It has possessions and divests itself of them in order to demonstrate that it is in earnest. On the one hand this negation is accomplished in a more intensive fashion only through the sacrifice or burning of something—even through human sacrifice; on the other hand the sensible enjoyment [of the sacrifice], for instance the eating and drinking, is itself the negation of external things. (*VPR* 1:334)

One demonstrates the actuality of the overcoming of the finite through sacrifice, through giving up particulars. Yet with this sacrifice comes enjoyment, especially in partaking of what is sacrificed. For Hegel, this aspect of the activity expresses the subject's identity with the absolute; the subject herself receives what is sacrificed to the absolute: "Thus from this negation or from the sacrifice one advances to enjoyment, to consciousness of having posited oneself in unity with God by means of it. The sensible enjoyment is linked directly with what is higher, with consciousness of the linkage with God" (*VPR* 1:334).

The shift to the third moment lies not in a difference in the basic expressivist model: We are still dealing with practices that express and cultivate a particular conception of the self. The difference here lies in the stage of overcoming of finitude expressed in the practice. Here as well, Hegel is following the account in practical spirit. Whereas the movement from the first to second moment is a movement of actualization or expression, the further movement is a development in the content expressed.

In this case, whereas the second moment involves the renunciation of things, the third consists in the renunciation of one's particularity as a whole: "The third and highest form within the cultus is when one lays aside one's own subjectivity—not only practices renunciation in external things such as possessions, but offers one's heart or inmost self to God and senses remorse or repentance in the inmost self" (*VPR* 1:334). What is renounced here is precisely the sense of oneself as a valid subjectivity standing over against the universal:

> then one is conscious of one's own immediate natural state (which subsists in the passions and intentions of particularity), so that one dismisses these things, purifies one's heart, and through this purification of one's heart raises oneself up to the realm of the purely spiritual. This experience of nothingness can be a bare condition or single experience, or it can be thoroughly elaborated. (*VPR* 1:334)

Here again, Hegel's language resonates clearly with Christian religious language—in this case with mystical language of nothingness.[57] Yet Hegel is

[57] For an extensive account that stresses Hegel's connection to mysticism, see O'Regan 1994. See also Magee 2001, 223–7.

providing the philosophical illumination of what those accounts provide in religious representations: it is "a point that can only be apprehended speculatively. If it is not so apprehended, then misunderstandings can arise—and it may seem as if these lead to forms that we have already dealt with earlier" (*VPR* 1:243). If we fail to appreciate the significance of overcoming representation in thinking, we end up with a reading of Hegel that appears to advocate forms of representation and understanding that he has already deemed inadequate.

The renunciation of particular subjectivity that Hegel describes here raises widespread concerns that Hegel's thought dissolves and sacrifices the individual. Crucially, though, what is given up is not one's essence but the opposite. We here renounce our particular idiosyncrasies, our inborn itches, and in doing so come to see ourselves in terms of a self-determining freedom. It is this freedom that liberates us from what we happen to be born with or possess "immediately"—our "natural state." For Hegel, we are neither free nor fully ourselves when our action is determined by whatever given impulses or other psychological events we happen to experience. Freedom consists in determining our activity according to our own essence, which is spirit. It is a freedom from the given, not a sacrifice of freedom to determination by others. While this capacity lies at the heart of what it means to be an individual, it is simultaneously what makes us spirit and what we share, at least implicitly, with all other human beings. I thus give up a sense of myself as identified with and determined by the given in favor of a conception of myself as sharing a freedom that is universal. For this reason, I renounce particularity but not individuality.[58]

Hegel makes the broader connection to practical spirit even more evident in linking the highest form of the cultus to ethical life. The passage above continues,

> If heart and will are earnestly and thoroughly cultivated for the universal and the true, then there is present what appears as ethical life. To that extent ethical life is the most genuine cultus. But consciousness of the true, of the divine, of God, must be directly bound up with it. (*VPR* 1:334)

The goals of religious training coincide with those of social and political life more generally: "religion is knowledge of the highest truth, and this truth, determined more precisely is free spirit" (*VPR* 1:339). The religious community constitutes a facet of the community, which can also be more comprehensively considered. Concretely, churches and other religious institutions function together with families, schools, and other communal groupings to educate and cultivate people, especially children. Finally, Hegel thinks such training will be most effective when these various institutions work in

[58] For further discussion of this conception of individuality, see Lewis 2005, 73–6.

coordination to foster the same dispositions. Religious training and institutions thus play a vital but not exclusive role in the formation of individuals, in the best cases leading us to conceive of ourselves in terms of the potential that we share with others.[59]

If the heart of this moment of the cultus is the sacrificing of particularity and elevation to the universal, then philosophy too

> is a continual cultus; it has as its object the true, and the true in its highest shape as absolute spirit, as God . . . It is part of knowing the true that one should dismiss one's subjectivity, the subjective fancies of personal vanity, and concern oneself with the true purely in thought, conducting oneself solely in accordance with objective thought. This negation of one's specific subjectivity is an essential and necessary moment. (*VPR* 1:334–5)

The negation of subjectivity is not a fundamentally mysterious activity or state but rather a process that occurs in its clearest and highest form in philosophy. The reference to philosophy as a cultus also suggests (even though it does not make explicit) the role that the practices constituting the pursuit of philosophy play in cultivating a particular character and attitude toward the absolute. Given his views on the central role of the university in modern society (discussed in Chapter 3), Hegel seems to view the university as picking up where childhood education leaves off, further refining the dispositions developed in school and church. Practices such as learning to follow a lecture, read a certain kind of material, and participate in intellectual discussions all foster the ability to abstract from one's own particularity as well as to participate fully in modern ethical life.[60]

At this point, we have an abstract account of religion—its concept but not yet its actuality. Just as free spirit leads to the transition to the actualization of spirit in objective spirit, so the culmination of the concept of religion leads to the actualization of the concept of religion in the determinate forms of actual religions.

[59] We return to the cultus's connection to ethical life in Chapter 6.

[60] Following this discussion of the third moment of the cultus, the 1827 lectures end with a brief paragraph of conclusion. The 1831 lectures add a fourth section on church and state, which expands on the connection drawn between the cultus and ethical life in the 1827 lectures. For two reasons, however, we will postpone a more extensive treatment of this material until later in our study: First, in Hegel's presentation, this issue returns in the culmination of his treatment of the Christian cultus. At that point we have additional pieces in place that allow for a more adequate understanding of Hegel's claims. (The material in the 1831 version of the Concept of Religion seems to be provoked largely by recent events in England and France; it addresses concrete issues that do not seem to belong within the abstract sphere of the Concept of Religion.) Second, in order to address the topic comprehensively, chapter seven will take up the relation between religion and the state by drawing upon a wider range of relevant materials.

5

Spirit and/in History

Absolute spirit is no Athena. It does not spring from the head fully formed but develops only over an arduous course that is simultaneously self-discovery and self-creation. Determinate Religion, the second part of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, claims to chart this journey from the most immediate forms of religion to the brink of the consummate religion. It examines the various finite, partial forms of religious consciousness of the absolute, a partialness—Hegel argues—that is overcome in the consummate religion. In doing so, it studies the way in which these forms of consciousness have appeared in history—in the religions of people around the world and across time.[1] It thus offers accounts of other religions arranged into a hierarchy ascending toward Christianity. Consequently, Hegel's account of determinate religion generally appears as the most problematic, least defensible, and most dated aspect of his philosophy of religion.[2] It easily appears to be the consummate expression of European ethnocentrism and to play a significant role in justifying European colonialism.[3]

[1] This development occurs at both the individual and the social level. Determinate Religion, traces this development at the latter level.

[2] It is also the least discussed in the secondary literature. Note, for instance, the section's absence from the otherwise inclusive treatments of Fackenheim 1967; O'Regan 1994; and Desmond 2003. Despite its title, even the recent *Viele Religionen – eine Vernunft: Ein Disput zu Hegel* contains remarkably little discussion of Hegel's actual treatment of Determinate Religion (Nagl-Docekal, et al. 2008). The reasons for this relative neglect, I suspect, lie in the consensus that this is the least salvageable element of Hegel's philosophy of religion and that it is impossible to responsibly treat all of the religions of the world within a single project. For some of the most important discussions, see Jaeschke 1990, 263–84; Wendte 2007, 186–220; and Hodgson 2005, 205–43. In one of the only book-length treatments of Determinate Religion, Reinhard Leuze (1975) provides detailed analyses of Hegel's treatments of particular religions. He examines both the sources available to Hegel and what he made of these sources but did not have access to the most recent edition of the lectures and therefore could not track the changes over the course of the Berlin lectures. Most significantly for the present purposes, he focuses on the religions themselves and does not attend to the conception of Determinate Religion itself.

[3] See, for instance, Dussel 1974, Bernasconi 1998, Buck-Morss 2000, and Hoffheimer 2005, as well as Parekh 2009, 127 nn. 2–3.

Without denying the profound limitations of Hegel's view or the human suffering ultimately caused by such views of other religions, this chapter seeks to identify two important conceptions at work in Determinate Religion and to diagnose the source of the section's deepest problems. To read Determinate Religion in this manner is clearly to reject as incoherent certain elements that Hegel views as integral to the project. Such a strategy is justified, however, because the resulting view coheres more consistently with Hegel's larger project than the actual accounts that he offers. Doing so is intended neither to whitewash the many alarming aspects of Hegel's treatment of other traditions nor simply to water them down to a less offensive form. Rather, the goal is to frame the project in such a way that the challenge it poses to us becomes as provocative as possible—to heighten Hegel's challenge rather than obviate it. As easy as it is to ridicule Hegel's account of Determinate Religion, framing it in this manner may reveal the most powerful elements of the project to stand much closer to our own views than we might have initially imagined.

Hegel's account of Determinate Religion is best understood as trying to combine two powerful but distinct conceptions that, while not in tension, become incoherent, implausible, and dangerous if *combined* into one. In one of the most encompassing formulations of the import of these determinate forms, Hegel states,

> The different forms or determinations of religion, as moments of the concept, are on the one hand moments of religion in general, or of the consummate religion. They are states or determinations of the content in the sensation and the consciousness of the consummate religion. On the other hand, however, they take shape by developing on their own account in time and historically. Insofar as it is determinate and has not yet traversed the circuit of its determinations, so that it is finite religion and exists as finite, religion is historical [*historische*] and is a particular shape of religion. By indicating, in the series of stages, the principal moments in the development of religion, how these stages also exist historically, I will in effect be furnishing a sequence of configurations, a history of religion. (*VPR* 1:91)[4]

The two aspects of determinate religion set out in this passage constitute two themes that Hegel tries to make one.

In the first, which I will call conceptual mapping, Determinate Religion maps the moments of religion and thereby provides a framework into which religions of the world can be placed. Although Hegel offers various accounts of the source of this structure, the basic idea is that it corresponds to moments of the realization of the concept—which, in the context of religion, consist in moments of consciousness of the absolute—and is fully realized only in the consummate religion. One can map actual religions onto this structure by

[4] See also *VPR* 1:59.

identifying the particular moment of the concept by which each religion is dominated and thus defined; religions are thereby analyzed in terms of the degree of their realization of the concept. This conception considers other religions as competing, representational accounts of the absolute and, so Hegel claims, demonstrates how their finitude or limitations can be identified and overcome while their valid content is preserved (in another religion that expresses that moment together with other moments of the concept). These limitations are demonstrated not vis-à-vis an external standard or yardstick but through the identification of internal contradictions that emerge within particular moments—i.e. by immanent critique. Progress is demonstrated when the internal contradictions that characterize one moment or form of religion are overcome in another moment or form that simultaneously preserves what is of genuine import in the former moment. In this conception on its own, the religions associated with a particular moment need not appear historically in the order of the moments of the concept. Rather, this structure constitutes a "path" only in a conceptual sense (the individual moments lead to the consummate religion), not in the sense that the religions that place these moments in relief contributed historically to the emergence of the following moments. It is simply a larger structure showing how the positive insights of diverse religions can be integrated into more comprehensive views as their finitude is overcome.

In the passage quoted, however, Hegel attaches this claim to a conception of Determinate Religion as a narrative of genesis. In this conception, determinate religions constitute an actual historical path to the consummate religion. Consciousness of the absolute progresses by virtue of new religions that assimilate the genuine insights (and overcome some of the limitations) of the views that have influenced their formation. The emergence of a specific religion is to be understood in terms of the way in which it overcomes the limitations intrinsic to those traditions that have influenced it. This conception, then, articulates where we now stand in terms of the path via which we have arrived here. This sequence is an actual historical sequence, a movement that comes to an end only when these developments have led to the consummate religion.

Unfortunately, Hegel attempts to combine these two conceptions (and the corresponding projects) into one. Although the two might peacefully coexist as distinct projects carried out by the same thinker, in trying to combine them into a single project Hegel generates multiple problems. Whereas the first project requires mapping all known religions, the second does not. In combining them, Hegel seeks to assemble all religions into a single historical sequence. Yet Hegel cannot explain how all of the religions of which we know can have actually, historically contributed to the emergence of the consummate religion. Moreover, Hegel's dominant conception of spirit

ultimately stands in tension with his efforts to link all religions into a single historical sequence.

The contrast between these two conceptions becomes apparent in two different ways of conceiving the relation between Determinate and Consummate Religion. Jaeschke argues that the consummate religion should be understood as the realization of the concept rather than the result of historical development. Against Jaeschke, Wendte argues that the consummate religion must be conceived in terms of the fruition of the history traced in Determinate Religion.[5] Distinguishing the two conceptions above substantially illuminates their interpretive debate. Jaeschke implicitly focuses on the first conception (conceptual mapping) as the only one consistent with Hegel's larger project, emphasizing that Hegel's "assumption that there is such a thing as a single history of religion" is unjustified within Hegel's work and, more generally, unjustifiable.[6] He thereby makes the first conception central and treats the products of Hegel's attempt to combine it with the second conception (narrative of genesis) as unjustified accretions. Wendte places greater weight on these products but does not appreciate their derivation from a distinct conception. The result is simply a more general claim that "in this respect, Hegel's texts offer no explanation of the history of religion completely appropriate to the concept."[7] Understanding their interpretations in this framework both explains the conflict and shows the stakes of these conceptions for the larger relation between Determinate and Consummate Religion.

The present chapter focuses on these two conceptions and their significance. In treating Determinate Religion, then, I will not attempt even to summarize Hegel's treatment of specific religions. To do so would not only far exceed the bounds of a chapter; more significantly, part of what we learn by considering the conceptions of Determinate Religion in light of subsequent intellectual developments is the inherent difficulty of such a task.[8] Despite the vastness of this section (it is substantially longer than either Part I or Part III), Hegel's accounts of the general conception of determinate religion, which are found in the introductions to the lectures as a whole and at the beginning of Part II, are remarkably brief.

With these goals in mind, the chapter begins with a brief consideration of the many changes among the different versions of the lectures. I then turn to the analysis of the two major conceptions operative in this section of the lectures: Determinate Religion as a conceptual map and as a narrative of genesis. The following section turns to the profound problems that arise

[5] See Jaeschke 1990, 283–5; 1991, 15; and 1994, xviii–xix and Wendte 2007, 187.
[6] 1990, 263; see also 283.
[7] Wendte 2007, 194.
[8] This point by no means undermines the value of focused studies of Hegel's treatment of particular religions. That task, however, lies outside the bounds of the current project.

from seeking to combine these two conceptions into one and argues that nothing in the concept of spirit requires them to be combined. Finally, I argue that if we abandon Hegel's misguided attempt to combine the two conceptions into one, we are left with two coherent but fatefully overambitious projects.

CONSTANT REVISION AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

The critical edition of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* makes one of the most important features of Determinate Religion visible for the first time: Hegel dramatically revised his treatment of Determinate Religion every time he lectured on the topic. He revised the presentations of particular religions, the conceptual structuring and categories, and the placement of particular religions within these structures (and thus the ordering of different religions).[9] Unlike the treatments of Part I (which achieved a relatively settled form in 1827) and Part III (which did so already in 1824), Hegel seems never to have settled on a particular conception of Part II.[10]

The implications of this constant revision are manifold. It conclusively undermines the charge that Hegel simply forces data into a preexisting, fixed schema. Moreover, Hegel's constant revisions suggest that he was not satisfied with any of these treatments. For Hegel, determinate religion constitutes a project that he had not been able to fully realize—a strong testament to his recognition of the difficulties inherent in the task.

Further, the changes reflect Hegel's responsiveness to new information about the religions he was analyzing. He was an avid reader of newly available material regarding religion in other parts of the world and sought to incorporate more and more of this material into each new set of lectures.[11] To credit Hegel with revising his view in light of new information, however, is not to say that he always made the best possible use of his sources. While these were undeniably limited by today's standards, Robert Bernasconi has argued powerfully that Hegel at times "misused" the sources that he did have in a manner that "opens him to the charge of sensationalism."[12]

Hegel's revisions in light of newly available sources serve as a powerful reminder of the historical moment in which he lived. If the historical factors most relevant to Parts I and III of the philosophy of religion are the social

[9] See Wendte 2007, 187–8.

[10] See Hodgson 2005, 206 and Jaeschke 1990, 276. Cf. Wendte 2007, 188–91. Even if—as Wendte argues—certain elements of the structure remain the same from 1827 to 1831, there are—at a minimum—major changes to the ordering of traditions as well as other changes demonstrating that the section was still a work in progress.

[11] See Hodgson 2005, 205–7 and Jaeschke 1990, 272–5.

[12] Bernasconi 1998, 45. See also Parekh 2009, 130 n. 28. Cf. Leuze 1975, 237.

upheavals and post-Enlightenment critiques of religion of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, that most relevant for Part II is the dramatic influx of information about other lands and peoples. Missionaries' and travelers' accounts of foreign lands and people were avidly consumed by the European reading public.[13] Peter Hodgson notes that "of the some 240 works upon which Hegel drew for his lectures on the philosophy of religion, approximately two-thirds were used primarily or exclusively for *Determinate Religion*."[14] Hegel was one of the first Western thinkers to try to give this material an integral role in his philosophical thought. Faced with this burgeoning literature, he held that a comprehensive philosophical system had to take it seriously and incorporate it. Of those who have tried to incorporate not simply the fact of pluralism and not simply one or two other traditions, he is by far the most influential. The rarity of the endeavor testifies to the vastness of the task as well as to the significance of his failure to carry it out successfully.[15]

Finally, these constant revisions entail that no version of Determinate Religion counts as definitive in relation to the others. With regard to the overall conception of Determinate Religion, the 1824 and 1827 versions offer much more material than the 1821 manuscript. Earlier editions of Hegel's *Werke* provide valuable material from the 1831 lectures, and this is included in the notes to the critical edition. The current chapter will thus draw principally on the three later sets of lectures. With regard to the points on which this chapter focuses, there are not dramatic contrasts among these versions.

DETERMINATE RELIGION AS A CONCEPTUAL MAPPING

The notion of conceptual mapping identifies one of the two major threads that Hegel seeks to combine in Determinate Religion. Considering this conception in relief, abstracted from the account of a singular history of religion, reveals the idea's power and—more significantly—the challenge it poses to those who would dismiss Hegel's account of Determinate Religion too quickly.

[13] Bernasconi 1998, 44 and Pratt 1992, 117–71. The many recent sources on which Hegel drew also testify to the novelty of this information for European readers. See the list of sources in Jaeschke, ed. 1985, 835–58 and Hodgson, ed. 1987, 783–806.

[14] Hodgson 2005, 205–6. Regarding Hegel's specific sources, see Hodgson's "Introduction" to volume 2 of the *Lectures* (1987, 3–13) and Jaeschke, ed. 1985, 653–817.

[15] With regard to transitions, Jaeschke also stresses that Hegel stands in the middle of the related transition from metaphysical approaches to the study of religion in the eighteenth century (which appealed to reason alone, understood as ahistorical) to the historicist approaches of the nineteenth (which subordinated metaphysical speculation to history) (1991, 10).

As problematic as Hegel's account initially appears, most of us implicitly claim something similar.

This conception maps the domain of determinate or finite religions in terms of the development of religious consciousness of the absolute. These are the possible forms that religion can take, with the exception of the consummate religion. Fully realized, these moments together will constitute the consummate religion, but here in Determinate Religion Hegel is dealing with these moments as they are realized in these limited, finite forms. To be sure, Hegel gives various, incompatible accounts of these moments over the course of the lectures; he never arrived at a satisfactory working out of the structure of the section.[16] Nonetheless, we can grasp the larger conception as attempting to set out the moments of the realization of religious consciousness of the absolute, which are themselves further movements of the concept initially set out in the logic (see *VPR* 1:28 and 2:143).

Framing the analysis of specific religions in this manner, we look at the way they represent aspects or moments of spirit. Hegel is explicit that we are dealing here with instances of human consciousness.[17] We thus have before us a variety of partial forms of spirit's self-knowledge in religion. Each moment constitutes an element of a more comprehensive conception of spirit. These are not, however, simply an assemblage of random fragments. Although they may initially appear as such, by linking them to the moments of the concept, Hegel's lens organizes this vast material. This is a central task of Part II of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*.

Insofar as the moments of the concept chart a development toward its complete realization, this conception presents Determinate Religion as a path to the consummate religion. They are sequentially ordered moments of spirit's knowledge of itself, which are all brought together in the consummate religion. Many of these moments will be placed in the foreground by particular religions, though this conception does not require that each moment of the concept of religion be the centerpiece of one religion: in theory, a moment might always appear only closely together with other moments. Insofar as the moments can be identified with particular religions, however, the determinate religions themselves are aspects of the cognition of the absolute in the form of religion. At the same time, in the conception of Determinate Religion as a conceptual mapping, the sequence of this structure need not correspond to the sequence of history. Its order is determined by the concept, not by history.

[16] The 1821 manuscript conceives of three moments closely related to those of the logic (being, essence, and concept); the introduction to the 1824 lectures promises three moments, but Hegel changes this to two moments in the body of the lectures; 1827 returns to three moments, but these are no longer conceived in such close relation to the logic. See Jaeschke 1990, 265–72; Hodgson 2005, 207–17; and Hodgson, ed. 1987, 12–90.

[17] "[H]uman consciousness is the material in which the concept of God realizes itself" (*VPR* 2:139 n.).

This aspect of Determinate Religion becomes much more apparent if we consider Hegel's revisions to the ordering of actual religions over the course of the lectures. To take the most notable example, Judaism precedes Greek religion in 1821, 1824, and 1831 but follows it in 1827. These changes derive not from shifting views about dates but from developments in his interpretation of these religions and their relationship to the realization of consciousness of the absolute. While this shift is perhaps the most striking, it is not unique.[18] From the point of view of this conception of Determinate Religion, the consummate religion will have to be understood in terms of the realization of spirit's self-knowledge—not as the completion of a history.

Significantly, this conception does not entail approaching other religions with a "blank slate." Hegel's repeated critiques of notions of immediacy preclude this possibility. In encountering others, presuppositions are not only necessary but positive in their function; without them, our attempts to understand others would be incoherent. The presuppositions brought to the inquiry, however, are not arbitrary. They concern the nature of religion itself, as developed and defended earlier in the philosophy of religion. The material preceding Determinate Religion thus justifies the questions that frame this enquiry.[19] How does this set of practices represent the absolute, how is this particular consciousness of the absolute instilled and transmitted, and so forth? Insofar as we are considering a particular set of practices as religion, these are the questions we should be asking.[20]

Although this conception of Determinate Religion entails the claim that Hegel's own religion is superior to others, it does not involve more than articulating what it means to hold a position on a contested topic. Insofar as we hold one view, we are committed to claims that it is superior to any alternatives of which we are aware. Despite the off-putting character of Hegel's presentation of determinate religion, this claim—central to his account—is shared by a wide range of views about what it means to hold a position. Hegel's approach involves identifying various religions as offering competing answers to common questions (which are determined by the concept of religion). Hegel takes the alternatives seriously in part by considering that they may have something important to say regarding the topic at hand. The most adequate answer will be the one that incorporates and reconciles the valid insights of each of the others while overcoming their self-contradictions. Such an approach certainly entails judging others, but no

[18] For a powerful illustration of this point, see the diagram in Hodgson, ed. 1988, 498–9.

[19] Similarly, in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, Hegel distinguishes between a merely empirical study of events—conceived as a purely passive or receptive study without presuppositions—and a *philosophy* of history, which is defined by its focus on the development of the consciousness of freedom (*VG* 10–22/16–24, 31/29, 53/46).

[20] Of course, this does not preclude asking other questions of practices that have been grouped as part of Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, etc.

more than any attitude that commits itself to one view out of the belief that it is superior to the known alternatives.[21] Radical forms of relativism are ruled out, but in this respect Hegel stands with the majority rather than with extreme versions of ethnocentrism.[22]

In considering Determinate Religion, one of the most significant worries is that other religions are judged to be limited, partial, and finite, while Christianity is about to be touted as the "consummate religion." It bears noting, however, that Hegel's claim is not that Christianity per se functions as the yardstick with which other religions are measured. Such a reading is misleading in two respects: First, although he develops the conception of determinate religion largely in relation to the consummate religion, he frames this not as a progression toward Christianity as such but toward self-knowledge:

> The absolute goal is to cognize itself, to be for itself. That it cognizes itself, that it is as object for itself, that it grasps itself in the complete intuition and complete consciousness of itself, is object to itself in the way that it is in itself, and comes to complete cognition of itself—this goal is its true goal. (*VPR* 1:57)

The end of this development—and thus the consummate religion—is defined in terms of spirit's knowledge of itself as self-knowing. The goal is thus nothing other than the realization or actualization of the concept of spirit.

Second, Hegel argues that the limitations or finitude of the particular religious forms become apparent from within these forms themselves. In this sense, not even the larger goal of spirit's self-knowledge functions as an external yardstick for the judgment of specific religions. Determinate religions themselves produce the criteria by which they are measured. In this respect, a central task of Determinate Religion is to demonstrate that movement proceeds in terms of an immanent development driven by contradictions within the determinate religions themselves (see *VPR* 2:2).

This conception of Determinate Religion can be illuminated by reference to a recent proposal by Alasdair MacIntyre.[23] In "Incommensurability, Truth,

[21] It need not even involve judgment regarding others' justification for holding their views. We may disagree with many people and yet believe them to be justified in holding the views that they do.

[22] This aspect of Hegel's view entails rejecting a position such as Hodgson's that claims to find various religions "equally valid" (2005, 237).

[23] Alasdair MacIntyre's relation to Hegel is a fascinating matter worthy of greater attention than we can give it here. MacIntyre edited an influential volume of essays on Hegel in 1972 and clearly engaged extensively with Hegel and Marx through the early stages of his career. Even in the introduction to *After Virtue*, MacIntyre compares his project to "what Hegel called philosophical history" (1984, 3). Nonetheless, with the turn taken in *After Virtue* (first edition, 1981) and further developed in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (1988) and *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* (1990), Hegel all but disappears from the surface of his work. It is not hard to argue that this absence is necessary for MacIntyre's project. Acknowledging Hegel as a significant modern thinker would deeply challenge MacIntyre's narrative of the modern West, in part because MacIntyre's later position carries a great, though largely hidden debt to Hegel. Richard

and the Conversation between Confucians and Aristotelians about the Virtues," MacIntyre takes on contemporary virtue theorists who hold that an appeal to "human nature as such" might provide "culturally neutral grounds [that] would provide moral philosophers with the resources for adjudicating rationally between the rival and competing claims about the virtues and other moral matters, advanced from the standpoint of a variety of different cultures." Against such attempts, MacIntyre argues that "[t]here is just no neutral and independent method of characterizing those materials in a way sufficient to provide the type of adjudication between competing theories of the virtues which I had once hoped to provide and to which some others still aspire."[24] Any account of human nature nuanced and developed enough to do the work of adjudication will not be neutral in the relevant sense. The quest for a universal standard or yardstick that enables us to measure the competing visions, then, is doomed to failure. Without such an Esperanto, comparison and encounters across traditions will be much more complex than advocates of the former approach claim. Faced with this difficulty, one response is to focus one's energies on the elaboration of one's own position while devoting relatively little time to challenges posed by sources external to one's own tradition. Overall, this response dominates MacIntyre's writing.

In this article, however, MacIntyre argues that his position does not rule out comparison and elaborates an alternative model. Since there is no independent standard by which two (or more) traditions can be compared, comparison must take place from the perspective of both of the traditions in question. In this case, the encounter must involve Confucian accounts of Aristotelianism and Aristotelian accounts of Confucianism. In such encounters, one can be justified in seeing another tradition being validated over against one's own if, and only if, two conditions are met:

> The first is that its own history, as narrated in the light of its own standards, the standards internal to it, should lead in the end to radical and, so far as it is possible to judge, irremediable failure, perhaps by reason of its sterility and resourcelessness in the face of some set of problems which its own goals require it to solve, perhaps because in trying to frame adequate solutions to its problems and an adequately comprehensive account of the subject matter with which it deals, it lapses into irreparable incoherence.[25]

In other words, the tradition faces an immanent contradiction.

While the first condition concerns the *need* for moving beyond this tradition, the second concerns the moving beyond itself: For adherents of one

Bernstein provides an illuminating discussion of the Hegelian background of *After Virtue* (1986, 138–9).

[24] MacIntyre 1991, 104 and 105.

[25] MacIntyre 1991, 117. This requirement does not entail that members of the tradition are aware of the failure, only that by their own standards they should be.

position to be rationally justified in moving to another position, the second condition "is that the adherents of this alternative rival tradition be able to provide the resources to explain why their own tradition failed by its own standard of achievement and, more precisely, why it succeeded and why it failed at just the points and in just the ways in which by those same standards it did succeed and fail."[26] MacIntyre argues—like Hegel—that one view can be a rational successor to another if it can account for the genuine insights of the other view as well as explain and overcome its limitations. In this manner, particular traditions can be ordered in relation to each other precisely in terms of the way that the more advanced ones overcome contradictions immanent within ones that preceded them. Although this can only be demonstrated through actual encounters in history, it says nothing about the historical order of the appearance of the various traditions. Nor does it entail a single line of development. The key for both Hegel and MacIntyre is that insofar as one seeks to take the views of others seriously, one must show the way in which one's own standpoint overcomes the contradictions that arise immanently within their views.

Viewed charitably, then, this aspect of Hegel's account of determinate religion should be viewed as setting a high standard for taking others seriously. Lecturing in an intellectual setting substantially defined by a qualitatively new level of information about other societies, Hegel confronts this diversity. He neither ignores it nor considers it extraneous to genuine philosophy. In doing so, he rejects both rationalisms that seek to justify their views without attending to the empirical plurality of views and an ethnocentrism that holds that only European views matter. He rejects more modest views of justification that are satisfied with justification in terms of "our" tradition alone, where this is understood to exclude the many other views that were becoming known to educated Europeans at the time. To rationally or justifiably hold a position, then, entails for Hegel being able to give an account of the alternatives that shows them to fail on their own terms and to show how one's own view accounts for the genuine insights provided by those alternatives.[27] Elaborating such an account involves developing a picture much like that which Hegel offers in determinate religion. In principle, though certainly not always in practice, Hegel is committed to justifying his view in relation to all of the alternatives of which he is aware, and this ambition must be understood in relation to the remarkable moment in European history that he occupies.

Before turning to the other major conception operating in Determinate Religion, another aspect of Hegel's treatment deserves more attention than it has received—either in our discussion so far or in the secondary literature. The

[26] MacIntyre 1991, 118.

[27] The *Phenomenology of Spirit* elaborates Hegel's most extensive and explicit account of this model of justification.

objects of inquiry in Determinate Religion are "religions." While denominating the objects in this way is often seen as too self-evident to mention, recent work in the history of the study of religion in the West challenges this presupposition. Scholars such as Tomoko Masuzawa have studied the process through which European scholars in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries assembled various practices of groups they encountered into discrete systems of belief, many of which developed into "world religions."[28] In forging these entities, European scholarly discourses often defined them around canonical texts, paralleling the Bible's function in Christian—particularly Protestant—communities. They thereby tended to homogenize the variety of religious practices carried out in relation to these texts—as well as to attribute to these texts functions they may not have had prior to European intervention.

Hegel's account of Determinate Religion participates in and contributes to this process in several respects. Not only does he portray religions as unified within a single time and place; he also treats finite religions as fixed entities that do not develop notably over time. Typically, this approach focuses on classical sources, often canonical texts, though this also depends on the sources available. As a result, despite the differences among the different lectures, the "religion of the Jews" or "Jewish religion," for instance, is consistently treated as a single, static entity within each series of the lectures. The vibrant range of German Jewish response to the Enlightenment taking place at the time receive virtually no attention; instead, Hegel deals principally with what he describes at one point as the "fundamental feature[s] of the Jewish people" (*VPR* 2:573). While he views certain developments within Christianity as integral to its identity, he tends to essentialize the religions of others. The consequences of doing so are vast. If religions are static, they cannot adapt to new social and intellectual developments, and it becomes much easier to proclaim them of merely "historical" significance. The consequences of doing so have been catastrophic for Judaism in particular.

Without downplaying Hegel's contribution to this discourse, however, we should also appreciate important senses in which he diverges from it. On these points in particular, we need to beware of projecting back onto his work conceptions of religions that developed only after Hegel. In all the variations of the structures of determinate religions across the four lecture cycles, Hegel never structures them fundamentally in terms of particular religions themselves. Although certain moments are associated with particular religions, they are fundamentally conceptual moments—defined by the unfolding of the concept. Those moments form the fundamental units of Determinate Religion. Hegel's own subheadings for 1821 and 1824 use only abstract rubrics and conceptual terms for religions: "Immediate Religion," "The Religion of

[28] Masuzawa 2005, especially 18.

Sublimity," "The Religion of Beauty," and so forth (*VPR* 2:v–vi). This point is unfortunately obscured in the English translation, which adds references to "The Religion of Ancient China," "Buddhism," "The Jewish Religion," and so forth both into the table of contents and into additional subheadings inserted in the text. In 1827 Hegel constructs subheadings referring to proper places and peoples, such as "Indian Religion" and "The Religion of the Romans" (rendered in the English translation as "The Hindu Religion" and "Roman Religion") (*VPR* 2:vi). The point is that as much as Hegel did reify particular, determinate religions, we should be cautious about identifying these too quickly with what we tend to refer to under today's "isms." As the comparison of Hegel's lecture cycles highlights, he develops the accounts of determinate religions out of conceptual moments that he links to the religions of particular places and peoples.

His treatment of determinate religions could have been significantly more subtle and more open to historical development had he defined religions not merely in terms of place (and the people in that space) but also in terms of time. That is, rather than speaking of the "Jewish Religion" or "Religion of the Jews," he could have at least delimited a religion in terms of a particular point in time as well, such as Rabbinic Judaism. Doing so would open the framework to at least some kinds of diversity and transformations within what we have come to refer to as "a religious tradition," such as Buddhism. Moreover, doing so would be entirely consistent with the implications and requirements of Hegel's larger project.[29] What matters in this particular context is being able to identify particular forms of religion (which need not be coextensive with an entire "tradition") that place in the foreground particular moments of spirit's self-knowledge.

While this qualification to his manner of treating "religions" addresses some of the problems of holism in the conception of determinate religion, another form of holism is intrinsic to Hegel's conception of religion. Where certain recent work on ritual, for instance, has emphasized the variety of understandings that different people in a single community bring to a particular practice, Hegel conceives of a particular religion as closely linking a set of representations and ritual practices that cultivate a particular consciousness of the absolute—and thus of oneself.[30] Within a single setting—a religion located in a specific time and place—a religion's various aspects function together toward the cultivation of a particular consciousness. Whereas the holism Hegel ascribes to entire traditions does not follow from the larger conception

[29] Admittedly, at points Hegel claims that a people expresses only one moment of spirit (e.g. *VG* 180/148). Rather than being intrinsic to the guiding threads of Hegel's thought, however, such claims constrain spirit's freedom with natural qualities, thereby standing at odds with the deeper currents of the project.

[30] See Bell 1992.

of spirit, a significant degree of holism within a particular time and place does. It follows from the broader account of the appearance and emergence of spirit's self-consciousness. Though tensions will appear within this consciousness itself, Hegel posits a remarkable degree of integration and homogeneity in the beliefs, practices, and consciousness of a particular religious group. Much of our contemporary discourse about religions continues to share this assumption, but it is precisely such presuppositions that need to be questioned in the interrogation of the history of the Western construction of religion.

DETERMINATE RELIGION AS A NARRATIVE OF GENESIS

While the above conception drives the structure of Determinate Religion, another, distinguishable conception is no less apparent in Hegel's general remarks. He consistently claims that the developments of Determinate Religion constitute not merely a conceptual mapping of representations of the absolute but an historical path to the highest representation of the absolute—the consummate religion. According to this conception, Determinate Religion also treats the history of religion, the historical path through which the consciousness of the absolute has advanced.[31]

The historical aspect of Determinate Religion consists in an interpretive narrative of the genesis of new representations of spirit. That is, religions must be understood—in part—in terms of their genesis out of earlier forms of religion: "Spirit does not reach the goal without having traversed the path, is not at the goal from the outset; that which is most complete must traverse the path to the goal" (*VPR* 1:57). The other religions considered as determine religions constitute not merely alternative attempts to represent the absolute but a path toward the consummate religion itself. They are "stations" along a way (*VPR* 1:57). Although Hegel stresses this point more in 1824 than later, in 1827 he argues that "[t]hese determinate religions are definite stages of the consciousness and knowledge of spirit. They are necessary conditions for the emergence of the true religion, for the authentic consciousness of spirit" (*VPR* 2:415).[32] Without these historically prior developments, the subsequent forms would not have emerged. We are dealing with the historical movement involved when one religion grows out of one or more others. As above, the movement consists in overcoming limitations within the earlier religions. This

[31] This conception also raises the question of the relation between the history of religion and world history in general. As Jaeschke notes, Hegel's conception of spirit would seem to require a close connection between the history of religion and the histories of ethics, law, art, and philosophy; but Hegel does not fully develop these connections (1990, 281–2).

[32] Hegel seems to have made similar claims again in 1831; see *VPR* 2:411 n.

aspect of determinate religion thus consists in a genetic account that explains the emergence of a new view or standpoint in terms of the preceding views or standpoints whose insights it has incorporated and (at least some of whose) immanent contradictions it has overcome. In this conception, the consummate religion (like determinate religions) must be understood in relation to the historical path that has brought it about—not merely as the realization of the concept of religion. In this conception, Determinate Religion need not—indeed, should not—make claims about an all-encompassing history of religion. Its power lies not in its comprehensiveness and all-inclusiveness but in its ability to explain crucial aspects of particular historical developments.

Hegel's point overlaps significantly with two recent proposals that echo and illuminate this genetic-narrative conception. At the opening of *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, Alasdair MacIntyre seeks to articulate "a conception of rational enquiry as embodied in a tradition" over against what he understands to be an Enlightenment conception of rational inquiry and justification. In MacIntyre's alternative, "the standards of rational justification themselves emerge from and are part of a history in which they are vindicated by the way in which they transcend the limitations of and provide remedies for the defects of their predecessors within the history of that same tradition."[33] To be sure, the differences with Hegel's account of Determinate Religion are real and multiple. Nonetheless, MacIntyre's concern with the way that advances are understood as "transcend[ing] the limitations of and provid[ing] remedies for the defects of their predecessors" is precisely the conception I seek to articulate from Hegel's account of Determinate Religion. What endures through these developments is what is found valid in the earlier forms. For both Hegel and MacIntyre, there is great emphasis on "how the argument has gone so far," and both interpret their present positions in relation to this history.[34] Thus, for MacIntyre, "To appeal to tradition is to insist that we cannot adequately identify either our own commitments or those of others in the argumentative conflicts of the present except by situating them within those histories which made them what they have now become."[35] Hegel shares this emphasis on genesis without linking it to anything like MacIntyre's notion of tradition. We need to understand our standpoint in relation to the sources that have constituted it, but that does not require us to conceive all of these sources as belonging to a single tradition. While MacIntyre acknowledges instances in which formerly discrete traditions are united, his use of the notion of "tradition" as something like a basic analytical unit tends to downplay the frequency of such developments as well as to reify the boundaries between conversations that sometimes overlap and sometimes

[33] MacIntyre 1988, 7.
[34] See MacIntyre 1988, 8.
[35] MacIntyre 1988, 13.

diverge.[36] As we will see below, Hegel's problem is the opposite: he seeks to include too much in the narrative.

Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (1989), takes a related but distinct approach that avoids MacIntyre's focus on tradition.[37] He, too, argues that "[w]e cannot understand ourselves without coming to grips with this history" of the development of our conception of the self. The task of this monumental work, then, is to trace the history through which this modern conception of the self has been constituted. More specifically, "I don't think we can grasp this richness and complexity unless we see how the modern understanding of the self developed out of earlier pictures of human identity."[38] We must appreciate the way in which elements of earlier views—such as Augustine's emphasis on human interiority or Herder's expressivism—have been both transformed and preserved through their incorporation into more complex, subsequent views of which they constitute one moment. In contrast to MacIntyre, Taylor's narrative is not committed to explaining developments so consistently in terms of their ability to "transcend the limitations of and provide remedies for the defects of their predecessors."[39] In that respect, MacIntyre hews more closely to Hegel's model.

Taylor, however, is particularly helpful in distinguishing this type of narrative from an attempt to provide an historical explanation—a point that applies to Hegel's conception no less than to Taylor's own. Whereas an historical explanation seeks to give an account of diachronic causation, to answer such questions as "what brought the modern identity about," Taylor seeks to answer an interpretive question: "Answering it involves giving an account of the new identity which makes clear what its appeal was," "which will show why people found (or find) it convincing/inspiring/moving, which will identify what can be called the 'idées forces' it contains."[40] Taylor is vague about the underlying basis for this appeal; he does not locate this appeal specifically in the new ideas' ability to overcome contradictions encountered within their precursors and leaves more room for an "intrinsic power," which presumably refers to their ability to capture what the self *really* is.[41] For our purposes, the contrast with historical explanations is most significant. Though the questions are related, to identify them is to reduce historical developments to effects of ideas alone. Neither Taylor nor Hegel claims that these developments can be explained exclusively in terms of ideas. As Taylor helpfully puts it, such a view

[36] On MacIntyre on tradition, see Pinkard 2003, 187–92; Porter 1993 and 2003; Stout 2004, 135–9; and Lewis 2006b.
[37] In his *Hegel*, Taylor's account of the conception of Determinate Religion is merely a brief summary—without analysis of the rationale (1975, 495–6).
[38] Taylor 1989, ix and x.
[39] MacIntyre 1988, 7.
[40] Taylor 1989, 202 and 203.
[41] Taylor 1989, 203.

would constitute a "vulgar Hegelianism."[42] By contrast, for Hegel himself—as for Taylor—this kind of narrative of genesis does not suffice as an explanation for historical developments. It does, however, explain their appeal and the reasons they can be understood as advances over the previous positions. Nonetheless, the narrative is historical in the sense that it refers to events that took place in history and necessarily occurred in a certain sequence: without the existence of the prior moments, the later ones would not have emerged.

Hegel's view of this process appears deeply shaped by his interpretation of the historical moment of greatest interest to him in this respect: the emergence and early formation of Christianity. Attending to this paradigmatic moment concretizes Hegel's conception. Despite the intervening developments in Hegel's interpretations of the relevant religions, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* provides a powerful articulation of the essential elements of the situation: "All the conditions for its production are to hand, and this totality of its conditions constitutes its *coming-to-be*, its *concept* or the production of it *in principle*. The circle of the creations of art embraces the forms in which the absolute substance has externalized itself"; that is, the essential achievements of Greek religion are present and available:

> These forms, and on the other side, the *world* of the *person* and of law, the destructive ferocity of the free elements of the content, as also the person as *thought* in Stoicism, and the unstable restlessness of the skeptical consciousness, constitute the [audience or] periphery of shapes which stands impatiently expectant round the birthplace of spirit as it becomes self-consciousness. (*PhG* 548–9/§754)[43]

These various influences (from which Judaism is curiously absent in this version) have each contributed essential elements to the emergence of this next stage of spirit's self-consciousness. With these aspects or moments developed by these other religions and additional reflections on the absolute, the more adequate understanding can now emerge. Miller's translation notes the allusion to figures waiting around the manger for the arrival of the Incarnation. For our purposes, the key point is the way in which other traditions have developed the essential ingredients of the emerging religion. Assuming we attend to developments over the course of its first few centuries, it is at least coherent to see Christianity incorporating elements from several religions into a new synthesis that overcomes certain contradictions encountered by these source traditions. While any claims that Christianity has superseded other religions—particularly Judaism—need to be treated with extreme caution, one can see how Hegel would conceive of Christianity as incorporating

[42] Taylor 1989, 204.
[43] See also *VPR* 3:80, 3:147, and 3:231–4.

elements from preexisting traditions into a new formation. In this case, it is clear that these other traditions contributed directly to the formation of Christianity and that Christianity as such exists only by virtue of their contributions; they were "necessary conditions."

THE PROBLEMS WITH TRYING TO COMBINE THESE CONCEPTIONS AND THE INADEQUATE RATIONALE FOR DOING SO

While this genetic-narrative conception is powerful when understood in this historical manner, it becomes deeply problematic, if not incoherent, when Hegel tries to unite it with the more encompassing strategy of conceptual mapping. In the case of conceptual mapping, we should aspire to comprehensiveness, demonstrating the way that our own view surpasses all other views of which we are aware. After all, that is generally what it means to hold a position. When Hegel tries to combine that conception with the genetic one, he is led to present this genetic conception as encompassing the entire history of religion. As a result, every religion can be located in a single line of historical development in which each religion contributes to the emergence of the next one.

Since such contribution would seem to consist in influence, it is unclear just what that is supposed to mean. How, for instance, might the religions of early China have contributed to the formation of early Judaism? What kind of claim is Hegel making here? If the systematic function of these determinate forms of religion is to advance spirit's knowledge of itself, then it is difficult to conceive how progress achieved through one religion might be preserved and transmitted in a subsequent one without historical contact. These difficulties are presumably part of what prevented Hegel from achieving a satisfactory formulation of this section. Hegel is not explicit about the mechanism of transmission. Perhaps he implicitly believes that at some point, when more historical material is available, the means of influence will become apparent, but he does not make this explicit, and it adds little to the account's plausibility. One is reminded of his claim in the *Philosophy of Right* regarding the inevitable failure of attempts to raise a child in the country, in isolation from the spirit of the age (as in Rousseau's *Emile*): "No one should imagine that the breath of the spiritual world will not eventually find its way into this solitude and that the power of the world spirit is too weak for it to gain control of such remote regions" (*PR* § 153 Z). Yet Hegel precedes this more poetic formulation with the argument that such attempts "have been futile, because one cannot successfully isolate people from the laws of the world." Thus, his point is not that the spirit of the age is transmitted by a mysterious, ethereal

mechanism but that it subtly pervades our lives and shapes our senses of ourselves, through shaping our laws as well as much else. While such a mechanism may explain the spread of ideas from Paris to the provinces, it is difficult to see how it explains the transmission of representations of spirit across the globe at times when travel and communication were dramatically more limited than they were even in Hegel's day. One interpretive option might be to locate the developments in a consciousness that stands independently of the consciousness of actual human beings, so that developments in China can be preserved and infuse thought in other places with no historical contact or intermediary interaction. Yet, as noted above, "human consciousness is the material in which the concept of God realizes itself" (*VPR* 2:139 n.).

Turning to Hegel's attempts to justify the claim offers little further help. He in some sense seeks to justify this vision by appealing to the more general accounts of the concept and of spirit. But these appeals are articulated in very general terms, and closer scrutiny reveals that they do not do the work that Hegel ascribes to them. More specifically, Hegel appears to provide the justification in the repeated claim that the need for this actualization of the moments of the concept of religion in historical religions follows from "the nature of the concept" (*VPR* 1:56, 2:143). Hegel's overall conception of spirit does require that spirit come to know itself through partial manifestations. As he elaborates in the 1824 lectures,

> Spirit's being is not immediate in this way, but only as self-producing, as making itself for itself. Spirit comes to itself; this is a movement, an activity, a mediation of itself with itself. It involves distinctions and directions, and this succession of directed movements is the path by which spirit comes to itself, for spirit is itself the goal. (*VPR* 1:56–7)

For spirit to come to know itself as self-knowing, it has to have this knowing as an object. We only achieve the more advanced forms of this knowledge by moving through imperfect initial expressions. Because this self-knowledge is achieved only through the process itself, this is more than a process of discovery. It is also a process of self-creation, and this self-creation occurs through these imperfect, finite manifestations. Thus, passages such as this one accord with the larger conception of spirit in holding that spirit necessarily manifests itself in history and that these manifestations are essential to its self-realization.[44]

That more general claim, however, does not entail that this activity will generate the single line of development over time that Hegel appears to claim. Hegel makes the latter claim explicit at points such as the opening of Part II in the 1827 lectures: "In the true science, in a science of spirit, in a science whose object is human being, the development of the concept of this concrete object

[44] On this general conception of spirit, see the discussion of *Enz.* §§ 381–4 in Chapter 3 above.

is also its outward history and has existed in actuality. Thus these shapes of religion have existed successively in time and coexisted in space" (*VPR* 2:415). The first sentence follows from and is justified by the general conception of spirit discussed in the previous paragraph. The second sentence appends—without argument—the claim that the crucial developments constitute a unified path singularly developed through history—that there is a single sequence of development that links all of the major religions of the world.[45] Jaeschke states the point precisely: "The 'nature of spirit' may, then, serve as a basis for the historicality but not the unity of the history of religion, at least not directly."[46] This is the point that causes the deepest problems in the overall conception of Determinate Religion.

In asserting this singular history, Hegel unjustifiably rules out several plausible scenarios that are entirely consistent with the systematic requirements of the conception of spirit itself. If one rejects this claim, for instance, there is no reason not to imagine that certain developments could have occurred independently in two different places or that a developmental stream might—for contingent historical reasons such as a natural disaster—die off without leaving a trace. Both of those scenarios are compatible with Hegel's general account of "the nature of spirit" and ruled out only by the unwarranted assertion introduced at points such as this.

Though Hegel tries to link this idea of a singular, unified history of religion to "the nature of spirit," the latter actually offers important arguments against the claim for a single line of historical development. In introducing the sphere of spirit, Hegel differentiates the spheres of nature and of spirit specifically in relation to the external existence of each moment:

> Observation of the *concrete* nature of spirit is peculiarly difficult, in that the particular stages and determinations of the development of its concept do not remain behind as particular existences at the same time confronting its profounder formations. In the case of external nature they do . . . The determinations and stages of spirit, on the other hand, occur essentially only as moments, conditions, determinations in the higher stages of its development. (*Enz.* § 380)

Essential elements of the individual, for instance, generally appear only together with other elements; and certain elements only become fully apparent in the extreme forms that constitute mental illness (*Enz.* § 408). In the well-adjusted individual, they cooperate with other elements below the surface

[45] One might argue that the passage does not make such strong claims, but there are too many instances of such claims in the lectures to deny that Hegel is claiming that there is a single history of religion. See, for instance, *VPR* 1:59.

[46] Jaeschke 1990, 281; see also 283. As Jaeschke also notes, "nowhere does he explain why the concept should have ordered the plurality of religions into a history. There is, to be sure, no lack of individual pointers, but they remain confusing and, not being brought together, insufficient" (1990, 278).

without ever becoming fully explicit. In the sphere of spirit, not every moment achieves an external existence—a claim in fundamental tension with the most problematic assertions made in the account of Determinate Religion.

Thus, despite Hegel's repeated efforts to justify the unity of these two conceptions in his account of Determinate Religion, "the nature of spirit" counts against such claims. The concept of spirit requires partial manifestations through which spirit comes to itself, but it does not entail that each moment achieves actuality in history or that these manifestations occur in a singular temporal order. The conceptual structure will not correspond to a history of all religions. Since Hegel ultimately gives no justification for the claim that the history of religion in general constitutes "a sequence of configurations" leading to the consummate religion (*VPR* 1:91), one can reject that claim without undermining Hegel's conception of spirit. With this point in mind, we can appreciate that each of these conceptions—conceptual mapping and a genetic narrative—can and should exist independently of the other. Hegel's attempt to synthesize them generates the most problematic aspects of Determinate Religion.

Perhaps his attempt to unite them in a single history of religion is best understood as reflecting an ongoing fascination with an idea given powerful expression by the cultural hero of Hegel's youth, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. In "The Education of the Human Race" (1780), Lessing contends that the revelations provided by Judaism and Christianity were each suited to the needs of humanity at a particular time and place. He constructs the entire argument around a comparison between the education of a single individual and that of humanity in general. Together, the sequence of religions constitutes an educational path for humanity that parallels the education of an individual, with different primers suited to different stages in his or her development. The individual is suited for the next stage only by virtue of having been prepared by the previous one.

Impressed by the influx of new information about a wide range of cultures around the world, Hegel seems to extend this model to religions in general. While Hegel's conception is distinguished from Lessing's by his attempt to locate it within the larger systematic context, this element of Determinate Religion echoes Lessing's idea in important respects.[47] He reinforces the connection in his repeated claim that the developments of determinate religion mirror the progress of a human life, from childhood, through youth and adulthood to old age (*VPR* 2:143, 1:90). Whether or not Hegel had Lessing's

[47] Cf. Jaeschke 1991, 23. The parallel to Lessing may help to explain Hegel's fascination with an idea that he found so difficult to realize satisfactorily.

essay in mind, he may well have been influenced by this family of ideas regarding human progress.[48]

CONCLUSION ON AMBITION

Rejecting Hegel's attempt to synthesize (a) the structure of development provided by the concept with (b) the history of development that is central to the notion of a narrative of genesis is essential to appreciating the way in which central elements of Hegel's account of Determinate Religion are still with us and can still challenge us. By reading Hegel against himself in this manner, we circumvent some of the most preposterous aspects of his presentation. Moreover, we can do so not on the grounds that they do not fit contemporary sensibilities but because they do not fit Hegel's own larger project. Of course, we are also still left with Hegel's often problematic treatment of particular religions, but that problem—as serious as it is—lies beyond our consideration of the larger conception of Determinate Religion itself. While distinguishing these two conceptions operative in Determinate Religion avoids certain central problems, however, these conceptions themselves raise other difficulties. In concluding this chapter, I would like to focus on one that is perhaps most obvious and most easily overlooked: overambitiousness.

To appreciate properly Hegel's account of Determinate Religion, we need to grasp its power as well as its audaciousness. This audaciousness becomes particularly apparent if we consider Hegel's project in relation to the contemporary projects considered above—those of MacIntyre and Taylor. MacIntyre's account of comparison between traditions shares a great deal with Hegel's account of conceptual mapping. In relation to other approaches to comparison, one of the most striking features of MacIntyre's approach is how much it requires. He calls for scholars of one tradition to learn not just a great deal about one figure from another tradition but to be able to tell the entire history of another tradition—both from its own perspective and from the perspective of their own original tradition. In doing so, he sets the bar very high. Few figures in history have attained such a level of knowledge of two traditions. Comparative studies involving first-rate scholarship on individual figures from different traditions are rare enough, but comparisons of traditions as wholes almost inevitably become superficial.

[48] Jaeschke includes Lessing's *Sämtliche Schriften* among the works Hegel probably used but of which there is no explicit mention (Jaeschke, ed. 1985, 849). J. G. Herder's "This Too a Philosophy of History for the Formation of Humanity" (1774) also belongs to this family of ideas (2002, 272–359).

Of course, part of the reason this bar is so high is that MacIntyre conceives of traditions in such insular terms. I have argued against this aspect of MacIntyre's project elsewhere.[49] Even if one does not require comparison to take place between traditions considered as wholes, however, an approach that focuses on identifying contradictions immanent within one standpoint is extremely demanding by virtue of the knowledge of that standpoint required.

Compared to the task signaled by Hegel's conception of Determinate Religion as a conceptual mapping, however, MacIntyre's aspirations are truly modest. Where MacIntyre is concerned with comparisons between two traditions—requiring extensive knowledge of one's own tradition as well as another—Hegel calls for such knowledge of all known religions. Only in this manner can they be located within the larger conceptual map and shown to generate contradictions that can only be resolved by religions that are conceptually more "advanced." Considered in this light, Hegel's project seems not so much ambitious as preposterous. It requires a level of knowledge far from possible for any single individual. Moreover, in light of the vast increases in information available today compared to Hegel's day, such an attempt inevitably appears more futile today than it would have then. Any attempt to carry it out, then, inevitably results in the inadequacies that plague Hegel's own account.

A similar problem arises in relation to the second of the conceptions—even if it is not as acute. Taylor's *Sources of the Self* is a tremendously ambitious work. It treats the work of thinkers over two millennia and considers more strictly philosophical and theological works together with other cultural products, particularly literature and poetry. At the same time, compared to the aspirations of Determinate Religion, it is modest in scope and ambition. Where Hegel attempts to incorporate religions from around the world, Taylor considers only a rather narrowly constructed Western history. Not only does he leave out cultures that—due to insignificant cultural contact—have had virtually no influence on the modern West. He also gives relatively little attention to the impact on modern Western identity of "Western" encounters with other people and traditions of the world.[50] Nor does he devote significant attention to subaltern movements within the West. Through these exclusions, Taylor constructs a "West" that is isolated from the rest of the world in a manner that Hegel rejects. In other words, Taylor can construct a more limited, manageable (though still extraordinarily ambitious) project along these lines only by excluding others in a way that Hegel in his day and many critics today find inadequate. Similar concerns arise for MacIntyre's account of tradition.

[49] Lewis 2006b, 58–65.

[50] Enrique Dussel has developed this critique of Taylor (1996, 129–59).

Viewed in this context, we can begin to see both MacIntyre's and Taylor's strategies as growing out of the realization of the inevitable failure of Hegel's attempts at inclusiveness.[51] Though their strategies for doing so differ, both abandon his aspirations to comprehensiveness. Central elements of each of their projects can be understood as responses to the sense that the standard Hegel sets is simply too demanding to be satisfied. Hegel's own aspiration thereto was clearly shaped by an environment in which knowledge of other places and people was beginning to seem possible. Since his time, our sense of what it would be necessary to know in order to comprehensively carry out the projects associated with either of these two conceptions has grown—far beyond the bounds of what is possible to achieve. As a result, contemporary attempts to carry forward either of the two conceptions that constitute Determinate Religion are necessarily incomplete and partial. Though they provide valuable conceptions for conceiving of our relationships to others and, thereby, for better understanding ourselves, the accounts they generate will never be completed.

[51] To develop the implications of this point for the interpretation of MacIntyre and Taylor lies beyond the bounds of the current project.

6

The Consummation of Religion

The highly contested third and final part of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* presents the grand claim that religion finds its completion in the "consummate" religion, which Hegel identifies as Christianity. Most fundamentally, the philosophy of religion's treatment of the consummate religion consists in *a philosophical account of the representational account of the contents of philosophy*, i.e. of Hegel's philosophical system. It articulates the philosophical significance of these religious representations. In so doing, it does not simply preserve their content but reveals their genuine content. Only philosophy can distinguish the rational and thus genuine content from aspects of the representations that reflect the representational form itself. As Hegel puts it, "The main point is to know that these appearances, wild as they are, are rational—to know that they have their ground in reason, and to know what sort of reason is in them" (*VPR* 3:214).[1]

To show that Christianity is the consummate religion, Part III must offer an interpretation of Christianity that shows how Christianity's representations set forth the content of the philosophical system. This conception enables Hegel to view his own thought as preserving Christian doctrine in a way that many contemporary theologies do not. At the same time, Hegel's claim that Christianity is the consummate religion depends upon his being able to show that Christian representations do indeed express this content. The order of justification is crucial: Christianity is the consummate religion because its representations express this content; this content does not constitute the consummate religion simply because it belongs to Christianity. It is a mistake, therefore, to conceive of "the consummate religion" as simply a synonym for Christianity—even though it is, for Hegel, the only consummate religion.

The resulting conception of Christianity provides the modern *Volksreligion* that Hegel has sought from the beginning. Christian doctrine represents and justifies the institutions of modern social and political life as the practical actualization of the consciousness of divine-human unity. Because religion

[1] Hegel is referring to more specific claims here, but the point applies more generally. See note 10 below.

is available to everyone—not only a philosophical elite—the consummate religion enables the population as a whole to identify with a social order based on freedom. This justification for the social order—Christianity so understood—is itself validated by philosophy. An uncritically appropriated Christianity and a philosophical justification thereby function in tandem to justify and hold together a complex new form of life.

The present chapter offers a reading of The Consummate Religion as a whole but focuses on the above concerns. We begin with the conception of the consummate religion offered in the introductory material. Many of the most crucial interpretive issues come out around Hegel's argument for the "need" for the Incarnation. What matters is the emergence of a consciousness of divine-human unity and thus of our own essence as spirit. Although this unity is implicit within us, it can only become actual through our becoming conscious of it. And we can only become conscious of it by initially grasping it sensibly—in a particular human being. Only on this basis can we ultimately come to see this unity as belonging to humanity as a whole. Finally, the Christian community, or cultus, actualizes the divine-human unity that is incompletely represented in Christ. In doing so, it provides the basis for Hegel's final account of religion's role in providing social cohesion.

Before turning to the analysis of the lectures themselves, one further issue needs to be addressed. Compared to the changes in Parts I and II of the *Lectures*, Hegel's treatment of Christianity remains relatively stable over the course of the lectures, particularly between 1824 and 1827. Nonetheless, there are important shifts that bear directly on the central concerns of this book. First, most generally speaking, over the course of the lectures, Hegel becomes better able to articulate Christian doctrines as representations of his philosophical views. This hermeneutical strategy is clearer by 1827 than it was in 1821 or even 1824. Moreover, in 1821 and 1824 material on the abstract or metaphysical concept of the consummate religion constitutes the first subsection of Part III. In 1827 this subsection has been eliminated and the material moved—some of it into the Concept of Religion and some into the introduction to Part III. This shift simplifies the internal structure of this part in a way that provides a clearer correspondence between Christian doctrine and the larger structure of Hegel's system.[2] In the 1821 manuscript and the 1824 lectures, Hegel gives the second section the title, "Concrete Representation." In 1827, however, the second element corresponds to what had been the second subsection of the second section. Moreover, in 1827, the section is simply referred to as the "second element," without further subtitling. (The Hodgson translation inserts additional subheadings that obscure this

[2] I thus concur with Jaeschke's suggestion that the 1827 formulation takes precedence over the others (1990, 300). Cf. Hodgson 2005, 206. On the development of the internal structure of Part III, see Hodgson 2005, 85–9 and Jaeschke 1990, 292–7.

important shift.) Although the material found in the second element of the 1827 lectures is very similar to that found in the second subsection of the second section of the 1824 lectures, the structural change highlights that the entire body of Part III concerns the philosophical analysis of the representations that constitute the consummate religion. It also makes the second element correspond more closely to the diremptive moment that characterizes the absolute Idea as well as much of Hegel's system. Perhaps most significantly, the 1827 lectures further develop the conception of the cultus in a manner that links it closely to ethical life. The result is a much more developed account of the role that religion can play in providing social cohesion in a complex modern society. Consequently, as in Chapter 4, I will focus principally on the 1827 lectures but make reference to both the 1821 manuscript and the 1824 transcriptions.

THE IDEA OF A CONSUMMATE RELIGION

Hegel begins Part III by setting out the notion of the consummate religion, which systematically precedes the claim that Christianity is this religion. He introduces the consummate religion with a concise, formal but potent definition: The consummate religion is "the religion that is for itself, that is objective to itself" (*VPR* 3:177).[3] It is, most fundamentally, religion that has religion as its object:

> Now, therefore, God is as consciousness, or the consciousness of God means that finite consciousness has its essence, this God, as its object; and it knows the object as its essence, it objectifies it for itself. In the consciousness of God there are two sides: the one side is God, the other is that where consciousness as such stands. With the consciousness of God we arrive directly at one side, which is what we have called religion. This content is now itself an object. It is the whole that is an object to itself, or religion has become objective to itself. It is religion that has become objective to itself—religion as the consciousness of God, or the self-consciousness of God as the return of consciousness into itself. (*VPR* 3:99)

Since religion is consciousness of the absolute, the consummate religion is religion that is a consciousness of this consciousness. The consummate religion is the one in which religion's object is not simply the object itself, "God," but also the consciousness of this object. Moreover, it is both at once: God and consciousness of God are represented as united. The absolute is here

[3] The content of the conception of the consummate religion offered at the beginning of Part III is consistent over the course of the three surviving lecture series, but Hegel significantly expands this introduction each time he lectures.

recognized as this self-conscious self-relation itself. The consummate religion is thus spirit's consciousness of itself *as conscious of itself in this religion*. It is self-consciousness.[4] First here does spirit grasp itself as grasping itself in this religion. As in the logic, the conclusion provides an open-ended closure constituted by cognitive self-transparency.

To claim that this consciousness is itself the absolute is to recognize the absolute—understood as God or spirit—as present in the consciousness of the religious community. If spirit is understood as other to human beings, this conception falls into contradictions: It becomes impossible to clarify whether we are dealing with the consciousness of human beings or of some transcendent being referred to as spirit. As the passage from *VPR* 3:99 indicates, however, Hegel's claim is that in the consummate religion we, humans, grasp that absolute as our own essence. Hegel is explicit about this point ("finite consciousness has its essence, this God, as its object"), but he does not offer an argument for it here. He does not need to, though, because he has already done so in The Concept of Religion. What is noteworthy, however, is that Hegel does not here introduce a new, additional conception of the absolute. Rather, he again makes explicit that this object of religion, which often appears to be other than us, is the essence of human beings.

At the same time, the representational form necessarily portrays this absolute as in some sense other. There is a tension between the finite form of representation and the absolute, infinite content. The limitations of the form cause it to portray the absolute in terms of mystery, and contradictions do arise in the representations.[5] Nonetheless, Hegel ultimately holds that the representations of the consummate religion, despite their form, effectively express and cultivate a consciousness of our identity with this absolute—as in the Christian account of the Holy Spirit present in the community. The reconciliation is sufficient to provide social cohesion, even though the remaining tension does generate a further drive toward the more adequate expression that philosophical thought provides.

As Jaeschke argues, the centrality of the self-consciousness of spirit to the notion of the consummate religion ties it directly to the concept of religion developed in Part I.[6] The consummate religion is the one that actualizes the

[4] "This means that spirit is the object of religion, and the object of the latter—essence knowing itself—is spirit. Here for the first time, spirit is as such the object, the content of religion, and spirit is only for spirit" (*VPR* 3:179).

[5] "It must be observed, quite generally, that a deeply speculative content cannot be portrayed in its true and proper form in *images* and *mere representations*, and hence it essentially cannot be portrayed in this mode without contradiction" (*VPR* 3:42). This 1821 formulation is one of the stronger expressions of this point. In general, over time Hegel becomes less emphatic about the tension between the finite form and infinite content, though he never claims that the religious expression is as true to this content as the philosophical expression.

[6] "The criterion of appropriateness is the concept of religion—the self-consciousness of absolute spirit. But all religions are forms of this self-consciousness. To call Christianity

concept developed there. The consummate religion realizes that concept of religion at a comprehensive level, even though this relationship does not determine the consummate religion's internal structure. Thus, the consummation must be understood in relation to religion's concept rather than its history. While the self-transparency that it achieves in some sense concludes this history—in that no religion can offer a higher representational expression of the absolute—this status does not derive from the history per se.[7]

Beyond this brief but pregnant definition of the consummate religion as the religion that has itself for its object, the introductory material also offers a crucial discussion of the consummate religion as both revelatory and revealed. Because the consummate religion has itself for its content and this content must be known, "[t]his absolute religion is the revelatory [*offenbare*] religion that has itself as its content and fulfillment, but it is also called the revealed [*geoffenbarte*] religion—which means, on the one hand, that it is revealed by God, that God has given himself for human beings to know what he is; and on the other hand, that it is a revealed, positive religion in the sense that it has come to humanity from without, has been given to it" (*VPR* 3:179). Hegel's point about the consummate religion as revealed is not centrally or uniquely concerned with scripture. It is that the consummate religion makes God known; the absolute is not hidden or ultimately mysterious.

The second aspect of being revealed involves a reevaluation of positivity that pertains to the difference in form between religion and philosophy. As we saw in Chapter 1, throughout Hegel's writings from the 1790s, "positivity" carries a negative valence. In the 1827 lectures, Hegel rejects that negative valence of positivity and sets out two principal elements of the notion of positivity, one of which concerns form and the other content. With regard to its form, religion is positive in that it first comes to individual human beings as something external and given. As with ethical mores, institutions such as churches and the family teach religion to children; and this teaching initially appears to these children as a simple given: "even the ethical comes to us in an external mode, chiefly in the form of education, instruction, doctrine: it is simply given to us as something valid as it stands" (*VPR* 3:180).

That these representations initially come to us in this manner is irrelevant to their validity. Their positive form neither precludes nor secures the rationality of their content, and their validity is determined by their rationality (*VPR* 3:180).

consummate can be justified only by showing that in it God is known as God is in himself, in other words by comparing the idea of God developed in the 'Concept of Religion' with that developed in Christianity" (Jaeschke 1990, 285).

[7] In this respect, the first of the two conceptions operative in Determinate Religion must be considered most significant for the larger structure of Hegel's philosophy of religion. Cf. Wendte 2007, 187.

Another element of positivity, however, concerns content, even though it derives from form. While the basic shape of religion can be rational, determinate existence requires specificity. There is thus a remainder, a positive element that cannot be justified by reason. While imprisonment for a crime may be rational, for instance, reason cannot justify 365 days as intrinsically more rational than 360 or 370 as the punishment for a given infraction. This *merely* positive element is "positive according to its nature," "without reason" (*VPR* 3:181). These merely contingent aspects of positivity are present in the sphere of religion as well: "Since historically, externally appearing elements are found in it, there is also present a positive and contingent [feature], which can just as well take one form as another" (*VPR* 3:181). Although consummate religion requires determinacy—it cannot be merely abstract—the non-rational particulars could be otherwise without undermining the consummate character of the religion. That which is merely historical, for instance, is not justified by reason and therefore cannot be essential to its being the consummate religion. The point is crucial in seeking to answer what makes Christianity the consummate religion: it represents the absolute as spirit.[8]

This introductory section thus frames the body of Part III of the *Lectures*. The images, narratives, and doctrines of the consummate religion must represent the essence of spirit. Since Hegel also seeks to portray Christianity as the consummate religion, the substantive sections thus have a double task. They must both give an account of what spirit is and demonstrate that Christian doctrine provides this account. Hegel executes this double task simultaneously through the explication of Christian doctrines.[9] To do so, he shows that Christian doctrine, including its narratives and practices, represents the essence of spirit—as this has been developed in philosophical terms earlier in Hegel's system.

The key to interpreting this discussion lies in appreciating Hegel's conception of representation, as developed in the Concept of Religion. Hegel's account of the consummate religion is replete with traditional Christian language; yet he understands these doctrines to present this truth in representational form. Any analysis of these doctrines must take this form into account. Hegel is remarkably explicit on this point. After discussing the first two moments of the Trinity in terms of the Father and the Logos, he states,

[8] A final aspect of positivity concerns the role that historical events, particularly miracles, should play in the verification of faith. Repeating the point discussed in Chapter 4 above, Hegel argues that no historical event can provide proof of spirit; no historical event can demonstrate self-consciousness.

[9] That these two tasks coincide for Hegel is no coincidence. It derives from spirit's self-manifesting nature, such that the consummate religion must be manifest in the world in order for us to recognize it as such. It is only because this religion has existed that we are in a position to know that spirit has these particular moments.

> These are the forms in which this truth, this idea, has fermented. The main point is to know that these appearances, wild as they are, are rational—to know that they have their ground in reason, and to know what sort of reason is in them. But at the same time one must know how to distinguish the form of rationality that is present and not yet adequate to the content. For this idea has in fact been placed beyond human beings, beyond the world, beyond thought and reason; indeed, it has been placed over against them, so that this determinate quality, though it is the sole truth and the whole truth, has been regarded as something peculiar to God, something that remains permanently above and beyond. (*VPR* 3:214)[10]

For the philosophy of religion, interpreting these doctrines consists in identifying what is rational in them, which is to say the way in which they represent spirit. In doing so, philosophy necessarily strips them of elements that accrue merely from their representational form—particularly the way in which the absolute is "placed over against" human beings. Accordingly, in the analysis of the story of the events in the garden of Eden, we find such language as, "What it really means is . . . " and "This, too, is expressed in a simple, childlike image" (*VPR* 3:225, 227). Human cognition is easily misled in this interpretive task because the representational form provides images of this object as somewhere beyond and other than human beings.[11] This is the key to unlocking both Christian doctrine and Hegel's discussion of this doctrine.

At the end of the 1827 introduction to Part III, Hegel justifies his account of the content of the consummate religion in terms of the three moments of the concept set out in Hegel's logic: universality, particularity, and singularity (*VPR* 3:198). The significant changes in Hegel's presentation of the material over the course of the lectures raise questions regarding this justification.[12] If the structure of the consummate religion is supposed to derive strictly from the structure of the logic, then the shifts in Hegel's treatment of Christianity over the course of the lectures would seem to entail corresponding changes in the logic. That Hegel does not suggest such changes entails that he does not understand the logic's structure to determine the specific structure of the consummate religion in this manner.[13] Though Hegel is not explicit on this point, it would seem that to do so would ask too much of the representations. The imprecision of religious representations relative to philosophical concepts suggests that they will be inexact accounts of the content treated definitively by philosophy. They will express the content with the kind of ambiguity that

[10] As Hodgson emphasizes, Hegel makes this point immediately following his discussion of Valentinian precursors of more orthodox Christian conceptions of the Trinity (Hodgson 2005, 139). While Hegel may have such forms principally in mind at the beginning of the passage, the fourth sentence connects such shortcomings to the positing-as-other that characterizes representation. It thus becomes clear that the point applies to representational forms more generally.

[11] See also *Enz*. §§ 565–6.

[12] Jaeschke 1990, 297.

[13] Cf. Wendte 2007, 220–32.

often attaches to metaphor, narratives, and so forth. Taking the representational form seriously thus lowers the stakes of certain shifts in Hegel's portrayal of Christianity. We can see the consummate religion broadly expressing movements set out philosophically elsewhere in the system without demanding exact correspondence. What ultimately matters is that these representations express the content in such a way that it cultivates the appropriate self-consciousness in the religious community.

THE FIRST ELEMENT

The first element of the consummate religion consists in the absolute in the abstract: "In accord with the first element, then, we consider God in his eternal Idea, as he is in and for himself . . . Insofar as he is thus within himself, it is a matter of the eternal Idea, which is not yet posited in its reality but is itself only the abstract Idea" (*VPR* 3:199–200). Such passages provide the philosophical account of this first element. As Hegel continues in the following paragraph, "Thus God in his eternal Idea is still within the abstract element of thinking in general—the abstract Idea of thinking, not of conceiving. We already know this pure Idea, and therefore we need only dwell on it briefly" (*VPR* 3:201). Hegel explicitly links the first element of the consummate religion to the absolute Idea treated at the end of the logic (see also *VPR* 3:204). The end of the logic, discussed above in Chapter 2, thus provides the authoritative account of this element's meaning. He puts this most explicitly in the final lines of the section: "[to show] that this Idea is what is true as such, and that all categories of thought are this movement of determining, is the [task of] logical exposition" (*VPR* 3:215; see also *VPR* 3:115). Or, even more bluntly, in an alternate transcription, "To show that the Trinity is what is true is the task of the logic" (*VPR* 3:215 n.). Since its proper explication belongs earlier in the system, Hegel does not need to re-elaborate the philosophical account here. Hegel's strategy here recalls that of the "Concept of God" at the beginning of Part I: briefly referring the audience back to an earlier point in the system, which provides the definitive content of this moment, and here addressing novel issues raised by the consideration of this point in the context of the philosophy of religion. Most importantly, Hegel does not here introduce a new subject beyond what has already been elaborated up to this point in the system.[14]

Against this backdrop, Hegel seeks to show that the Christian doctrine regarding this element is best understood as representing this philosophical

[14] Jaeschke 1990, 302.

claim. While doing so does not add significantly to the conception of that first moment in itself, it does something important that the logical account does not: it shows how this moment is represented for the population as a whole: "Specifically, the eternal Idea is expressed in terms of [*ausgesprochen als*] the holy Trinity: it is God himself, eternally triune. Spirit is this process, movement, life" (*VPR* 3:201). Hegel then proceeds to offer a brief explication of the immanent Trinity in terms of the self-differentiation and subsequent reconciliation that characterizes the movement of thought as well as spirit as a whole.[15]

In more concrete representations, this first element concerns God "prior to or apart from the creation of the world, so to speak" (*VPR* 199–200).[16] Hegel's "so to speak [*sozusagen*]" is crucial: it distinguishes the philosophical and representational formulations. The representation invokes categories of time and space, locating this element in a time and place other than the world. The representation thereby renders the absolute subordinate to such categories. Hegel thus seeks to clarify,

> But God is the creator of the world; it belongs to his being, his essence, to be the creator; insofar as he is not the creator, he is grasped inadequately. His creative role is not an *actus* that happened once; what takes place in the Idea is an eternal moment, an eternal determination of the Idea. (*VPR* 3:200)

More properly conceived, the absolute cannot be conceived temporally. Moreover, the account of thinking creating the world discussed in relation to the logic enables us to grasp these representations in a manner that obviates the apparent contradiction among the representations with respect to time and space.

Such complications with regard to the representations explain why this first moment necessarily appears as a mystery to representation and to the understanding (*VPR* 3:205–6). The mystery, however, is only apparent: "a mystery is called inconceivable, but what appears inconceivable is precisely the concept itself, the speculative element or the fact that the rational is thought" (*VPR* 3:207). The apparent mystery is overcome in the conceptual thought characterizing philosophy: "The resolution of the contradiction is the concept, a resolution which the understanding does not attain because it starts from the presupposition that the two [distinguished moments] both are and remain utterly independent of each other" (*VPR* 3:208). Central to the appearance of mystery and contradiction is the juxtaposing of objects that are not

[15] Hegel also devotes considerable attention to the sensible expression of this reconciliation in love (*VPR* 3:201). As important as this discussion is, however, love—being a sensible expression—cannot be the key to interpreting the philosophical formulations. This point follows clearly from Hegel's treatment of "Knowledge of God" in Part I.

[16] This passage mirrors the phrasing in the introduction to the *Science of Logic*, thus further highlighting the connection Hegel draws here. See *WL* 1:44/50.

separable—precisely what Hegel makes intrinsic to the form of representation in Part I. As he puts the connection here,

> One of the circumstances contributing to the assertion that the divine Idea is inconceivable is the fact that, in religion, the content of the Idea appears in forms accessible to sense experience or understanding, because religion is the truth for everyone. Hence we have the expressions "Father" and "Son"—a designation taken from a sensible aspect of life, from a relationship that has its place in life. In religion the truth has been revealed as far as its content is concerned; but it is another matter for this content to be present in the form of the concept, of thinking, of the concept in speculative form. (*VPR* 3:208–9)

The mystery attached to the Trinity derives from the finite forms of understanding and representation—a finitude that is overcome insofar as this content is raised to thought. At the same time, this finite form is connected to religion's wider accessibility compared to philosophy. Only religion's representational form makes this content available to everyone.

In overcoming the apparent mystery, philosophy provides a more adequate form for this content: "if the divine Idea is grasped in the forms of finitude, then it is not posited as it is in and for itself—only in spirit is it so posited" (*VPR* 3:211; see also 3:42). The task of the *philosophy* of religion is therefore, to disclose the rationality within these representations, which can only be done by philosophy, not by religion itself. Sublating representation's juxtaposing is intrinsic to the elevation to thought.

Finally, as several commentators have noted, Hegel displays relatively little interest in conventional doctrinal debates over the Trinity.[17] For Hegel, the significance of Christian doctrines lies in their representation of the content of philosophy. Consequently, he engages doctrinal specifics only to the extent that they bear on this content. As important as the doctrine is, to try to further systematize it in non-philosophical terms—to elaborate the doctrines as if they were philosophical concepts rather than representations—is to fail to appreciate the distinction between these two forms of cognition. This also explains why Hegel does not attempt to transpose philosophical articulations back into theological systematizing: to attempt to do so would misunderstand the relation between representation and thought.[18] Although Hegel does not make the point explicit, one can imagine that he would critique Schleiermacher's *Glaubenslehre* along just these lines: Schleiermacher's attempt to systematize Christian doctrines presupposes that they are capable of a precision that they are not. Here as well, Hegel's account of representation explains an important distinction between his philosophy of religion and much Christian theology.

[17] See Hodgson 2005, 134 and 168 n. 16; Jaeschke 1990, 319; and Wendte 2007, 239–40.
[18] Cf. Wendte 2007, 240.

THE SECOND ELEMENT

Whereas the first element of the consummate religion corresponds closely to the first moment of the concept of religion ("The Concept of God"), by 1827 the second element stands in a more complex relationship to the second moment of the concept of religion ("Knowledge of God"). The second moment of the concept of religion traces the development of cognition from an immediate form of faith through feeling and representation to thought; it both involves diremption and traces reconciliation at a theoretical level prior to the examination of a parallel reconciliation at a practical level in the third moment. Thus, whereas the second and third moments of the Concept of Religion are defined in relation to the theoretical and the practical respectively, this parallel does not hold in the consummate religion. The second element of the consummate religion is more clearly a moment of diremption—though it too includes a movement toward reconciliation that is only completed in the third and final element.

As the diremptive moment, the second element begins with the representation of God's self-othering in the creation of the world and of humanity—and thus Hegel's philosophical interpretation of the doctrines of creation, prelapsarian humanity, and the fall. The second half is occupied with the partial overcoming of this division through the reconciliation represented by Christ. Hegel's treatment of the Incarnation places in relief decisive questions about the interpretation of his thought. For this reason, following a brief treatment of the initial account of creation and natural humanity, our analysis will focus on his account of the need for the Incarnation and its historicity.

Hegel's rich analysis of the fall illuminates how these representations express that we are not by nature what we ought to be, a point central to the philosophical anthropology he sets out in subjective spirit.[19] We ought to realize ourselves as spirit, and spirit is not immediately present but rather must be made actual (*VPR* 3:221). The story of the fall links this contrast to consciousness and knowledge:

> The first human being is represented as having brought about this fall. Here again we have this sensible mode of expression. From the point of view of thought, the expression "the first human being" signifies "humanity in itself" or "humanity as such"—not some single, contingent individual, not one among many, but the absolutely first one, humanity according to its concept. Human being as such is consciousness; it is precisely for that reason that humanity enters into this cleavage, into the consciousness that, when further determined, is cognition. (*VPR* 3:225)

[19] For excellent discussions of this material, see Wendte 2007, 247–53 and Hodgson 2005, 147–54. Hodgson highlights the distinctive emphases of different lecture cycles.

Hegel's language repeatedly highlights the representational character of the Christian teachings. Comprehended philosophically, consciousness brings us out of immediate unity with nature and thereby generates the cleavage represented in the fall. Without this potential for consciousness, we would simply be like other animals, but this consciousness, when developed, makes us "like God": "The words of the snake were no deception" (*VPR* 3:226).

Prior to the development of consciousness of this identity, our consciousness of this contrast between what we are and what we ought to be generates profound anguish and unhappiness. This division takes two closely related forms:

> On the one hand, it is the antithesis of evil as such, the fact that it is the human being himself that is evil: this is the antithesis vis-à-vis God. On the other hand, it is the antithesis vis-à-vis the world, the fact that he exists in a state of rupture from the world: this is unhappiness or misery, the cleavage viewed from the other side. (*VPR* 3:229; see also 3:230)

This alienation from the world "drives and presses human beings back into themselves" (*VPR* 3:231). The first antithesis finds acute expression in Judaism, the second in Roman Stoicism and Skepticism. With this antithesis raised to a crisis, "[t]hese two moments contain within themselves the need for a transition" (*VPR* 3:233). The ground has been prepared for the arrival of reconciliation: "The concept of the preceding religions has refined itself into this antithesis; and the fact that the antithesis has disclosed and presented itself as an actually existing need is expressed by the words, 'When the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son' [Gal. 4:4]" (*VPR* 3:233).

This "need" for reconciliation is both timeless and located at a specific point in history: On one hand, the ultimate source of this need lies in the essence of spirit itself.[20] Hegel demonstrates this through both the philosophical interpretation of religious teachings about human nature, the fall, etc. and the analyses of spirit found in subjective spirit. In this sense, it is not simply the result of contingent historical events. On the other hand, because spirit, our essence, is not immediately given but must be realized, the need only becomes actual once a certain point in that realization is achieved. Concretely, a group of people had to develop to a point that they became conscious of this antithesis implicit within all of us. Because these developments had taken place in Palestine around the beginning of the Common Era, "the time had fully come" for the overcoming of this antithesis. Hegel notes that others had also been conceived as both human and divine—in ancient Greece and India, for instance—but "the infinite idea of humanity could attach itself only to Christ and see itself only realized in him, for the time had fully come, the idea

[20] "Put more precisely, the antithesis arises eternally and just as eternally sublates itself; there is at the same time eternal reconciliation" (*VPR* 3:234).

was *completely* mature in its depths" (*VPR* 3:81). In the other cases, the prerequisite developments had not taken place. Only in a time and place where "the antithesis is at its height" could the representation of an individual as both divine and human have the significance for reconciliation that Christ did (*VPR* 2:232).[21] The contingency involved in human history entails that there could have been situations in which particular advances were at hand but—due to natural disasters or some other extrinsic factor—did not occur. Had a particular development not taken place then, however, some other group would eventually have been driven to a heightened experience of this antithesis, and this need would ultimately be satisfied.

The more precise nature of this need and its satisfaction, however, has been one of the most contested points in Hegel's reception. He has sometimes been understood as claiming that this conceptual need—a need grounded in the logic and the essence of spirit—somehow causes an historical event, that it causes a birth that would not otherwise have happened, for instance. This issue lies at the heart of the original division of the Hegelian school into Left and Right Hegelians.[22] Making the converse point, James Yerkes has influentially argued that Hegel's philosophy of religion is "*based on,* i.e. *epistemologically and methodologically normed by, the Christian fact.* And by "Christian fact" I understand Hegel to mean the historic revelational incarnation of God in the event of Jesus as the Christ and the church's subsequent witness of faith . . . "[23] Yerkes thereby makes a historical fact or event foundational to Hegel's conception of spirit. Yet both these lines of interpretation run afoul of the interpretation of Hegel's larger project developed above: Philosophy on its own can generate the need for reconciliation but not the fact of its occurrence in a specific time, place or individual. Conversely, to base the truth of the absolute on an historical fact stands in fundamental tension with Hegel's account of thought as self-determining and ignores central elements of his account of representation. Moreover, Hegel offers little evidence to support either of these readings. In light of these incompatibilities and the lack of textual support for those readings, does Hegel's account of the Incarnation stand as a challenge to the interpretation of Hegel's idealism developed above or does an attentive reading of Hegel on the Incarnation actually cohere more closely with this interpretation?

[21] As Hodgson notes, these antitheses arise at other historical points as well, whenever the consciousness of this reconciliation has been lost: "Hegel's rendition of them has a particular application to his own time and place. Jewish anguish appears in the modern world in the form of Protestant piety, which knows nothing of God other than its distance from God; while Roman unhappiness appears in the form of Enlightenment rationalism, which valorizes the finite and is vulnerable to secularism and atheism" (2005, 154).

[22] See Jaeschke 1990, 317–18 and 373–80 and Toews 1980, 217–87.

[23] Yerkes 1978, 207, emphasis in original.

Rather than basing an historical event on the concept *or* basing spirit on an historical event, Hegel's analysis focuses on what it would take to overcome this cleavage, to bring about a more developed consciousness. Thus, this need should be understood in terms of what must happen *if spirit is to advance further in its self-realization in this context—or, more specifically, what must happen in order for self-consciousness to develop in such a way that it can overcome this cleavage and, ultimately, cultivate a consciousness of ourselves as spirit*. In Hegel's words, "What satisfies this need is the consciousness of atonement, of the sublation, the nullification of the antithesis, so that the latter is not the truth . . . Reconciliation is what is demanded by the need of the subject, and this exigency resides in the subject as infinite unity or as self-identity" (*VPR* 3:233). Being grounded in this subject, this need would have re-emerged elsewhere had it not been satisfied when and where it was. What this need demands, moreover, is fundamentally a transformation in consciousness. As Hegel states toward the end of his discussion of the Incarnation,

> The truth to which human beings have attained by means of this history [*Geschichte*], what they have become conscious of in this entire history, is the following: that the idea of God has certainty for them, that humanity has attained the certainty of unity with God, that the human is the immediately present God. (*VPR* 3:250; see also 3:251)

What appeared to be an unbridgeable cleavage can only be overcome by a consciousness in which this distinction is sublated in a more encompassing unity.

While historical events constitute necessary preconditions for this development in consciousness, what makes it possible in the first place is that it is implicitly already overcome: "That the antithesis is implicitly sublated constitutes the condition, the presupposition, the possibility that the subject should also sublate this antithesis explicitly" (*VPR* 3:234). This implicit sublation is not something accomplished in time, not the result of a particular deed. It is not the result of Jesus Christ's appearance in the world. Rather, "the antithesis arises eternally and just as eternally sublates itself; there is at the same time eternal reconciliation" (*VPR* 3:234). Christianity expresses this in the immanent Trinity, understood to stand independently of time (*VPR* 3:234). It is intrinsic to spirit, not the result of a specific act. Like the need for reconciliation, so too the reconciliation itself is grounded in spirit itself.

If this reconciliation is always already implicitly present, the question then becomes how the consciousness of this reconciliation emerges: How does this implicitly accomplished reconciliation become explicit for human beings (*VPR* 3:234)? This consciousness cannot emerge in philosophical form first. Rather, this truth must first appear in a more immediate form. Given how much of the interpretation of Hegel on the Incarnation turns on this point, the passage merits quoting at length:

> Or expressed differently, the substantiality of the unity of divine and human nature comes to consciousness for the human being in such a way that the human being appears to consciousness as God, and God appears to it as a human being. This is the necessity and need for such an appearance.
>
> Furthermore, the consciousness of the absolute Idea that we have in philosophy in the form of thinking is to be brought forth here not for the standpoint of philosophical speculation or speculative thinking but in the form of certainty—not that thinking first apprehends necessity but that it is certain to human beings. In other words, this content—the unity of divine and human nature—achieves certainty, obtaining the form of immediate sensible intuition and external existence for humankind, so that it appears as something that has been seen in the world, something that has been experienced in the world. It is essential to this form of nonspeculative consciousness that it must be before us, it must essentially be before me—it must become a certainty for humanity. For it is only what exists in an immediate way, in inner or outer intuition, that is certain. In order for it to become a certainty for humanity, God had to appear in the world in the flesh. (*VPR* 3:236–8)

The reason that the unity of divine and human nature must appear in the flesh lies in the requirements of cognition. What must come first is a certainty grounded in sensible intuition (*VPR* 3:251). As Hegel has argued at length in "Knowledge of God" and in theoretical spirit, we cannot start with philosophy but work our way up to it on the basis of intuition and representation.

Since this reconciliation takes place in spirit, and human beings are the only sensible form of spirit, "the unity of divine and human nature must appear in a human being [*in einem Menschen*]" (*VPR* 3:238). Although Hegel has already noted that Jesus is not unique in being claimed to be both human and divine, he emphasizes here that unity or reconciliation must initially take sensible form in a single individual (though Hodgson's English translation overstates this case by rendering "in einem Menschen" as "just one human being" and adding italics). If this unity were seen as present in multiple individuals, the unity would necessarily lie in a quality abstracted from the individuals. Such an abstraction, however, would not be a sensible object. Hegel's account of cognition thus drives the need for a single human being to be the sensible form of this reconciliation.

The precise nature of divine-human unity in Christ is crucial. For Hegel, Christ does not possess two natures, one human and one divine. Rather, "What it [this representation] posits is that divine and human nature are not in themselves different" (*VPR* 1:146; see also 3:143). Jesus therefore cannot be distinct from other humans with regard to his nature; his distinctiveness lies elsewhere. Jesus is unique, Hegel thinks, in bringing this consciousness of human beings as spirit to the world. He appeared when the time was right and appeared to his contemporaries to be the only one with this consciousness

of himself as both divine and human. Divine-human unity can be said to be unique to Jesus among his contemporaries in that only he possesses the consciousness of this unity; in this sense he is uniquely *actually* divine at this point because achieving this self-consciousness is essential to what it means to be actually—not just potentially—spirit.

For Hegel what is essential to the emergence of the consciousness of reconciliation is the certainty that the reconciliation has taken place—a certainty that can only arise on the basis of sensible intuition: "[t]his presupposition implies that it is certain that reconciliation has been accomplished, i.e. it must be represented as something historical, as something that has been accomplished on earth, in appearance. This is the presupposition in which we must first of all believe" (*VPR* 3:252–3). Linking certainty to belief, Hegel argues that what matters is the *belief* that this unity has appeared. This belief is essential for the emergence of the consciousness of the unity of divine and human nature, even though philosophy will ultimately show this unity to lie in the essence of spirit rather than to have been brought about by a particular historical act.[24] Intuition initially locates this unity uniquely within one person, but thought ultimately reveals it to be the character of humanity as a whole. Christ's ultimate significance, for Hegel, is in contributing to bringing about the consciousness that this reconciliation is intrinsic to humanity, not the unique domain of one individual.

Although Christ's fundamental significance lies in his sensible representation of reconciliation, his teaching plays an important role in propagating the consciousness thereof.[25] As the initial expression of this unity, however, Jesus' teaching locates it beyond the present: "This reconciliation, expressed as a state of affairs, is the kingdom of God, an actuality . . . This kingdom of God, the new religion, thus contains implicitly the characteristic of negating the present world" (*VPR* 3:241; see also 3:148). It stands opposed to the world, rejecting not only property but family and all "essential interests and ethical bonds" (*VPR* 3:242). In itself, this teaching does not overcome the antithesis between the subject and the world. It rejects existing ethical (*sittliche*) relationships because these are not yet themselves the ethical relationships expressive of this consciousness. This "polemical attitude," however, is specific to the first appearance of this religion (*VPR* 3:242). In Hegel's writings from the 1790s, precisely these features of early Christianity rendered "Christianity" incapable of providing social cohesion in modern society. By 1827, however, early Christianity's

[24] Hegel's language also suggests this emphasis on belief about what has happened when he says that "it appears as something that has been seen in the world, something that has been experienced in the world" (*VPR* 3:237–8), though he is not consistent in this formulation.

[25] "[S]till the main point is that this content does not impinge on our representation through teaching but through sense-intuition" (*VPR* 3:150).

polemical stance is distinguished from what Hegel sees as the more developed Christian doctrines that he elaborates in his account of the cultus.

Christ's significance as the sensible manifestation of divine-human unity, however, directs attention away from such teachings and toward his death. By 1827, death constitutes the sensible expression of the negative, so that Christ's death represents the negative moment within the absolute itself: "'God himself is dead,' it says in a Lutheran hymn, expressing the consciousness that the human, the finite, the fragile, the weak, the negative are themselves a moment of the divine, that they are within God himself, that finitude, negativity, otherness are not outside God and do not, as otherness, hinder unity with God. Otherness, the negative, is known to be a moment of the divine nature itself" (*VPR* 3:249–50). The representation of the resurrection shows that the negation that is death is not ultimate for spirit.[26] The death of Christ thus represents the negative moment within the movement of spirit.

THE THIRD ELEMENT

In the third moment, the reconciliation that was initially represented as unique to Christ is actualized and universalized in the Christian community or cultus. Here—and specifically in the 1827 lectures—Hegel finally elaborates an understanding of Christianity that satisfies the concern for social cohesion that has driven him since his earliest writings. This formulation represents the culmination of a crucial shift in Hegel's presentation of Christianity: moving from the *Phenomenology* through the Berlin lectures, Hegel generally attributes less and less significance to the reconciliation represented in Christ and more and more weight to that achieved in the community.[27]

More specifically, the cultus treats the process and practices through which the movement is made from consciousness of divine-human unity as present in one individual to consciousness of this unity as present in the community as a whole—a community that in principle extends to all humanity. God is recognized as present in—not other than—the community: "Thus the community itself is the existing spirit, spirit in its existence, God existing as community . . . The third element, then, is this consciousness—God as spirit. This spirit as existing and realizing itself is the community" (*VPR* 3:254). Christian doctrine represents this presence of God in the community in terms

[26] In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the death of this God-man is essential to moving beyond the sensible basis for this certainty of reconciliation, but in 1827 Hegel emphasizes death as a sensible form of the negative.

[27] This claim draws on the interpretation of the *Phenomenology* that I develop in Lewis 2008b. On Hegel's increasingly pneumatological focus after 1821, see Hodgson 2005, 88.

of the Holy Spirit and the community's foundation in terms of the Pentecost. The Christian community thus represents the cleavage between God and humanity being overcome for the people as a whole. The treatment considers both the theoretical and practical sides of this process (whereas in the Concept of Religion the cultus deals only with the practical side). Through participating in the cultus, subjects come to grasp the absolute as spirit—and specifically as self-conscious in and through the cultus's practices. In the church, "they as subjects are the active expression [*das Betätigende*] of spirit" (*VPR* 3:256). They thereby make spirit's self-consciousness actual.

The resurrection constitutes the transition to the third element. More than most of Hegel's transitions, it spans the sections rather than simply preparing for the movement to the next.[28] Hegel is ambiguous about this point; he provides no clear indication that the resurrection belongs in the third element, but he discusses it more there than in the second element and when he does discuss it in the second element, he already invokes the cultus.[29] This arrangement is significant for Hegel's effort to formulate Christian doctrine in a manner that coheres with his larger philosophical conception: the second element ends without having clearly overcome the negation represented by Christ's death. At the same time, Hegel does locate Christ principally within the second element, rather than in the third—as he does in the *Encyclopaedia's* presentation of the philosophy of religion (*Enz.* § 569).[30] Doing so makes for clearer conformity to Trinitarian language and, more importantly, highlights the incompleteness of the reconciliation achieved in Christ and thereby the cultus's decisive import.

The first subsection, "The Origin of the Community," begins from the immediacy of the community that surrounded Jesus. This origin

> is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. [It is] spirit that comprehends this history spiritually as it is enacted in appearance, and cognizes in it the idea of God, his life, his movement. The community is made up of those single, empirical subjects who are in the spirit of God. But at the same time this content, the history and truth of the community, is distinguished from them and stands over against them. (*VPR* 3:252)

This community emerges from the shared certainty of the sensible presence of divine-human unity in Jesus Christ. As such, this unity initially stands over against the community:

[28] Hegel ties the "outpouring of the spirit" remarkably closely to the resurrection; see, for instance, *VPR* 3:160.

[29] In the second element in 1824 and 1827, see *VPR* 3:150–1 and 3:249. In the third element, see *VPR* 3:157–60 and 3:253–4.

[30] On the contrast between the placement of Christ in the *Encyclopaedia* and the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, see Wendte 2007, 257–60.

> the human subject—the one in whom is revealed what is through the spirit the certainty of reconciliation for humanity—has been marked out as singular, exclusive, and distinct from others. Thus for the other subjects the presentation of the divine history is something that is objective for them, and they must now traverse this history, this process, in themselves. (*VPR* 3:252)

This traversing is the task of the cultus—to overcome the otherness of divine-human unity and to actualize this unity in all members of the community.

This movement involves a shift in focus from the sensible presence of this unity in a particular individual to "the spiritual comprehension, consciousness of the spiritual. The content is spiritual, involving the transformation of the immediate to spiritual determination" (*VPR* 3:253; see also 3:160). The initial, sensible, and exclusive form of divine-human unity is superseded through the community, but the resurrection plays a key role in initiating this spiritual comprehension. The resurrection is not a fact like other historical facts: "The history of the resurrection and ascension of Christ to the right hand of God begins at the point where this history receives a spiritual interpretation. That is when it came about that the little community achieved the certainty that God has appeared as a human being" (*VPR* 3:249). The resurrection has its reality in the spiritual interpretation itself, not in a sensible event. Grasped philosophically, this means that what is "resurrected" is precisely the consciousness of divine-human unity; it is not a sensible resurrection. The resurrection is real, however, not merely symbolic, precisely because this consciousness is actually present in the community. The reality of the resurrection, then, lies in the interpretation given to it by the community—in the community's representations and thoughts.

Jaeschke compellingly argues that the reality of the resurrection in Hegel's thought is best interpreted in relation to his "Lutheran" interpretation of the Eucharist. It is neither a historical, material presence (the "Catholic" view of the Eucharist) nor merely symbolic (the "Reform" view of the Eucharist). Instead, "In Hegel's view the distinguishing feature of the Lutheran doctrine is that it regards the host as actual 'only in faith and in the partaking. This [is] its consecration in the faith and the spirit of each individual' (*LPR* 3:155 [*VPR* 3:91])." By interpreting the resurrection of Christ in similar terms—as actual in, but only in, the spirit of the community—one can claim that "[i]t is not merely claimed of this human being that he symbolized the unity; the unity is also asserted to be actual." This approach avoids the

> fundamental ambiguity that led to the schism in [Hegel's] school; it alone saves it from the reproach that it is incapable of deciding between holding fast to facticity and going back to the faith of the community. These two positions can be combined in the manner described: the 'is' becomes actual in the Spirit of the community and not in an external actuality.[31]

[31] Jaeschke 1990, 326, 329, and 332.

What Jaeschke's account could emphasize more clearly is that the reality of this unity consists first and foremost in a consciousness.

Hegel's interpretation of the resurrection in terms of spirit—rather than as a sensible, historical fact—becomes even more apparent in his discussion of the verification of the resurrection:

> As to the empirical mode of the appearance, and investigations concerning the conditions surrounding the appearance of Christ after his death, the church is right insofar as it refuses to acknowledge such investigations; for the latter proceed from a point of view implying that the real question concerns the sensible and historical elements in the appearance [of Christ], as though the confirmation of the spirit depended on narratives of this kind about something represented as historical [*historisch*], in historical [*geschichtlicher*] fashion. (*VPR* 3:253)

The matter at issue is not a sensible historical event.[32] If the historical fact were essential, it would mean that the sensible is foundational to spirit, that spirit remains ultimately dependent on nature. For Hegel, this would reverse central elements of the Christian message as well as his own philosophical vision. Given the nature of spirit, the authentic verification or witness of spirit cannot be found in sensibility: "Only by philosophy can this simply present content be justified, not by history. What spirit does is not history [*Historie*]" (*VPR* 3:163). The justification as well as the authoritative account necessarily lie in thought.

This transformation of consciousness is not completed by the mere founding of the community, however. Hegel treats much of the work of the cultus—the transformation in consciousness it brings about—in relation to "The Subsistence of the Community," the second subsection. Here he gives a more concrete picture of the practices through which the self-consciousness of spirit is cultivated, and because he is dealing with this process as it actually exists, the theoretical and practical aspects of this process appear closely interwoven. Once the community is well established, particular individuals are born into it. For them, the church's doctrine initially exists as a presupposition and as authority (*VPR* 3:257–8). The church presents these teachings as something given and positive, which is then internalized by the individual participants in the community. Consequently, "the church is essentially a teaching church" (*VPR* 3:257). In this respect, the doctrines are positive in the first sense discussed above: they come to the individual from without. Appropriating this content, however, is not simply a matter of memorizing doctrines but of internalizing them, cultivating a consciousness.

This process, in Hegel's view, entails a vital role for a wide range of devotional practices, sacraments, and other "external" forms through which this reconciliation is realized: "This is the concern of education, practice,

[32] Cf. Yerkes 1978.

cultivation. With such education and appropriation it is a question of becoming habituated to the good and the true" (*VPR* 3:259). These practices shape us to accord with the truth of and to participate in spirit. Their ultimate significance lies not in the particularities of their form but in their role in enabling us to appropriate this conception of spirit: "Therefore it is the concern of the church that this habituating and educating of spirit should become ever more identical with the self, with the human will, and that this truth should become one's volition, one's object, one's spirit" (*VPR* 3:260). They bring about the overcoming of the apparent division between particular human beings and infinite spirit.[33]

The third and final subsection, "The Realization of the Spirituality [*Geistigen*] of the Community," contains the most important change in the 1827 treatment of the consummate religion. Although this view has been developing in the earlier lectures, only here does Hegel fully elaborate a vision of religion as providing social glue for complex modern societies. Here Hegel finally gives us a modern *Volksreligion*.

Relative to the section's significance, it is brief (only eight pages). Hegel offers little argument here to support such dramatic claims, and it has the feel of a relatively rapid conclusion to a course when time is running out. Yet these pages must be understood as a conclusion that draws on and pulls together the arguments developed over the course of the lectures. Hegel can be brief precisely because the arguments for the claims have already been developed, and he can simply draw out their further implications.

In the penultimate chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel argues that even in its highest instantiations religion remains intrinsically alienating due to its representational form: The reconciliation that is represented in Christian doctrine "remains burdened with the antithesis of a beyond. Its own reconciliation therefore enters its consciousness as something *distant*, as something in the distant *future*, just as the reconciliation which the other *self* [Christ] achieved appears as something in the distant *past*" (*PhG* 574/787). Even in the *Phenomenology's* consummate religion, satisfaction remains elsewhere. Alienation is only overcome with the transition to philosophy.[34]

By 1827, however, Hegel's view has shifted: Though he still portrays the representational form of religion as projecting, he no longer depicts it as intrinsically alienating.[35] Rather, the modern, Lutheran cultus provides the

[33] This aspect of the cultus is central to my treatment in Lewis 2005, 191–204.

[34] See Lewis 2008b, 192–209.

[35] The 1821 lecture manuscript provides some indication of this shift (*VPR* 3:76) but ends on "*a discordant note*" and what appears to be a recommendation of withdrawal (*VPR* 3:94). Religion no longer functions to reconcile the populace to the existing world, and "[h]ow the present day is to solve its problems must be left up to it" (*VPR* 3:96). The highest form of reconciliation presently possible is that of philosophers gathered as "an isolated order of priests—a sanctuary—untroubled by how it goes with the world" (*VPR* 3:97). (One cannot

reconciliation that was projected "beyond" in the *Phenomenology*'s account of religion. In the 1827 version of the philosophy of religion, conceiving of religion as projection is not a criticism of religion.

The third moment of the cultus "is the realization of the spirituality of the community in universal actuality. This contains at the same time the transformation of the community" (*VPR* 3:262). It thus concerns the manner in which the reconciliation that is present in faith becomes actual in thought and in the world. The self-consciousness of spirit as spirit here moves beyond the realm of the heart and feeling. What is initially a relatively vague, only partially articulated consciousness here takes concrete forms: "spirit is simply present to itself; it demands a fulfilled present; it requires more than [love or] merely cloudy representations [*trübe Vorstellungen*]. It requires that the content should itself be present, or that feeling, sensibility should be developed and expanded" (*VPR* 3:167).[36] Hegel has developed the argument for this drive toward self-actualization throughout the philosophy of spirit but most specifically in the treatments of theoretical and practical spirit. This development transforms the community but does not render it obsolete.

This process involves two distinct forms of actualization: "In order that reconciliation may be real, it is required that in this development, in this totality, it should be known, should be present and brought forth" (*VPR* 3:262). Reconciliation thus moves from the realm of the heart into both the more developed form of cognition that is thought *and* into a worldly existence: it must be both philosophically cognized and attain actual, objective existence in the world. Hegel thus treats both a practical and theoretical dimension, bringing together within the cultus the two sides that were treated in the second and third moments of the concept of religion. Hegel treats these sequentially, beginning with the real or practical side.

The "real" side (*VPR* 3:265) concerns the actualization of reconciliation in the social structures of the world. More specifically, it is the expression in social and political life of humans' self-understanding as spirit:

> The vocation [*Bestimmung*] to infinitude of the subject that is inwardly infinite is its freedom. The substantial aspect of the subject is that it is a free person, and as a free person it relates itself to the worldly and the actual as a being that is at home with itself, reconciled with itself, an utterly secure and infinite subjectivity. This vocation of the subject ought to be foundational in its relation with what is worldly. This freedom of the subject is its rationality—the fact that as subject it is thus liberated and has attained this liberation through religion, that in accord

help but notice the echo of this passage in the conclusion to MacIntyre's *After Virtue* [1984, 256–62].) The concluding pages of the 1824 lectures are less grim but still posit a contradiction that is only completely overcome in philosophy (*VPR* 3:174–6). Consequently, it gives no indication of a positive role for religion in providing social cohesion.

[36] The first edition of the lectures included "love or" in this passage.

> with its religious vocation it is essentially free . . . What is required, therefore, is that this reconciliation should also be accomplished in the worldly realm. (*VPR* 3:262–3)

The passage places in relief a number of points integral to our interpretation. That which is being actualized is our own essence, the infinitude that is central to Hegel's conception of spirit and thus of human beings. Rather than finitizing spirit, Hegel explicitly links the vocation of human subjects to the infinite. The religious consciousness is thus a consciousness of our own essence, even when not recognized as such. And this means that my vocation or determination (*Bestimmung*) is for freedom; that is the realization of my essence. This freedom, though initially merely implicit, must be realized in the world. Freedom is actual when I can justifiably find myself at home in the social and political structures of the world. This is only possible, however, on the basis of a consciousness that is cultivated by religion. Through participation in the cultus of the consummate religion, I become conscious of myself and other human beings as free, and it is intrinsic to this consciousness that this freedom be realized in social relations and structures. Hegel can make these points so briefly here because he has elaborated them at length in other contexts, such as the *Philosophy of Right*.

Hegel identifies three stages to the realization or actualization of this self-consciousness in the world. The first, "immediate" form is a "monkish withdrawal" from the world:

> at first the community contains the element of spirituality, of being reconciled with God, within itself, in abstraction from the world, so that spirituality renounces the worldly realm, placing itself in a negative relation to the world and thereby also to itself. For the world is in the subject; it is there as the impulse toward nature, toward social life, toward art and science. (*VPR* 3:263)

Since the world appears to the early Christian community as incapable of reconciliation with its own spirituality, the first response is to try to realize religious consciousness away from that world—to find reconciliation elsewhere. This strategy is doomed to failure, however, because "the world is in the subject." Attempts to flee this world necessarily result in internal division and alienation from oneself, not reconciliation or freedom.

This form is not a fundamentally historical stage; it has recurred many times. Nonetheless, though Hegel does not make this point explicit, he may well have had in mind Christianity from the beginning up until roughly the time of Constantine or Charlemagne.[37] Conceiving of this shape of Christianity as an initial, inadequate form contributes to the articulation of a modern Christianity that can function as a *Volksreligion*.

[37] Such a portrayal of Christianity during this period dramatically oversimplifies a complex landscape.

The second form, by contrast, seeks to actualize religious consciousness through the church's domination of the world. If one cannot successfully flee the world, then one response is to attempt to conquer it. Here as well, however, spiritual consciousness and the world continue to relate to each other externally:

> The religious, it is felt, should be the dominant element; what is reconciled, the church, ought to prevail over what is unreconciled, the worldly realm. Accordingly, this is a uniting with a worldly realm that remains unreconciled . . . But the dominating power takes this same worldliness up into itself, including all of its passions; as a result of its dominion, there emerges in the church itself a worldliness devoid of spirit just because the worldly realm is not in itself reconciled. (*VPR* 3:263–4)

The world itself remains uncultured and untransformed, and the church's attempt to dominate it simply transforms the church. In the process, many human activities, specifically those related to the family and to politics, "count for nothing, they are unholy" (*VPR* 3:264). Prominent for Hegel is the idea that marriage and procreation are a lesser course than vows of celibacy. Activities that, for Hegel, are fundamental to who we are, to the expression of our essence, are deemed a less holy path. Consequently, "The ruling principle is that humanity is not at home with itself" (*VPR* 3:264). This second form, too, fails to achieve reconciliation and is in fact "precisely the opposite of reconciliation" (*VPR* 3:264). Christianity has taken this form, like the first form, in a variety of times and places, but in Hegel's account it seems to describe what he views as the Catholic model of the church.

The third form of the actualization of this reconciliation, the only genuine one, characterizes a modern social and political life undergirded by Lutheran Christianity. Though linked to the Reformation by the Lutheran account of subjectivity, this form is only being fully realized in Hegel's own epoch. Here,

> this contradiction [of the second form] is resolved in ethical life, . . . the principle of freedom has penetrated into the worldly realm itself, and . . . the worldly, because it has been thus conformed to the concept, reason, and eternal truth, is freedom that has become concrete and will that is rational. (*VPR* 3:264)

Reconciliation is realized in the world because social and political institutions have been transformed such that they express the self-consciousness cultivated by Christianity. They cultivate and realize the conception of the individual as a free subject. In this sense, "The institutions of ethical life are divine institutions—not holy in the sense that celibacy is supposed to be holy by contrast with marriage or familial love, or that voluntary poverty is supposed to be holy by contrast with active self-enrichment, or what is lawful and proper" (*VPR* 3:264). Religion provides an essential expression of this consciousness, but the realization of this consciousness involves structures,

relations, and institutions that are far beyond the walls of the church. These institutions accord with the concept, with reason, because they express our essence, spirit. We are thus free and at home with ourselves in them.

Hegel makes this claim very briefly in the lectures, devoting only one paragraph to this third form, but he can do so because the accounts of objective spirit, both in the *Encyclopaedia* and in the *Philosophy of Right*, elaborate at great length how and why these modern social and political institutions are the realization of spirit in objective existence. The realization of the religious community in the world thus converges with the account of ethical life developed elsewhere in the system.

With respect to the challenge of social cohesion, what is most striking is the way that this final form of worldly realization of reconciliation enables modern Christianity to function as the *Volksreligion* for which Hegel has been searching. Insofar as this development shifts the focus beyond the particular religious community, we are dealing with a significant transformation of the community, as Hegel notes at the section's opening. Particularly since these institutions develop a relative autonomy vis-à-vis religion, we have in some sense moved beyond the realm of religion per se. In certain respects, the relevant "community" is the society as a whole. Moreover, as Michael Theunissen has argued, this community extends in principle to all of humanity.[38]

Yet Hegel does not claim that smaller scale religious institutions will therefore fade away. The church's vital pedagogical role requires that the religious community or its functional equivalent—an institution that instills a consciousness of the absolute in representational form—endure. Only through practices of this sort do individuals come to view themselves in the manner appropriate for participation in modern life—as free individuals. The appropriate religious upbringing cultivates a self-understanding that enables individuals to be at home in institutions that realize this conception of ourselves—i.e. for Hegel, modern political institutions. Moreover, because religion makes this content accessible to everyone—in a way that philosophy does not—the consummate religion is the religion that can function as social glue in the modern world.

This "real" side of the realization of religious consciousness is paralleled by the "ideal" side. The transition from one to the other is simply introduced, without justification or indication of a contradiction left unresolved at the conclusion of the realization in the world. In this context, Hegel presents the practical and theoretical as two, parallel sides of the realization. Insofar as the practical converges with objective spirit, however, the transition between them can also be seen as reiterating the movement from objective to absolute spirit, i.e. from the second to third section of the philosophy of spirit. In this

[38] Theunissen 1970, 403.

respect, the ideal side is higher, but it is important to stress the extent to which the sides of this actualization are coessential.[39]

The second, ideal side is driven by the immanent development of cognition toward thought. Because we have already attained the level of representation, the movement here is from representation to thought itself—and thus the movement from religion to philosophy. Having already analyzed this movement in detail in The Concept of Religion, Hegel focuses here—as in the introduction—on the contemporary intellectual developments that manifest stages of this realization.

The knowledge of this reconciliation, that spirit is at home with itself in thought, initially takes an abstract form that rejects all externality and all concreteness: "Thus thinking enters in, defying and destroying externality in whatever form it appears. This is the negative and formal mode of acting which, in its concrete shape, has been called the Enlightenment" (*VPR* 3:265). As Hegel has articulated in earlier discussions, this negative moment of thought rejects not only what is merely external but all determinacy, all concreteness.[40] In encountering religious representations, this form of thought has purely destructive consequences.

A second form of thought also "volatilize[s] all content," but it sacrifices this content not at the altar of abstract reason but at the altar of abstract subjectivity (*VPR* 3:267). This form takes the human being to be good and identifies this goodness with the arbitrary will (*Willkür*): "This is the pinnacle of this form of subjectivity and freedom, which renounces the truth and its development and moves within itself, knowing that what it regards as valid is only its own determinations, and that it is the master of what is good and evil" (*VPR* 3:266). In subordinating genuine reason and freedom to the particularity of the individual, the result can "just as readily assume the form of hypocrisy and extreme vanity as it can peaceful, noble, pious aspirations" (*VPR* 3:266). The critique should be familiar at this point: when the particulars of feeling and contingency are placed above reason, it is a matter of chance whether the result will be something we recognize as admirable or something horrible.

[39] To appreciate these sides as largely parallel developments—and the significance of the reconciliation achieved in the worldly sphere in particular—it is essential to highlight the distinction between the 1827 lectures and the earlier ones. Perhaps because he treats the 1824 and 1827 lectures as so similar, Hodgson subordinates the real stages of realization to philosophy in a way that obscures the significance of the reconciliation in ethical life that Hegel presents in 1827. Jaeschke, by contrast, emphasizes the "reconciliation of religion with worldliness" in the later lectures (Jaeschke 1990, 346).

[40] "This thinking first emerges as abstract universality as such, and is directed not merely against the external but also against the concrete in general. For this reason it is also directed against the idea of God, against the idea that God as triune is not a dead abstraction but rather relates himself to himself, is at home with himself, and returns to himself . . . Since abstract thinking turns against externality in general, it also is opposed to distinction as such . . . Abstract identity prevails as the rule for this abstract thinking, for understanding" (*VPR* 3:265–6).

In Hegel's time, Pietism, which "acknowledges no objective truth and opposes itself to dogmas and the content of religion," represents the most prominent manifestation of this position (*VPR* 3:266–7). Thus, in these final paragraphs, Hegel again positions himself, as the true defender of Christian doctrine, over against neo-Pietist critics such as Tholuck.

Genuine reconciliation, however, requires genuine thought:

> The third, then, consists in the fact that subjectivity develops the content from itself, to be sure, in accord with necessity. It knows and recognizes that a content is necessary and that this necessary content is objective, being in and for itself. This is the standpoint of philosophy, according to which the content takes refuge in the concept and obtains its justification by thinking. (*VPR* 3:267)

Here cognition attains the level of thought considered at the end of "Knowledge of God" in The Concept of Religion. Thought thus achieves independence of the representations from which it emerged. The contingency intrinsic to the representational form is overcome as the content is known in its necessity and grasped as produced by spirit itself. What initially appeared to come from without—to be revealed to the subject—is grasped as produced by thinking itself. With this development, we have moved from religion to philosophy, so that the content is given conceptual form and justified by thinking itself.

Hegel's language in this section brings us back to the account of self-determining thought at the conclusion of the logic: "This thinking . . . is comprehension [*Begreifen*], meaning that the concept determines itself in its totality and as Idea. It is free reason, which has being on its own account, that develops the content in accord with its necessity, and justifies the content of truth" (*VPR* 3:267). This content, the object of religion that is now the object of philosophy, is this self-determining thought become actual as spirit. What is known is precisely the content of Hegel's philosophical system, and this unfolds from the conception of spontaneous, self-determining thought developed in the logic.

Hegel is emphatic that this elevation to thought not only preserves the genuine content of religion but also provides its only adequate justification:

> This objective standpoint is alone capable of bearing witness to, and thus of expressing the witness of, spirit in a developed, thoughtful fashion. Therefore it is the justification of religion, especially of the Christian religion, the true religion; it knows the content in accord with its necessity and reason . . . The witness of spirit is thought, and it knows the form and determinacy of the appearance, and hence also the limits of the form. (*VPR* 3:268)

All other forms of justification of religion, Hegel holds, collapse under their own weight. Insofar as they are consistently pursued, they develop immanently toward thought—as Hegel has set out both in his account of theoretical spirit and in the account of "Knowledge of God." Consequently, "The witness

of sprit in its highest form is that of philosophy, according to which the concept develops the truth purely as such from itself without presuppositions" (*VPR* 3:183). Highlighting claims already made, Hegel places in relief that it is ultimately philosophy, the "absolute judge," not religion itself, that evaluates what constitutes the genuine content of the representations and distinguishes what is rational from what is merely contingent and arbitrary in these representations (*VPR* 3:268 n.). Thus, in the face of protests that what some take to be genuine content of the representations has not been preserved by philosophy, Hegel's response must be that the objection can only be judged on the basis of philosophical accounts of the representations.

For some, this justification will not be required or even noticed: "Ingenuous piety has no need of [justification]; the heart gives the witness of spirit and receives the truth that comes to it through authority; it has a sense of satisfaction and reconciliation through this truth" (*VPR* 3:268). Religion functions very effectively in binding such people to society. They are not troubled by the questions raised by the Enlightenment and live with the kind of trust Hegel associates with the agricultural estate. They may find great satisfaction in this piety, even though the form in which it represents the absolute content is inferior to that of philosophy.

Many, however, have begun to question this inherited faith, and once that process begins it does not end quickly: "But insofar as thinking begins to posit an antithesis to the concrete and places itself in opposition to the concrete, the process of thinking consists in carrying through this opposition until it arrives at reconciliation" (*VPR* 3:268–9). Once such questions have arisen for the individual, she cannot return to the immediacy of ingenuous faith. Just beyond its border lies, first, what appears to be a slippery slope. Further thinking brings more questions and the initial responses no longer seem satisfactory. This slope passes through the moments traced above, most obviously Enlightenment and Pietism. Ultimately, however, the path gives way to a new standpoint, one that is simultaneously higher and more stable than the point from which we initially fell. Cognition will not be satisfied until it reaches this standpoint of genuine thought and philosophy.

Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of religion thus seek both to demonstrate the inadequacy and instability of other purported resting spots along this journey and to demonstrate that it comes to a successful conclusion:

> This reconciliation is philosophy. Philosophy is to this extent theology. It presents the reconciliation of God with himself and with nature, showing that nature, otherness, is implicitly divine, and that the raising of itself to reconciliation is on the one hand what finite spirit implicitly is, while on the other hand it arrives at this reconciliation, or brings it forth, in world history. This reconciliation is the peace of God, which does not surpass all reason, but is rather the peace that through reason is first known and thought and is cognized as what is true. (*VPR* 3:269)

In that philosophy expresses the reconciliation that is the central content of religion, philosophy can be said to be theology—though this claim does not validate the claims of religion in general or theology in particular *over against* the independence of philosophy. Philosophy provides the authoritative account of this reconciliation. Over the course of the system, it demonstrates that nature is not other than thought, that it is constituted by the spontaneous activity of thought. Moreover, it shows that we are dealing with the actualization of what is implicit in human beings: it is both implicit within us and must be realized in the world. This reconciliation—this peace—is first fully known through philosophy.

Philosophy's reconciliation is thus higher than religion's. Though religion is essential to the genesis of this knowledge, the justification ultimately stands independently of this genesis. In part for this reason, only philosophy provides the form that is entirely adequate to the content.

This form, however, is not for everyone. Hegel believes philosophers will always be a minority, and the majority will continue to grasp the absolute principally in representations. Elsewhere I have critiqued Hegel's complacency about such inequalities, arguing that they stand in fundamental tension with his philosophical anthropology.[41]

In the present context, however, what is most striking is the way that this philosophical justification of religion enables it to hold together a complex, new form of social and political life. Hegel interprets the content of the tradition in a way that justifies the institutions of contemporary ethical life and secures the validity of these justifications through a philosophical validation of the tradition. Both uncritically appropriated traditions and more reflective philosophical justifications function in tandem to enable diverse segments of society to commit themselves to an emerging social order based upon freedom.

[41] Lewis 2005, 163–85.

7

Cultivating Our Intuitions

Hegel on Religion, Politics, and Public Discourse

In grappling with the consequences of the French Revolution and Napoleon's dramatic transformation of the European political landscape, Hegel seeks to articulate not only a modern religion but also a modern state. He builds upon and extends what he sees as a distinctly modern concern with freedom, making the incorporation of individual freedom a central aim of his political as well as religious thought. While he attends closely to the significance of tradition—religious and otherwise—his account of the modern state is marked by its appeal to reason, rather than merely history, for justification. Because he wrote in a time and place where the state was often understood to be based on religion—and challenges to religion were viewed as challenges to the political order—this appeal to reason rather than history raised profound, politically sensitive questions about religion's role in politics. Though the sensitivity of these questions may have diminished and we now deal with a level of religious diversity beyond what Hegel could have imagined, the fundamental challenges with which he wrestled remain current. Considering the relation between religion and the state thus brings the conception of religion elaborated in the previous chapters to bear on what remain pressing contemporary concerns. If religious commitments frequently define people's most deeply held beliefs and seem to address political issues, can they be given a role in the political order without undermining individual freedom or calling forth a theocracy?

Hegel's mature responses to this question, his principal treatments of the relation between religion and the state, are found in the remarks to § 270 of his *Philosophy of Right* and § 552 of the *Encyclopaedia* as well as in a discussion of religion and the state from the 1831 lectures on religion (*VPR* 1:339–47). In addition to the text of the *Philosophy of Right*—which was intended largely as a guidebook to be expanded upon in courses—Hegel lectured repeatedly on this material in Heidelberg and throughout his years in Berlin. In recent decades scholars have made transcriptions of many of these lectures available, though

so far only one has been translated into English. As rich as the remarks in the *Philosophy of Right* and *Encyclopaedia* are, the lectures provide a level of detail and nuance that surpasses that found in Hegel's published texts. They illustrate well the issue's complexity, how Hegel grappled with it, and the degree of practical judgment he saw required. My analysis therefore draws extensively on these lectures.[1]

Hegel begins his discussion of religion and the state with the widespread idea that "religion is the foundation of the state." He remarks, "No assertion is more apt to produce so much confusion, or indeed to lift up confusion itself as the political constitution and the form which cognition ought to take" (*PR* § 270 A). Hegel accepts the claim that religion constitutes the foundation of the state, but the key to grasping his views on the relation between religion and the state lies in properly interpreting this statement. Despite his concern to ground the state in appeals to reason, Hegel provides religion with a more expansive role in social and political life than does much modern Western reflection on religion and politics. He attributes to religion and religious institutions a major role in shaping character and dispositions. Though philosophy can express spirit more adequately than religion can, Hegel credits religion with a decisive influence on the formation of our initial feelings and attitudes toward others, society, and political life. While he views religion's institutional manifestations in the community as vital to an adequate conception of religion, in the present context he stresses religion's role in shaping consciousness rather than its institutional manifestations and focuses on "religion" rather than "the Church." Thus, in considering religion's function with respect to the state, the decisive point concerns the way in which religion shapes our deepest convictions on topics broadly relevant to the political order.[2]

In unfolding the significance of this claim, Hegel offers an account of the relation between religion and the state directly pertinent to contemporary

[1] The two most valuable treatments of Hegel on religion and the state are Franco 1999, 296–306 and Jaeschke 1981, 127–45. Also helpful are Dallmayr 1993, 140–2; Fackenheim 1967, 270–2; and Hodgson 2005, 195–7. Even in these treatments, the crucial role of religiously formed convictions and dispositions is largely overlooked; Franco presents the most important exception to this trend. More generally, religion's role in the state has been discussed surprisingly little in the scholarship on Hegel's political thought; for examples, see Avineri 1972; Hardimon 1994; Kolb 1986, 114; Patten 1999, especially 185 n. 25; and Wood 1990. Perhaps reflecting widespread assumptions about the disappearance of religion from modem public life, recent secondary literature has tended to focus on Hegel's rejection of theocracy and to give religion only a very minor role in his account of the state. Recent changes to our religio-political landscape, however, make Hegel's alternative to either theocracy or a strict separation of religion and the state all the more relevant.

[2] In the present context, I use "intuitions," "convictions," and "dispositions" to refer to prereflective, often inarticulate attitudes, much as Hegel uses *Gesinnung* and *Gemüt*. In the case of "intuition," the immediate context should make clear whether I am using it in this more general sense or as a technical term translating "*Anschauung*."

discussions of religion's role in public life. Against influential views that would radically separate the spheres of religion and politics, Hegel thinks the two are complexly intertwined such that neither should be indifferent to the other. Yet the political relevance of religion cuts both ways: While it justifies faith somehow informing political commitments, it also rejects appeals to faith as adequate justification for actions if these threaten to undermine the state. In viewing religion as making politically relevant claims, he locates it within a broader public conversation. Viewing religious discourse in this way, however, Hegel opens it up to challenge. Religion is not a "conversation stopper," and a simple appeal to conviction—religious or otherwise—does not in itself count as a substantial reason.[3] Given the intricacy of his view, Hegel is impossible to locate in today's conventional categories of liberal, conservative, or communitarian, but rather challenges all sides in the discussion.

Hegel's subtle understanding of this relationship flows from the underlying account of the commonalities as well as differences between religion and the state. Consequently, grasping Hegel's view requires beginning from an adequate account of these two notions. Only then can we examine what follows for understanding the relation between them. I conclude by beginning to explore the contribution Hegel's thought can make to our contemporary discussions.

THE STATE AS THE ACTUALIZATION OF SPIRIT

The preceding chapters have set out Hegel's conception of religion as an interrelated complex of feelings, representations, rituals, and other social practices that express and mold a consciousness of spirit—which is ultimately grasped as our own essence. Concern with the relation of religion and the state highlights two features of this account: First, religion is closely connected to feeling, and feeling is understood as bearing cognitive content. Second, our earliest and frequently deepest intuitions about the absolute are generally those formed through participation in the practices of a religious community. Religion thus has a crucial pedagogical function.

While practices are integral to Hegel's account of religion, they gain their significance from their role in molding and expressing consciousness. Hegel's vision of the state, by contrast, emphasizes the expression of spirit not only in consciousness but also in actual, existing political institutions. The state is thus a very different manifestation of spirit, but a manifestation of spirit nonetheless. Because spirit is self-conscious, we can equally say that spirit is actualized

[3] I refer here to Richard Rorty 1999, 168–74. Rorty subsequently modified his view on this matter; see Rorty 2003, 148–9.

in the state or that our consciousness of spirit is actualized in the state. Unpacking the language of spirit, we can say that Hegel understands the state not merely as a collection of laws and political entities, but as an expression of a collective sense of who we are and what matters to us. A vital state gives actuality to our deepest convictions—whether these are articulate or not—of who we are. Our being agents with a free will, for instance, is expressed in laws, such as those concerning freedom of expression or the right to vote, that engender and support this freedom. Who we are is objectified in the political institutions we construct to shape our common life. To view the state in purely mechanistic terms or as merely instrumental to the protection of life and property is to fail to see this deeper significance. Groups with different conceptions of themselves will generate different kinds of states. In the *Philosophy of Right* and the corresponding lectures, for instance, Hegel takes it as his task to describe the state that is expressive of the conception of spirit that has emerged in post-Enlightenment, post-Napoleonic Europe.[4]

To claim that the state is based on our conception of who we are is to view it as based on that which is the object of and expressed in religion. In other words, that which is actualized in the state is precisely what spirit has before it as an object of consciousness in religion as well as in philosophy. As Hegel states, "the Idea as [it is] in religion is spirit in the innerness of disposition; but it is the same Idea that appears, in the state, as worldliness, that in knowing and willing gives itself existence, actuality" (*Rph V* 732).[5] That which religion holds in representation and the dispositions cultivated through ritual is that which the state actualizes in structures of the political world. Thus, "it is philosophical insight which recognizes that Church and state are not opposed to each other as far as their content is concerned, which is truth and rationality, but merely differ in form" (*PR* § 270 A). This commonality—their expressing the same Idea—provides the basis for the close connection between religion and the state. While Hegel's claim here draws upon major elements of his elaborate philosophical system, the point can also be put in less specifically Hegelian and less controversial (though not uncontroversial) language: At their best, states should actualize our views about who and what we are—which are also a central topic of religious belief.

To grasp this point properly, it is essential to note that Hegel's state must be understood not only as the laws and institutions themselves but also as encompassing the practices, consciousness, and dispositions of citizens that

[4] See *PR* §§ 1–4.

[5] Or, even more emphatically, "[u]niversally speaking, religion and the foundation of the state are one and the same—they are implicitly and explicitly identical" (*VPR* 1:339). See also *Enz.* § 552 A (page 355/283). The *Encyclopaedia* discussion stresses the sense in which a particular conception of spirit appears in religion before it is actualized in a state. On this point, see Theunissen 1970, 84–5.

are necessary to enliven it.[6] In light of his concern with individual freedom, Hegel holds that no matter how ideal the state's institutions actually are, we are not free if we think of the state as being opposed to our freedom. This concern with individual freedom necessitates a profound concern with individuals' attitudes or dispositions toward the state. Hegel's attention to citizens' dispositions toward the state must be viewed in relation to this concern with individual freedom; otherwise Hegel appears to be requiring citizens to think favorably of the state. Hegel's political thought has often been understood in such terms, but to do so is to ignore a fundamental feature of his attempt to articulate a modern conception of freedom. I can be fully free only in a state in which I find my "*right* to . . . *subjective determination*" fulfilled (*PR* § 153).[7] Consequently, Hegel's point here does not suggest blind obedience. For such a positive attitude toward the state to be as deeply grounded and rational as possible—rather than based in mere idolatry of the state or a dangerous nationalism—it must be based in recognizing the state as expressive of who we are.

While this general disposition toward the state is necessary for subjective freedom to have its place within the modern state, it is also essential to the functioning of the state itself. This attitude is best understood in terms of the broad commitment to its ideals that is necessary for citizens to participate in good faith rather than either withdrawing from participation or participating cynically. Good laws alone are insufficient. Rather, "two elements, conviction *[Gesinnung]* and the formal constitution [i.e. a rational system of law], are inseparable and mutually indispensable" (*VPR* 1:346; see also *VPG* 531/449). Hegel explicitly rejects what he sees as a modern notion that a constitution can be self-sustaining. To take a concrete example, if voters do not believe in—one is tempted to say, have faith in—the electoral process, no degree of perfection in its laws will make a state an effectively functioning democracy. When the appropriate dispositions are lacking, even the best laws are merely "rotten bulwarks," incapable of supporting and sustaining themselves (*Enz.* § 552 A [page 361/288]). Without such attitudes not only will individuals not be fully free; the state's institutions will soon become moribund and collapse. Both freedom and a functioning state can only be achieved where at least a substantial portion of the citizenry finds itself committed to the broad range of social practices that gives life to the state's political institutions.

[6] See Lewis 2005, 135–61.

[7] While Hegel is still often thought of as disinterested in this kind of freedom, recent scholarship has been emphatic about its role in his thought. See, for instance, Avineri 1972, 178–9; Hardimon 1994, 166; Neuhouser 2000, 82–113; Patten 1999, 190–3; and Tunick 1992, 91. My discussion of Hegel's view of the state draws extensively on their work as well as on my discussion in Lewis 2005, 135–85.

THE DIFFERENCE FORM MAKES

Hegel's conceptions of religion and the state have tremendous consequences for how he understands the proper relation between them. Because religion expresses our consciousness of spirit, and that consciousness is actualized in the state, religion can be said to be the foundation of the state. Thus, Hegel can claim that "in itself the state is based on religion, arises from the principle of religion" (*Rph VI* 646; see also *Rph V* 730). Moreover, "it is within this relationship [between the religious consciousness of the absolute and everything else] that the state, laws, and duties all receive their highest endorsement as far as the consciousness is concerned" (*PR* § 270 A; see also *VPR* 1:339–40). While the definitive justification for these institutions comes from philosophy, religious views provide important support for them.[8] Such claims quickly raise the specter of religious authoritarianism. In the *Philosophy of Right* as well as throughout the lectures he delivers on this material, however, Hegel consistently argues against any notion that this priority justifies theocracy. Understanding why this relation between religion and the state does not justify theocracy requires appreciating the difference in the forms in which spirit is expressed in religion and the state.

Particularly in these discussions, Hegel emphasizes the interior manifestations of religion: "Religion is the relation to the absolute *in the form of feeling, representation, and faith,* and within its all-embracing center, everything is merely accidental and transient" (*PR* § 270 A). Even though religious consciousness is also expressed in ritual practices and actual communities, such as churches, its most distinctive moment lies within consciousness. Religion's connection to self-consciousness and cognition stands in stark contrast with the actuality of the state: "The state presents the actuality of the will; in religion the Idea is as a relationship of the heart, of disposition *[Gemüths]*" (*Rph V* 734–5).[9]

While the difference between the expression of spirit in representations and its objective actualization in the world is one crucial difference in form, another difference is equally important. Having its center in feelings and representations, religion lacks the determinacy necessary to effectively structure worldly institutions. Religion can shape our deepest feelings and dispositions, but these do not have the specificity to determine the structure of a constitution. Such structures are essential to the state, which "is the divine will as present spirit, *unfolding* as the actual shape and *organization of a world*"

[8] On the ultimate justification deriving from philosophy, see *VPR* 1:345.

[9] Walter Jaeschke expresses this point particularly clearly: "Religion is the foundation, but *only* the foundation and not the substance, of the ethical life. It contains indeed the 'deepest confirmation,' but only 'as the inward, abstract side' which is merely added to the ethical relationships of the 'actual rationality' of the state" (1981, 131).

(*PR* § 270 A). Though the state's primary manifestation is as an actuality—an existence in institutions—these structures must also be known, be objects of cognition. This ordering must be in thought, not merely in feeling and representations. The state therefore also has a kind of doctrine of its own: "the state, too, has its doctrines, for its institutions and whatever it recognizes as valid in relation to right, to the constitution, etc. are present essentially in the form of *thought* as law" (*PR* § 270 A). This form provides the articulation necessary to determine the specific laws and institutions necessary for a functioning state: "The state has to lay out its Idea in members *[Glieder]*; these are particular spheres and have their determination comprehended in laws, i.e. in the universal" (*Rph III* 217). The difference in form between religion and the state, then, concerns not only the worldly, actual existence of the state vis-à-vis the relative interiority of religious consciousness but also the difference between feeling and representation in religion and thought in the state. Religious commitments on their own are simply too imprecise to tell us how to structure a government. Thought provides the articulation and determinacy that are inadequately developed in feeling and representation.

This lack of determinacy—the generality of religious representations—explains the dangers Hegel sees in trying to actualize religion directly in the political sphere. One danger of misconstruing the relation between religion and the state lies in seeking to find specificity and determinacy in religion by basing the legal code on specific religious commandments. Purportedly literal readings of the Bible, for instance, could be seen as warrants for banning same-sex marriage. For Hegel, however, such a hermeneutic typically misrecognizes the character of religious expression, treating religious language as something other than representation. Allegories are read "literally" rather than symbolically. Although Hegel takes religious doctrine very seriously, to interpret it in this literalistic manner is to fail to grasp the representational character of religious language. Interestingly, while this may appear to be one of the more pressing dangers of linking religion and politics today, it is not one about which Hegel worries.

Instead, Hegel highlights a complementary danger. If religious feelings and representations cannot on their own generate particular institutions or laws, all such fixed arrangements will tend to appear as opposed to these feelings and representations. In this case, the effort to base the government solely on these religious commitments will destabilize and undermine the state as a whole:

> The religious standpoint generally has the form of enveloping subjectivity over against the unfurled *[entfaltete]* Idea, the objective world. When the religious seeks to assert its form against objectivity, against the state, those inverted appearances emerge. The religious shows itself here primarily as a negative; it is idealistic against the systematization of different spheres and determinations.

> When the religious principle asserts itself in this manner, it becomes fanaticism. This can contain a high content in itself, but the fanatical insists on that negative direction. All existing distinction perishes therein. (*Rph III* 217–8)

Attempting to make religious subjectivity objective has a purely negative effect; the finitude of particular laws appears at odds with the indeterminacy of abstract subjectivity and therefore must be taken down: "Should piety obtain as the actuality of the state, all laws are thrown out and subjective feeling makes the law" (*Rph V* 739).[10] Hegel sees this having taken place historically when the Anabaptists took control of Münster in the sixteenth century, and he compares it to the Terror of the French Revolution, which he also—and more famously—discusses in terms of the attempt to actualize a vision of freedom at odds with the finitude intrinsic to the form of law. Religion's form is neither suited nor adequate to determine a political order.

CULTIVATING POLITICAL DISPOSITIONS

Being unable to determine directly the shape of political institutions, however, does not render religion politically irrelevant. Its role as the state's foundation does have political consequences. While religion may not write the constitution, it is one of the principal forces informing citizens' dispositions in relation to the state: "religion is that moment which integrates the state at the deepest level of the disposition" of its citizens (*PR* § 270 A). Religious background frequently shapes our deepest attitudes and intuitions regarding matters directly relevant to the state. Religions may cultivate views about human freedom and the dignity of the individual, for instance, that are also directly relevant to political life and actualized in a constitution: "The expressions, teachings of a religious content—especially insofar as principles of the will, of action, are articulated therein—immediately meet up with [the concerns of] the state" (*Rph III* 220).[11] Taken together with the essential role of dispositions in sustaining the state, this point entails that,

> it is vain to delude ourselves with the abstract and empty assumption that the individuals will act only according to the letter or meaning of the law, and not in the spirit of their religion where their inmost conscience and supreme obligation lies . . . [E]ven though backed by penalties and externally introduced, they [laws]

[10] *Rph V* provides a longer discussion of fanaticism on 736ff.

[11] Hegel is explicit that these are not two different dispositions, one religious and the other ethical (*Enz.* § 552 A [pages 355–6/283–4]).

> could offer no lasting resistance to the contradictions and attacks of the religious spirit. (*Enz.* § 552 A [page 360/287])

That is, if a society's legal institutions are fundamentally at odds with the population's deepest intuitions on relevant matters—many of which will be formed by religious training—these legal institutions will not long survive. Religion plays an essential role in constituting the dispositions and convictions that sustain a state by enabling citizens to view it as expressive of who they are. Although views on these matters are also expressed in philosophy, our deepest intuitions regarding them are often formed at an early age by religious instruction and practice.

Religion does not, for Hegel, tell us how to write particular laws, but informs our subjective attitudes toward the state's central ideals. This function is apparent from the location of Hegel's discussion of religion and the state. In the *Philosophy of Right* and the lectures based on this work, it comes in the preliminary material in Hegel's discussion of constitutional law (which is arguably the main section of the treatment of the state). In these paragraphs, Hegel is considering the subjective aspect of the state, the "political *disposition* [Gesinnung]" of its citizens—their consciousness of and attitude toward the state (*PR* § 267). Here the subjective side of the state comes forth. Hegel is addressing individuals' relations to and attitudes toward political institutions rather than the institutions themselves. As seen above, a conception of the state must include this kind of consideration of the broader context of attitudes and practices that provide a necessary background to an effectively functioning set of political institutions. Moreover, in order for individual freedom to be respected, citizens must be able to see their own interests expressed in the state. The state must be known by its citizens to be an expression of their own spirit; otherwise these citizens are not free in it. Then, Hegel's remark on this paragraph begins with the claim that "[t]his is the point at which we must touch on *the state's relation to religion*" (*PR* § 270 A). The issue at hand when Hegel comes to discuss religion and the state, then, is citizens' attitudes toward the state. Religion's role with respect to the state lies in the cultivation of this consciousness toward the state.

In the lectures Hegel makes this role in cultivating dispositions more concrete by mentioning at least briefly particular religions. Hegel here points to the way in which religions shape broader views about who we are, which are then reflected in our political organizations. He credits Protestantism, for instance, with prizing individual freedom:

> Abstractly considered, the principle of the Protestant spirit is the freedom of subjective spirit in itself—that the spirit of the human being is free, that the spirit of the human being must be present if it is to be valid for him, that no authority stands . . . This is also the principle of the state generally, that the human being

exist and act in his freedom and that the state be nothing other than the actualization of the freedom of the human being. (*Rph VI* 650)[12]

When appropriately grasped, what Protestantism yields for political life is a central concern with subjective freedom—not a legal system based in biblical injunctions. By cultivating an appreciation of individual freedom and autonomy, Protestantism can instill in citizens an appreciation for and respect toward a political order that instantiates such freedom. Hegel views the modern state as providing such freedom and thus sees his version of Lutheranism as uniquely capable of supporting such a state.[13] Crucially, Protestantism cannot, on its own, determine the political structures that will instantiate this freedom; the associated religious representations and feelings are too general to do that work. Hegel believes, however, that a Protestant milieu will be conducive to the emergence of such a state, and insofar as the state does express this freedom, Protestantism can contribute to a commitment to its central projects.

By contrast, a religion that does not conceive of individual freedom in this way will support a different kind of state. Hegel mentions Islam as an example: "But so much is clear: a Mohammedan state must be entirely other than a Christian state; other principles follow from the Christian religion than from Mohammedanism . . . and an entirely different political life emerges from the evangelical religion than from the Catholic" (*Rph VI* 646). Hegel discusses at length why, in his view, Catholicism does not cultivate the convictions and inclinations necessary to support a modern, free state. Dominated by "unfree, unspiritual, and superstitious relations," Catholicism misjudges the most basic freedom of spirit and therefore undermines right, justice, and political freedom (*Enz.* § 552 A [page 357/285]; see also *VPG* 531–5/449–53). Since the state expresses a conception of spirit, different conceptions of spirit will result in different political institutions and laws.

One can accept this more general point—that different intuitions about who we are will support different political structures—without accepting Hegel's frequently monolithic treatments of particular traditions. Twentieth-century developments in Catholicism, for instance, have shown the way in which the Catholic tradition can develop so that it comes to provide powerful support to democratic institutions. Many thinkers have sought to do much the same with Islam. Conversely, Protestantism both past and present affords many

[12] Regarding the relationship between Protestantism and the emphasis on subjective freedom, see also *VPR* 1:344, as well as Neuhouser 2000, 232–5; Jaeschke 1981, 133–7; and Jaeschke 1990, 262.

[13] "This relationship has come about in Protestant states and it can occur only in such states, for in them the unity of religion and the state is present. The laws of the state have both a rational and a divine validity due to this presupposed original harmony, and religion does not have its own principles that conflict with those that are valid in the state" (*VPR* 1:341). For the most helpful discussion of Hegel's account of the relation between Protestantism and the modern state, see Jaeschke 1981, 136–40.

examples of groups who have understood their faith to be at odds with a broadly liberal state.

RESPONDING TO RELIGIOUS CHALLENGES

The potential concordance, however, simultaneously indicates the possibility of discord. Within any given state, some religious groups may cultivate dispositions at odds with the state. As Hegel puts it, "state and Church are at this point either in direct *agreement* or in direct *opposition*" (*PR* § 270 A). The Quakers provide Hegel's most interesting example of this possibility, because he sees a refusal of military service as constituting a withdrawal from the state. Hegel views such groups as a significant challenge to the state. They therefore place in relief the question of how the modern state should respond to religious groups that cultivate dispositions at odds with the state's guiding ideas.

Hegel's grappling with this issue is one of the most fascinating aspects of his view of the relation between religion and the state. Though religion should play a vital role in supporting the attitudes that are necessary for the state to function, Hegel does not think this necessarily justifies the state enforcing a religion. Because he attributes to religion such an important role in cultivating appropriate dispositions toward the state, he writes that "the state ought even to require all its citizens to belong to such a community" (*PR* § 270 A). Yet he continues, "but to any community they please, for the state can have no say in the content [of religious belief] in so far as this relates to the internal dimension of representational thought." Out of concern for the subjective or individual freedom discussed above, Hegel seeks to preserve autonomy for religious belief in relation to the state: "the state must on the whole assert the formal right of self-consciousness to its own insight and conviction, and in general to thoughts concerning what should count as objective truth" (*PR* § 270 A). A state that does not respect this freedom of conviction fails to incorporate the element of subjective freedom that Hegel takes to be integral to modernity. Thus, "the state cannot exist without the disposition of its citizens for it, but what it can require as a duty is another matter" (*Rph V* 735–6). Even the vital role of dispositions toward the state—in which religion is often crucial—does not justify compelling belief: "The church demands the heart, but if the church demands this through the state, imposes punishments, it becomes a tyrannical religion" (*Rph V* 736). To seek to impose religious belief is to become tyrannical.

Nonetheless, religious doctrines can come into conflict with the "doctrine" of the state—as in the case of a group that rejects the notion of taxes. In such cases,

> the attitude of the state towards *opining*—in so far as it is merely opinion, a subjective content which therefore has no true inner force and power, however grandiose its claims—is on the one hand one of infinite indifference . . . But on the other hand, when these opinions based on bad principles give themselves a universal existence which undermines actuality, the state must protect objective truth and the principle of ethical life. (*PR* § 270 A)

Views—religious or otherwise—that appear to challenge the state only become a genuine concern when the challenge becomes significant. Only then might worry about which intuitions are being cultivated outweigh respecting individual conscience. Hegel develops this point in relation to the Quakers with what some might call vagueness but I would call subtlety: the appropriate response depends on the strength of the state and the scale of the challenge. "A state which is strong because its organization is fully developed can adopt a more liberal attitude in this respect, and may completely overlook individual matters which might affect it, or even tolerate communities whose religion does not recognize even their direct duties towards the state (although this naturally depends on the numbers concerned)" (*PR* § 270 A). What Hegel calls for is practical judgment.

How the state should ideally treat groups—religious and otherwise—that cultivate dispositions inimical to a commitment to the state depends on the particular context. Where the actions in question do not threaten the state, they should be tolerated. Thus, immediately after the passage just quoted, Hegel recommends that groups such as Quakers substitute other forms of public service for military service. Yet the concern with the actual threat presented suggests that in cases where such action threatens the state, the state would be justified in taking more active measures to force compliance with its laws, even if this involved going against the religious views of some of its citizens: "the state retains the right and form of self-conscious, objective rationality, the right to enforce the latter and defend it against assertions based on the *subjective* form of truth, no matter what *assurances* and *authority* this truth may carry with it" (*PR* § 270 A).

Particularly given Hegel's reputation as an authoritarian, such language raises fears about the state oppressing religious groups. While such fears should be taken seriously, fundamental elements of Hegel's view share more with our contemporary practices than it might initially appear. In requiring children to learn about claims of human equality that many see expressed in documents such the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution, for instance, boards of education effectively limit parents' ability to shelter their children from such ideas, regardless of whether parents base their claims in religious views. The state—in this case a board of education—decides that the need to provide future voters with a familiarity with central ideas expressed in our political order may trump parents' claims to religious freedom. Note that even in requiring familiarity with these principles, the state is not necessarily trying to force all students to believe the principles. Children

should be exposed to them and see the ways in which our government has sought to express them—as well as failed to live up to them—but there need be no goal of compelling consciences to accept them. Nor need such instruction preclude criticism of either these principles or the state's history of trying to actualize them. Exactly what such educational requirements should be, what exceptions might be granted, and so forth will ultimately be a matter of practical judgment, to be negotiated and revised over time.

Our contemporary practice on this issue seems to share much with the approach Hegel calls for. Indeed, Hegel may articulate commitments implicit in our practices more effectively than much of our contemporary public rhetoric does. A concern to expose future voters to central ideas on which the state is based could trump some citizens' freedom to raise their children according to their own religious views. Such decisions are not to be made lightly. Hegel's extended discussion of the issue emphasizes the gravity of impinging on religious conscience. Nevertheless, when fundamental political issues are at stake, some kind of compulsion, as in the case of mandatory school enrollment, may be justified. Simply appealing to religious convictions is not an absolute trump card—for Hegel or in our society today.

HEGEL AND CONTEMPORARY CONVERSATIONS

Hegel's analysis of religion and the state stresses that the background views contained in our basic attitudes and dispositions matter to the health of a political body. These often largely unconscious intuitions about individuality, justice, and our capacity for freedom engender very different attitudes toward the state itself. Political discussions therefore need to be concerned with not only institutions and other "existing" forms of the state but also the subjective attitudes of citizens and how these are inculcated. In a functional state, basic institutions must be understood, at least in part, as expressions of the commitments that much of the citizenry possesses in its dispositions and intuitions.[14] Engaging such convictions appropriately is essential both for individuals to be able to find themselves free in the state and for individuals to support the state enough for it to survive. As a preliminary step toward bringing Hegel into the contemporary discussion, I would like to conclude by briefly suggesting three ways in which Hegel's position might bear on today's debates.

Hegel's first significant contribution to current discussions of religion and politics concerns how we approach our public discourse. Hegel eschews views

[14] This point highlights the Hegelian background to Jeffrey Stout's *Democracy and Tradition,* in which he draws attention to the background practices and commitments necessary to animate a democratic polity. See Stout 2004, 6–7, 19–29, 192–8, and 270–86.

that would have our most essential debates take place in terms of a "public reason" that does not require appealing to our most comprehensive views.[15] Instead, engaging in public discourse should involve seeking to express our deepest commitments in a language that does not presuppose any authority as unquestionable. In Hegel's terminology, they should be transformed into the form of discourse that he associates with thought. No claims can function as simple givens, impervious to challenge.

While Hegel's complete picture relies upon his account of the relation between representation and thought, even those who do not accept his most robust claims might admit a crucial feature of this picture: once the discussion moves into the public sphere, simply appealing to religious authority is not in itself an effective means of persuading members of the audience who do not share that religious conception. Assuming we are at least minimally committed to engaging fellow citizens in dialogue, we are therefore pushed to articulate justifications for our positions that do not make such appeals (or to justify these appeals themselves). Religion is thereby brought into a dialogical process in which religion need not and should not function as a "conversation stopper." It may rather be a conversation starter that leads to efforts to justify claims with arguments that do not just appeal to religious authority. Though some members of religious traditions may fear that expressing their religious commitments in language that does not presuppose the authority of their canon amounts to rejecting their tradition, we should not take this outcome for granted. I take the question of the outcome to be in significant respects an empirical question.

[15] Of course, I have in mind here John Rawls's treatment of public reason, particularly in *Political Liberalism* and subsequent writings. While Rawls does not entirely exclude religious and other comprehensive doctrines from such public discussions and hopes that they will support public reason, he develops a notion of public reason as "freestanding" and capable of being "expounded apart from, or without any reference to" comprehensive views; see Rawls 1993, 12. In "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited," he makes this point in arguing that these political conceptions "can be presented independently from comprehensive doctrines of any kind (although they may, of course, be supported by a reasonable overlapping consensus of such doctrines);" see Rawls 1999, 143. In this essay he also allows a greater role for comprehensive doctrines in public discourse through the notion of the proviso: "reasonable comprehensive doctrines, religious or nonreligious, may be introduced in public political discussion at any time, provided that in due course proper political reasons—and not reasons given solely by comprehensive doctrines—are presented that are sufficient to support whatever the comprehensive doctrines introduced are said to support" (1999, 152). Nonetheless, the ideal of public reason as freestanding remains in place and differentiates Rawls from Hegel. In relating Hegel to Rawls, it is essential to stress that whereas Rawls draws a distinction between public reason, on one hand, and private reasons based in comprehensive doctrines (which may or may not be religious), the contrast I have been working with in Hegel lies between different modes of expression of comprehensive doctrines (religious v. philosophical expressions). Thus, Hegel's grappling with religion's role in public discourse already presupposes a role for comprehensive doctrines that Rawls is concerned to limit. Despite this contrast, however, we can see them both striving to enable citizens to express religious and other comprehensive commitments in terms that do not presuppose as unquestionable authorities that are not accepted by other members of society. I am grateful to John P. Reeder, Jr. for his insightful suggestions on this matter.

Though much remains to be said on this matter, I would suggest that Hegel encourages us to attempt such arguments rather than presuppose they will fail.

Second, despite his linking of religiously informed views to politics, Hegel's distinction between representation and thought offers one strategy for making this connection without calling for theocracy. For while religion shapes dispositions corresponding to a broad orientation, it should not, for Hegel, determine specific laws. Arguments about the legal definition of marriage, for instance, should not be based simply on appeals to biblical evidence; for Hegel, to do so is to misconstrue the character of religious language. This is one of the points at which Hegel parts company with many who would give religion a greater role in the public sphere. Hegel suggests we need to be wary of those who would move too quickly from religious claims to public policy.[16]

Interestingly, in linking religion to public life in this manner, Hegel suggests that it is most relevant in relation the most fundamental aspects of our political order, not in relation to particular policies. In John Rawls's language, it concerns the "basic structure" of society, its "main political, social, and economic institutions and how they fit together into one unified system of social cooperation from one generation to the next."[17] Whereas Rawls is most concerned to regulate religion's role in the determination of society's basic structure, Hegel holds it is precisely here that religion is most relevant. For Hegel, a state only functions well when most citizens' basic dispositions or prereflective intuitions support the conception of who we are presupposed by its basic structures. Political life needs grounding in and must be expressive of "comprehensive" views.[18] This position entails a significant role for religion precisely because religious traditions often play a decisive role in the formation of these intuitions.[19] Engaging in public discourse involves articulating and bringing to consciousness the convictions and presuppositions instilled in us by religious and other forms of cultivation.

Finally, Hegel provides us with analytic tools to articulate why certain religious views do pose challenges to political institutions that many of us hold dear. Insofar as we are committed to a broadly democratic state, we have reason to be concerned about groups that cultivate dispositions at odds with basic principles of this kind of state. In thinking about such groups, we will be

[16] Here I have in mind not only the most vocal Christian conservatives but also thinkers such as Stanley Hauerwas; see Hauerwas 2001.

[17] Rawls 1993, 11; see also 257–88.

[18] To be sure, Rawls himself intends for citizens to "view the political conception as derived from, or congruent with, or at least not in conflict with, their other values," but he wants the political conception of justice to be "freestanding," rather than "comprehensive" (1993, 11–12). See also note 15 above.

[19] Though Hegel at times suggests that only religion can play this role, there are reasons to believe that other forms of civic education might be able to play this role as well. I return to this issue in the conclusion.

looking not at "religions" or "traditions" but at much smaller groups within broader traditions. It is essential to stress that labels such as "evangelical" are far too broad to be helpful in this context. Where Hegel worried about the kind of state that Catholicism and Islam could support, the experiences of pluralism and religious transformation since Hegel's time—as well as probably before him—strongly suggest that more religious traditions (and some we might conventionally refer to as nonreligious) have the capacity to support modern democratic regimes than Hegel could have imagined. If we focus closely on the way that Hegel conceives of religion as cultivating our intuitions, we can learn from Hegel today without concluding that religious pluralism is intrinsically a challenge to the state.[20] With this qualification in mind, we can still learn how some groups do pose important challenges to the political order. Hegel is particularly helpful in indicating the challenges without presupposing the state should take legal action against them. Concretely, focusing on the early formation of attitudes and dispositions reminds us how seriously we should take discussions of civic education, especially when religious groups seek to educate their children in their own schools. With further analysis, we might locate a significant aspect of Hegel's contemporary "bite" in claims about what standards for civic education should be required of all children. For these and other discussions, what we need, and what Hegel can help us to develop, is language to explain just what is at stake—why such groups threaten to undermine commitments that many of us hold dear.

[20] I therefore attribute to Hegel greater contemporary relevance on this issue than does Paul Franco 1999, 307.

Conclusion

Throughout his lifetime, Hegel struggled to elaborate a conception of religion that could provide cohesion for a rapidly transforming, frequently fragmenting modern society. Hegel's quest for a modern *Volksreligion*, or civil religion, is not the singular motive of his work; but it is integral to grasping his religious thought as well as his broader engagement with the new social order he saw emerging. While the goal persisted, the resources and approaches Hegel brought to bear, as well as the conclusions he drew, shifted greatly. Through the 1790s he experimented with a number of strategies—first more Kantian, subsequently more romantic—for grounding a vision of religion as binding the social order together. Convinced by the failure of each of these attempts, he concluded that the only adequate basis for overcoming this fragmentation lay in a theoretical philosophy that could overcome dualism at the most profound level. For this he turned to post-Kantian idealism.

Although he began this turn at the beginning of the new century, its ultimate fruits for the problem of social cohesion first became fully apparent in his 1827 lectures on the philosophy of religion. By then Hegel was able to elaborate a complex account of religion that addresses these social concerns without rendering religion merely instrumental. He could see religion as providing an authentic expression of what matters most—of what is divine—and, by instilling these convictions in the population as a whole, bonding together a modern social order. The strategy seeks to grasp the truth of Christian doctrine by appreciating the representations for what they are: metaphorical and narrative expressions of the absolute. They mislead if—but only if—they are taken to be in tension with the philosophical expressions of the same content. Despite the superiority Hegel ascribes to philosophy relative to religion—in that the former's form is more adequate to the content—he sees his account as defending the genuine content of religious doctrines in a way that even many of religion's supposed defenders do not. Philosophy validates the religious representations. The result is a philosophical justification of religion in the modern world.

Hegel thus offers an account of religion that combines attention to belief as well as to practices, to religion's object and content as well as to its social

function. He defines religion in terms of its object, its principal mode of cognition, and the communal practices through which it cultivates a consciousness of its object. While the object of religion is integral to this conception, this object is initially defined in terms of what the religion takes to be of absolute significance. This aspect of his project provides a heuristically valuable frame for the interpretation of practices as religious. Yet Hegel's conception of religion is more than heuristic. He makes substantive claims about the ultimate meaning and value of these practices: the highest form of religion, the consummate religion, grasps this object as spirit and thus as our own essence. What this object is explicitly, however—what people take it to be—varies by the religion: "[t]he representation people have of God corresponds to the representation they have of themselves, of their freedom" (*VPR* 2:140 n.). Thus, though one can say that for Hegel spirit is the object of all religion, this does not entail that something is not religion because its object is not grasped as spirit. In this regard, what matters is simply that its object is what is taken to be absolute.

In the account of representation's relation to thinking, Hegel offers a powerful argument—based in his theory of cognition—that the content of religion can be expressed philosophically as well. The content of religious feelings as well as representations can be raised to thought. Religion does not involve a mode of cognition or experience fundamentally different from other spheres of life. Claims that it does depend upon claims about cognition that, Hegel argues, fall into contradiction. In working through such proposals from his own contemporaries, Hegel offers arguments no less relevant to conceptions still circulating widely today. For Hegel, religion is not fundamentally other to philosophy—or to politics.

Despite this attention to religion's object and the modes of cognition involved, Hegel simultaneously emphasizes religion's practical aspects. His treatment of the religious community or cultus not only makes religious practices integral to the conception of religion but also attributes to these practices an essential role in cultivating the consciousness of the absolute that is given expression in representations. Learning the content of a religion is a matter of habituating the body as well as the mind. This account builds upon Hegel's earlier conception of the complex interconnections between the intelligence and the will, and it undergirds his account of the important role of religious practices and institutions in the formation of individual subjects.

Rather than reducing the essence of religion to a single element, Hegel interweaves distinct elements into a complex conception. He can be seen as anticipating the recent turn to practice in religious studies scholarship, and he does so without swerving to the opposite extreme and abandoning attention

to consciousness and the content of beliefs.[1] Viewed in relation to the history of the study of religion, Hegel's account of religion stands out in relation to others that emerged concurrently. Conceptions that identify religion's essence with a faith or belief conceived in principally interior terms have subtly but profoundly shaped not only wider discourse on religion but also the academic study of religion itself. It is these views that have drawn accusations that the Western study of religion has been skewed by unconscious Protestant presuppositions about the nature of religion. Hegel's account of religion offers a powerful alternative to those that have garnered so much attention in recent scholarship. In doing so, it reveals a vibrant debate among Protestants over just these issues. Generalizations about the intrinsically private character of Protestant notions of religion overlook and conceal this contestation over the category of religion.

At the heart of Hegel's defense of religion, then, is his reconceptualization of it. In part for this reason, some may not recognize the result as "religion." God is ultimately no transcendent being, and mystery is overcome through the transformation of religious representation into philosophical thought. For some, Hegel appears to sacrifice religion in order to save it. Hegel's extensive response to such objections—which he anticipates in his lectures—involves his entire project. He critiques the coherence of alternative conceptions of religion; incorporates elements of these views into his own more encompassing conception; and argues that once one moves to the level of arbitrating what is essential to the representations, one has already moved to the level of thought (and that such conceptions cannot hold up to thought). In short, the first Hegelian response to such objections is to argue that the proposed alternative collapses under the weight of its own contradictions. Although there is no generic form of this response, over the course of the *Lectures* Hegel develops criticisms of this sort against a wide range of challengers. In a broader perspective, interrogating Hegel's conception of religion in this manner also places in relief our own presuppositions about the meaning of the term. It again highlights that Hegel was writing and lecturing at a moment when the concept itself was being dramatically renegotiated.

While some will be dissatisfied with this defense of religion, it is by no means an impoverished account. Hegel has reason to see himself offering a robust conception of religion. In unpacking this conception, we have also seen that the post-Kantian readings of Hegel's project need not ignore or downplay Hegel's philosophy of religion. Nor must they be understood as anachronistically imposing contemporary philosophical prejudices on Hegel's work. To the contrary, this interpretation of Hegel's response to post-Kantian idealism coheres with locating Hegel in an historical context where religion itself was

[1] Terry Godlove has stressed the danger of abandoning attention to belief altogether (Godlove 2002).

being reconceived. Together, these two elements provide the background for an interpretation of Hegel on religion that both attends to its historical context and discloses its contemporary relevance.

In closing, I would like to briefly consider Hegel's account of religion's endurance in the modern world as well as the open-ended nature of its consummation. These topics raise far larger issues than we can fully consider here, but even a cursory discussion suggests Hegel's continuing relevance to the study of religion. His claim that philosophy can express the genuine content of religion has brought widespread accusations that he—at least when so interpreted—renders religion obsolete. Yet we need not choose between interpretations that make religion a thing of the past and those that do not subordinate representation to thought. To the contrary, attending to the distinct elements of Hegel's account of religion reveals a number of reasons why, even though religion is in some sense subordinate to philosophy, it cannot be replaced by philosophy.

As we have seen, Hegel's attention to the process through which we learn and appropriate attitudes toward the absolute attributes a vital role to religion. Though Hegel envisions churches working in tandem with schools and the home, it is largely through religious practices and representations that we first develop a sense of what matters most, of what is to be treated as divine. According to Hegel's account of cognition, we cannot begin with philosophical thought but must work up to it. This formation plays a critical role in the development of our consciousness and intuitive judgments about social and political life. Religion's pedagogical role cannot be replaced by philosophy.

While some people initially develop a consciousness of the absolute through religious representations but subsequently develop a philosophical grasp of this same content, Hegel holds that only a few will become philosophers in this sense. Religion not only provides a point of entry for all; it also remains the principal way in which most people relate to the absolute. This is one of the reasons that Hegel sees religion providing social cohesion. Despite the limits of the representational form, religion—at least the consummate religion—provides a consciousness of the absolute that enables most people to see the institutions of the modern world as expressive of who we are. While this rationale for religion's ongoing importance is important to Hegel's own thought on the matter, it depends also on the judgment that philosophy is only for a few—with the rest being left with religion.

A further reason for religion's ongoing significance, however, lies in Hegel's account of cognition. Even when we are in a position to express religion's content philosophically, intuition and representation continue to be vital forms of cognition. We do not leave them behind. Moreover, the abstraction from particularity that is integral to Hegel's conception of thought renders it less connected to our emotions. Representation will continue to move and

affect us in a way that philosophy does not. As literature too shows us, we need such imagery and narrative.

While these points suggest that religion will and should continue, they do not entail that just any religion will. Of course, Hegel can acknowledge that a wide range of religions will continue to exist, and new ones will emerge. The pressing question for him, however, concerns whether a religion supports or stands in tension with the emergent social order and related intellectual commitments. Framing the issue in this manner may appear to presuppose a certain commonality if not homogeneity within the modern West. While the North Atlantic world today may display greater diversity than Hegel could have imagined, a crucial difference between the ancient Greek *polis* and a modern *Volksreligion* is that the latter supports and sustains an internal complexity and differentiation that the former could not. Part of Hegel's vision of modern social life is that it can encompass differences. Nonetheless, he does conceive of modern social and intellectual developments as constituting a meta-context from which particular subcommunities will not remain completely isolated. The *Zeitgeist* is pervasive, and even relatively autonomous subcultures will be affected by it. If a religion cannot accommodate itself or adjust to these developments, its lifespan will likely be limited. The tensions between it and other aspects of the way that people live their lives will force it to transform or collapse.

For Hegel, the religion that meaningfully endures in the modern world—that is least threatened by its intellectual, social, and political developments—is the consummate religion, the religion that shapes and expresses a consciousness of ourselves as self-conscious, self-determining spirit. What ultimately matters in this religion, what makes it the consummate religion, is that it expresses this content—more specifically, that it represents spirit as present and self-conscious in the practices of the community. Spirit grasps itself as grasping itself in this religion. Consequently, the conclusion of the philosophy of religion parallels that of the logic. The closure is defined most fundamentally in terms of a self-consciousness or self-transparency; it is religion that has itself for its object.

As Hegel argues at the beginning of Part III, however, the representational form necessarily includes merely positive elements that are contingent or accidental. While a determinate form is necessary for the representations, these particulars are not essential to the content. Indeed, because spirit's free self-determination is intrinsic to the consciousness of the consummate religion, the consummate religion must include a consciousness of the overcoming of what is merely given. The consummate religion, then, must itself express this distinction between its essence and what is merely positive, between its spirit and its letter.

Though Hegel does not highlight the point, the consequences are vast. Most significantly, it entails that Hegel's account of consummation does not

preclude further development of the consummate religion. Since the contingent, merely historical features of Christian representations and practices are not intrinsic to its being the consummate religion, they can in principle transform without ceasing to constitute the consummate religion. Other rituals and representations—if appropriately embedded in the life of a people—might come to express this content equally effectively. The requirement that they be embedded in a way of life—which follows from Hegel's account of the largely unconscious process through which we take them on as children—means that we cannot simply fabricate a new religion from whole cloth. And yet the account of positivity entails that many of the particularities of even the consummate religion are contingent and inessential. Their evolution need not threaten that which makes the religion consummate. In this sense, even the philosophy of religion's conclusion in the consummate religion is an open-ended one.

Finally, viewed from another angle, Hegel's complex account of religion provides tools for exploring just how broadly one might meaningfully think about "religion" with regard to these issues. Hegel's treatment can draw our attention to the significance of practices that are not usually viewed as religious. If what matters in the consummate religion is the cultivation of a consciousness of spirit, the absolute, as present in the community, this also requires representations and practices that function together to express and instill this consciousness. But the representations and practices that play this role may not be the sole domain of institutions focused on "God." This absolute need not be conceived in theistic terms or with this nomenclature. To the contrary, we may find that a broader array of our practices play much the same role. Civic education, for instance, insofar as it is conceived in terms of our understanding of our collective life and not simply obedience to the state apparatus, may serve this function.[2] Recognizing this function suggests that Hegel's analysis of religion is relevant to understanding—and appreciating the significance of—much more than explicitly religious institutions. By drawing attention to the conceptualization of religion in this manner, we can begin to think about the significance of Hegel's philosophy of religion for reflection on social cohesion even in—and perhaps especially in—a contemporary context in which churches and other religious institutions no longer occupy the social position they did in Hegel's day.

[2] Jeffrey Stout's interpretation of American democratic practices can be well understood in these terms (Stout 2004).

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