

# The World as Analogy of Absolute Mind



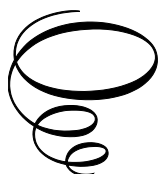
# The World as Analogy of Absolute Mind:

*An Hegelian, Thomist and  
Aristotelico-Platonist Account*

By

Stephen Theron

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“I am alive or rather, not I” (The Apostle Paul, *Galatians* 2: 19b-20).

“The first form of the idea is Life: that is, the idea in the form of immediacy” (Hegel, *Enc.* 215, *Zus.*).

“If there were no analogy of being then all beings would be one” (St. Thomas Aquinas).



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# CHAPTER ONE

## GREY MATTER

Why are we told, in the Gospel, to hate our lives in this world, as a condition for being Christ's true disciple or, in other words, for living rightly, as judged by the highest standard at least? For a clear distinction is made, by Christ, between those to whom it is given to know the secrets on "the kingdom of heaven" and those others, so to say outside or at some distance, who are instructed exclusively in "parables" and, indeed, signs, such as miraculous healings or restoration of this life on earth or, again, in this world.

One answer may seem to be that it is because of the separate finitude of each thing, thus set at loggerheads with God, unless, namely, it is grasped as *within* God or as absorbed conceptually, i.e. not spatially etc., "within" God. What is thus put as within is spirit, spiritual vision, annulling precisely what is visible to the eye, audible or otherwise sensible or, indeed, "felt". One is reminded, has to recall, that God has no eyes, ears, hands and so on, doesn't need them, is himself knowledge, thought, spirit, as condition for knowing and constituting everything supremely, transcendently as we say. Hence the hatred of this "life that is no life at all" (Teresa of Avila) is enjoined, upon those seeking God and thus coming to Christ. So it is due to this infinite difference, however in place. That is, it is because of this, whether or not the situation results uniquely or in some respects from some supposed aboriginal fault or, in that case, such a fault results in turn from a deliberately, as it were perversely abused freedom, or whether the repulsion is a natural consequence of finitude inasmuch as, to cite Aquinas, what can err will, at or after some time, short or long indifferently, thus err and can no other, whether or not, again, this is to be explained as a forfeiture of divine grace. These all seem in fact no explanations, especially the latter, since the erring that St. Thomas speaks of is already a rejection of or a failure to correspond with such grace rather than a sheer perversity of nature as issuing from God's hand.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Note, however, that St. Thomas Aquinas, in first introducing the treatise on grace in his main *Summa*, speaks of it as necessary for Man's attainment of his, in some

We would have next to ask, or we might well ask, whether time itself, as immediately known, is either cause or consequence of the error, or neither of these, the error in the latter case not occurring at some time precisely, as St. Thomas had expressed it, but as part, again, of “the whole idea”, of the Idea or Concept, to speak with Hegel. It is certain, after all, as a matter of logic, that the creation itself did not occur at some particular time in the life of God, as we would then be imagining. Life, Hegel declares, is “only the Idea immediate”, i.e. as first represented (*viventibus esse est vivere*). We might rather have thought it does not belong to the Idea at all. Yet **Life** too as a category is expressly part of Hegel’s system of logic<sup>2</sup>. These considerations go some way towards suggesting that man, Adam, was bound from the start to fail at some point, just as being “the old man”, as he has become, by contrast with the new man in Christ, God’s eternal Word. Here the way can seem to prepare itself for Hegel’s view of the Eden myth as the ascent from innocence to self-consciousness, itself viewable as an assertion just of self which has to be made before we set about overcoming the “selfishness” involved. This, of course, will be overcome only by a more fully magnanimous “selfishness”, here taking the term more literally. Thus good men exclaim: “Who suffers and I do not suffer?”

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Thus in having no body, since absolute being annuls this abstraction in the Concept which God is, God lacks nothing. The Hegelian Concept is not the being which it is or *anything* else, is rather spirit or mind, *Geist*, as annulling all *things* in thinking only itself. That is, he lacks nothing specifically just in that negation of body. So or by the same token the body is nothing, not a metaphysical notion at all, says Aquinas, adding, perhaps oddly, that body, its notion, is as such only of use or interest for logicians.<sup>3</sup> This view is less

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sense at least as he surely means, *natural* end (*Summa theol.* Ia-IIae, Q109, art. 1). If this is so then Hegel’s analysis of man’s “fall” as, it can seem, a mere figure for growing up out of innocence (since otherwise man’s creator, God, “would not be God”) must be deeply faulted as ignoring or implicitly denying the presence of such grace, *gratia*, as being proper to God’s providence, also a God reached in and by philosophical reasoning, whether only or in part. Grace, that is, as a transcendence of nature, can be “naturally”, i.e. philosophically, considered, hence proposed, rejected, etc. Thus man’s “fall”, inasmuch as we admit the term, just means a fall from or forfeiture of (divine) grace specifically. This is thus a *theological* concept and thus it might at least seem that it is only within theology that it is immune to Hegel’s critique of it. Hegel could, however, have acknowledged this at least.

<sup>2</sup> *Enc.* 216f.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. his commentary on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*.

a pure instance of apophatic mysticism than it is a transcendence by Hegel and/or Aquinas of this dilemma (between the apophatic and the cataphatic)<sup>4</sup>.

True, the Creeds speak of the resurrection of the body, of the flesh even, as nature as a whole, herself material, groans and travails, awaiting her redemption, in St. Paul's words. Intended there, however, is the glorious destiny of the whole person in which our everyday dualism of flesh and spirit is transcended. It is for this reason, it is plain, that St. Thomas affirms, if not without that "picture language" which Hegel affirms that theology needs specifically for communicating its truth, that "the beauty of the bodies of the redeemed" will more than compensate for the absence, in eternity, in "the resurrection", of separate animals or plants. Further he could not go while retaining theology's literal picture, or that of traditional apocalyptic rather, of a general return of a more super-abundant life than what time had sickled away. Indeed, for the eternal to be understood *by us* the everyday must first be mentioned, mere picture again, even though (or just because) belief in and worship of infinite actuality as personal and/or supra-personal must require this picture, the everyday "parable", to be set (this is creation *stricto sensu*), rather, toward its own implied "cancellation" (one of Hegel's several senses for this general *Aufhebung* in favour of the Idea) in fulfilment. For the same reason however, ourselves being part of this picture precisely, such an understanding beyond the picture *by us* is impossible. It is only *faith* that in principle can "overcome the world". "I would leave all that I can think and take for my love that which I cannot think", the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* accordingly declares. Reason indeed, our spiritual nature, can take no other path, the diabolical *non serviam* of Joyce's hero leading nowhere, affirmations of "life" notwithstanding. Thus the Scholastic *viventibus vivere esse* must be open to being both taken negatively and otherwise surmounted. The philosopher must practise and *thus* overcome death rather, befriending immortality in his *athanatizein*, as Aristotle had taught (*De partibus animalium*). Thus "life is only the idea immediate" (Hegel), again, and as such it, **Life**, again, actually features within Hegel's logic, as a category namely, to the scandal of some<sup>5</sup>. Yet this already indicates that there is here no intent of *reducing* the Christian mysteries to logic, as is sometimes charged. Logic rather attains its true height, not so much as merely *having* an ontology as *being* it, even as, Hegel finds, it is the fabric, as is not immediately seen by us, of the world.

Hence when St. Thérèse says on her deathbed, in the year 1897, that death is "only" the separation of the soul from the body ("It is not death but God who comes for me", she crucially adds) she is not to be convicted of dualism

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. N. Berdyaev's *Spirit and Reality* for extended discussion of this duo.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. note 2, above.

but of a higher monism rather, where the body is just nothing. The flesh, again, profits nothing, as we hear or read again and again in the sacred and/or canonical texts<sup>6</sup>. She there, at least, transcends without discounting the more representational language of the creeds and religious devotion generally. Theology needs its pictures, Hegel had remarked, though in his system it follows further that *all* language whatever, as of the tongue after all, is reductively pictorial or, the more general term, representational. We must thus renounce or “escape from”<sup>7</sup> language, nor, again, is there contradiction in an extensive use of language to achieve this, what we call philosophy in a word. Philosophy, Hegel understood, has thus to become *sophia*. Wittgenstein equated this with literal silence, apparently at least not prepared to countenance that intellect when brought to language can and must overturn while retaining it, not by resting content with mere paradox but by a dialectical discourse, not retaining passively merely “the soulless word ‘is’” (Hegel) but rather recalling the “fluid” ever self-transcendent and hence “restless” nature of spirit, of *nous*.<sup>8</sup>

So we may say that the true *corpus* is itself spirit (and not merely spiritual), thus remaining most truly itself. This equation of matter and form is a definite step in Hegel’s self-developing logic<sup>9</sup>. The Christian Gospels represent this situation, this reality, in presenting the risen Christ as able most perfectly to consume food while able all the same, or just in that self-assuredness, to pass through locked doors, or to bear, as it were for ever, open wounds beyond what we might endure for but a moment even, e.g. an opening in his side large enough to enclose a man’s hand. He, therefore, is master still or all the more of normal bodily language, saying “Doubt no longer but believe: touch me and see for yourselves, a ghost has no flesh and bones as you see that I have”. This flesh and bone, however, is absorbed into what transcends it, what passes through locked doors, again, or, in a figure, “ascends” into eternal “heaven” and “sits at God’s right hand”, whence the Spirit in its plenitude shortly and consequently, it seems implied, “comes down”. Implied equally is that flesh and the visible is and

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<sup>6</sup> In being *canonical* they are recognised by the appropriate body as sacred, just as saints or recognised holy persons are confirmed as such, some of them, in “canonisation”.

<sup>7</sup> Herbert McCabe’s phrase.

<sup>8</sup> He “did not try hard enough”, McCabe comments (in his *Law, Love and Language*, London 1968), perhaps hastily, however. Wittgenstein’s “The limits of my language are the limits of my world” could, can, be read as an invitation to “go up higher”, to the one divine Word (something like the “still small voice” Elijah heard or knew as beyond hearing).

<sup>9</sup> *Enc.* 128, 129.

was all along an analogous reality merely, as St. Paul regularly acknowledges in the above citation (“I live, yet not I”), language itself thus belonging to this analogy<sup>10</sup>. Just this, in fact, is the creation *stricto sensu*, again, in which we believe<sup>11</sup>, one namely that can add nothing to God, to infinity, being rather contained or “swallowed up” therein. This is the reverse of pantheism. Inasmuch, too, as time is itself analogy (of what if not of eternity, its “moving image”?) there is no “before the world was” which does not more truly, but as exceeding the presumed limit of comprehension of those first hearers, signify a possession of the glory mentioned (the Johannine Christ saying he had it with the Father “before the world was”) as outside of all time, this itself only analogous being. “With the Lord a thousand years is as a day.” As stated in the liturgy, Christ, the Son, “came down from heaven” without ever leaving it “in the heaven of his soul”, interprets Maritain<sup>12</sup>. Here the dualist anthropology employed seems to place more than a limit upon the heavenly man, however, unless understood in the Thérésian way mentioned above, where “body” signifies nothing. Hence the Dominical image: “Fear not them that can the body kill but have no power to hurt the soul; fear rather him who can cast both body and soul into hell”.

We may be guided here throughout by the Gospel account of what is more than aptly called Christ’s transfiguration, before three of his foremost disciples, an event, as it is believed to have been, of which the Church has made a special and major feast in her liturgical calendar, with reason. The reason, I suggest, tentatively at least, may lie close to or even within the line of thought developed here. For first of all, Christ is shown there to be “in glory” whether before or after his suffering life on earth generally. As a hymn from the Latin liturgy has it,

And now, to heaven ascended,  
He sits upon a throne,  
Whence he had ne’er departed,  
His Father’s and his own.

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. John of the Cross, “God has spoken only one Word”.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. our “Creation *stricto sensu*”, in *New Blackfriars*, March 2008, pp. 194-213, replying in part to Richard Gildas’s Internet article “*Examen critique du jugement de Hegel sur la notion de création ex nihilo*”, but also as Chapter Five of our *From Narrative to Necessity: Meaning and the Christian Movement according to Hegel*, CSP Newcastle 2012, pp. 96-119.

<sup>12</sup> Maritain, J., *On the Grace and Humanity of Jesus*, Burns & Oates, London 1969 (French original 1967).

He did not depart from heaven, that is, even while hanging on the Cross, his assumed human nature, crying out his sense of forsakenness, a moment ever given special and honoured place by the Church, e.g. in the Good Friday liturgy. A question here would be whether his assumed human nature also sits, or has sat, *ever* “enthroned”, is included in that “he”. The answer is “of course”, i.e. this has to be, given this relation of time and eternity. God, the true yardstick, is immutable, not “in time”, as he was not in Elijah’s earthquake. Such things are nothings, representations, to use the Kantian term (*Vorstellungen*) that Hegel develops in all its implications. Theology had come, though, explicitly nearer to this implication in claiming to show (e.g. in Duns Scotus) that God’s love for man his “rational creature” (the phrase is not exclusively Kantian), identification with him even, is such that he would have become incarnate as man, as rational creature, sin or no sin. Only thus, one could argue, is the *felix culpa* truly *felix* and not in mere paradox. One may trace the kinship of much later thought with this, e.g. the statement of Alexander Pope, himself a believing Catholic by all accounts, that “The proper study of mankind is man”. I mean, on the Scotist account we have a sound *theological* reason why this is “proper”. It is proper, ultimately, because one man at least was and is, by *antecedent* divine intention, himself divine, as are others with respect to the union with himself offered by that divine man as in the true or full sense exemplar. This is anticipated, if obscurely, by selected spokesmen at least, in Israel, Greece or further east, also within post-apostolic otherwise dissident groups, as in Islam by Al Hallaj, whom they killed for it.

Yet *anima mea non est ego*, wrote Thomas, for his part, in a Scriptural commentary, elsewhere affirming that “It is evident that it is this man who thinks”, i.e. an individual or “individuated” man (*opusc.* “Against a Common Intellect”). What is evident, however, can also be “off the cuff”, as in Thomas’s related principle, that of preferring the “literal” sense of Scripture wherever possible, though not blindly or “against the spirit”. Rather, in Thomas’s deeper thought, as in St. Paul’s, we are eternally “members one of another” (cp. “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up”, said of “his body”, the evangelist tells us). We are not, then, abstractly or unconditionally “this man” (who thinks). Thought thinks itself rather, Hegel will later affirm. “Who suffers and I do not suffer?” seems a corollary. The flesh, matter, is then, in Hegel’s account, at once nothing and/or *one with* the form while the form, ultimately, is one with the Idea, for the reason that matter individuates, abstractly again. It is, that is to say, literally the separating principle of alienation (absolutised to a further degree by G.E. Moore and followers). This opposite view, though, faith in the total allness of God, *Deus meus et omnia* (i.e. not merely “my” all),

pantheism's converse, is the victory overcoming, as annihilating, this world which, nonetheless, as flesh, is first or immediate reality and *hence*, according also to Hegel again, false. Truth is *as such* mediated<sup>13</sup>, as the Word (or any word) mediates, always and everywhere, the final mediator being thus eternal and Trinitarian, so not abstract but omni-comprehensive. This is reflected in Hegel's principle, though itself a conclusion (of logic), that truth can only be as result, from what if not from the false, which is accordingly in itself nothing, first image of the true, rather. Incarnation is thus pictured in Scripture as divine self-humiliation, concerning which *qua* picture Hegel accordingly expresses reservation. The highest, rather, *includes* the lowest, cannot stand without it as one of its *constitutive* moments, Elijah's "still small voice", to hear which we must not "harden our hearts", i.e. minds. Hence babyhood is a true and full part of divine incarnation, as signifying the whole incarnation itself of which it is otherwise part merely. The part, again, *is* the whole, both categories losing both themselves and their opposition in the Idea.

In general, then, religious *language*, including its theological mode, speaks in inverted analogy when it attributes to God, and not to us, analogous being and, if it is not extremely careful, analogous reality. *Viventibus esse est vivere*. Precisely! That is why those living, in their spiritual contemplation or philosophy, must practice a certain death or life-denial (Aristotle, in *De partibus animalium*, who adds there that "a little of this is worth more than all the rest", i.e. than life). Thus in itself such prayer (implied is that this is what it amounts to as elevation of mind) is deathlessness, i.e. a *praxis* thereof (*athanatizein*). Here arises a certain conflict between knowledge and blind love, it may seem ("I will take for my love all that which I cannot think", writes the fourteenth century man of prayer<sup>14</sup>, and none of that which I can think, he effectively adds), of which, while McTaggart made much, Hegel makes short work, as we see at *Encyclopaedia* 159, where he lists as internally related all the things that thinking "means", viz. the other's meeting with one's self (effectively the Biblical definition of love), a liberation as that of having its own being "in the other actuality with which it is bound up", just thereby or necessarily. Thinking, this liberation, is even, or further, what is "called I" or, finally, "free Spirit". Of this he says, explicitly, that "as feeling, it is Love" while

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Enc.* 70, where Hegel also says, however, in the course of examining the mutual relation of being and the Idea, or "subjectivity" and "objectivity", that "the quality of mediation is involved in the very immediacy of intuition"

<sup>14</sup> I.e. the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, English, probably East Anglian, as was his contemporary anchorite, Julian of Norwich (*Revelations of Divine Love*).

“as enjoyment, it is blessedness”. It is apparently just as thinking that free spirit so modulates, without losing its original being, into what these other terms name. A truly symphonic principle seems at work here, if it is not rather the spirit of music itself that is further revealed or disclosed, brought to expression at least. It might well be the unspoken premise to Beethoven’s conclusion, his thesis, that “Music is a greater revelation than the whole of religion and philosophy”<sup>15</sup>, whether or not we incline to think it is his own music to which he, Beethoven, primarily referred. Hegel, anyhow, sees as his theme here “liberation from finite exclusiveness and egoism”, his vision of the concept transcending even Spinoza’s vision of substance, which “is only a potential liberation”. That is to say that we need, the Concept needs, existence “in an individual form” such that here too “flesh” comes into its own. By the same token, however, it, incarnation, as in the view of Duns Scotus already sketched above, belongs to the Concept or is, theologically speaking, a divine or absolute necessity as belonging to what God or spirit is. He is, namely, love, however, the same theology, as Biblically based, insists. Hence it is just this, for Scotus, God’s love for his “rational creature”, i.e. man, that entails his union with man in incarnation, sin or no sin, to repeat. For why else would he love him rather than a horse, say, but that he has, the Scripture says, “put my spirit within him”, whereby alone Adam it is who *names* the beasts, and not contrariwise, as if they should name us? The authenticity and truth of this taking of an individual human form is not invalidated by our concluding here towards temporal life as misperception (McTaggart), as, again, Christ’s transfiguration, witnessed by the foremost apostles, bears out. *That* is the real or eternal reality of the man Christ, into which we are destined, such is the hope, to be incorporated as in fact we are already by the sacrament of the eucharist.<sup>16</sup> Yet in a certain sense he was transfigured there only yet again into another, so to say more condign *figure*, i.e. for the eye, the “glistening” robes and so on, not yet the spirit transcending all figure, as in our saying above that the flesh is nothing. Nonetheless Christ says that my flesh (i.e. his) is meat indeed, my blood drink indeed. That is the sacramental principle, that “He that eats me shall live because of me”. The sacramental sign is a sign of itself, as the Word of God is that God of which, of whom, it is the Word, as the separation into

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<sup>15</sup> Compare the theological idea that the creation itself is a first revelation, of God. “*Die Schöpfung ist die erste der Offenbarungstaten Gottes*” (*Katholischer Erwachsenen Katechismus*, Bonn 1985, p.95).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. M. Levering, “Metaphysics and Contemporary Sacramental Theology: Retrieving Anscar Vonier”, in *Indubitanter ad veritatem*, ed. Jörgen Vijgen, Damon Publishers, Kerkrade, Netherlands, 2003; also Abbot Vonier OSB, *A Key to the Doctrine of the Eucharist*, in his *Collected Works*, 1925.

bread and wine *signify effectively*, i.e. in true sacramental mode (i.e. a new form of being, cf. Vonier cited above (note 16), the sacrifice of outpouring.

The question that inevitably arises here, however, is how to avoid, or whether one should avoid, saying that the same necessity attaches to the creation, of man as finite rational spirit in particular, which we have noted above is God's first revelation. If it does so attach, then how do we distinguish this from the divine incarnation in or as one unique individual? This is what, as for a Christian thinker, necessitates Hegel's acknowledgement of and serious work with, a principle of *identity in difference*, in what one might call an exquisite representation of the import of a mass of key New Testament texts, whether evangelical or from the thought of Paul or John. One of the old breviary hymns, in fact, speaks of Adam as having the face of Christ, though I have no desire to provoke in citing this.<sup>17</sup>

This, all of it, in fact follows from the affirmed principle of St. Thomas that "we know most about God when we know that we know nothing about him", affirmed without apology as the finally valid contradiction. This is mind not "at the end of its tether" (H.G. Wells) but at the beginning of its truth in untethered freedom. The condition for this, for such dialectic, is that we acknowledge the analogous character of our own reality, in faith, as indeed it has to be, no suppression of intellect but rather the reverse being here implied. "This is the victory that overcomes the world; even your faith", though Christ adds here, as regards his own case (to which we are to

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<sup>17</sup> C.S. Lewis, for his part, speaks, writes, of conversing with a Swiss pastor who had met Hitler and who, upon Lewis's asking him how Hitler looked, replied that he looked "like Christ". What was Lewis's or the pastor's point here? One recalls anyhow Hegel's affirmation that good and evil "are the same", in which case "evil is just not evil" (well, it isn't, being a *privatio* purely), Hegel adding, perhaps nervously, that we must strenuously continue to assert their difference. He will later qualify evil as "sham-being", as *privatio boni* pretending to be something. This is perhaps the key, if we grant the identity of *ens* and *bonum* as defended by "the great metaphysicians of the past" (cf. Aquinas on the "transcendental predicates", *QD de potentia* VII). This idea, of anti-Christ as the Christ, hovers also in Nietzsche's thought, in terms of the union of opposites. St. Thomas had already affirmed that *ratio est ad opposita*, while *natura est ad unum*. But the Cross of Christ remains the most extreme instance, or that between Adam and Christ as "second Adam", of fall and resurrection, or that "the last shall be first". Yet none of these instances assert that "good and evil are the same" simply. Understanding Hegel rightly here requires some care. Did the Devil have a point, as Hegel seems to suggest in his angelology, maybe having read his Milton? Or, did Blake fully understand his own verdict on Milton as "of the Devil's party without knowing it"? Putting the Devil "behind" us does not mean he has no role to play, that is, as had Gollum in Tolkien's on-going saga.

be more and more assimilated), that he has “overcome the world”. We might call this the world’s, or perhaps even the Church’s, “best kept secret”<sup>18</sup>. Is it for philosophy to re-open it to view? Hegel late in life implied, had to admit, that all seemed as if the “gates of hell had prevailed” (he referred to the Enlightenment in its impact on Protestant theology in the first instance), though he added at once that this was impossible, referring rather, if obliquely, to the invisibility of “the true church”, charged with reversing this very prevalence *in its concept*. One need not take exception to this, it seems to me, conceding rather that Hegel here would pass beyond the bounds of our own analogous reality, concerning which he might say, with St. Paul and hence safely, “I live and yet not I”, at some point perhaps reaching the situation of St. Thomas as one who “can write no more”, seeing indeed his own admirable texts as “but straw”, flesh, in a word.

Implied, however, would have to be the positive notion of invisibility implied by Hegel’s own idealist philosophy in absolute form (where it becomes the final realism), the principle, rather, it is the same, that “no man has seen God at any time”, a principle to be held along with the Messianic declaration that “He that has seen me has seen the Father” (in response to St. Peter’s “Lord show us the Father”). This might be further source for Hegel’s principle that all truth is mediated. It would not be the populist Protestant notion, namely, of an invisible “church” yet existing side by side, merely, with our visible reality, in no way “overcome” intellectually thereby, as “science” too, for example, fights ever to overcome mere immediacy with no less immediate moon-landings or nuclear weapons. No doubt the unity in credibility of science, seen or seeing itself as the converse of “religion”, is here upheld in a measure. Yet the construction of huge (and hugely expensive) quasi-fairground structures to capture some minute ultimate particle representing matter *as such* (as if it would not itself have hylomorphic form and *materia* over again *ad infinitum*) certainly stretches belief in the credibility of that *Naturwissenschaft* Hegel would certainly have upheld and with all reason. But it begins essentially where practical experiment leaves off as being the latter’s true result in *and as* interpretation.

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Yet, as philosophy, perhaps especially that of “the modern Aristotle” Hegel, demonstrates, the body, flesh, nature, “our sweating selves”, and all we can say of these, is mere analogy, as is, therefore, language (though the “therefore” holds equally in reverse of these), the labour of the fleshly

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<sup>18</sup> Herbert McCabe OP, *op. cit.*

tongue, in itself. It is lingual analogy, while the same line of thought should be applied to our notion of “grey matter”, without which Anthony Kenny once declared that thought was inconceivable. He did not perceive, or wish to develop, the contradiction. So our very notion of being is, to a degree, analogous, is analogy for “the Concept” thinking only itself in “pure act”, i.e. this, the concept, is not itself analogous. Nor then, finally, is being, however be the case with our use and indeed exemplification of it. Hence, though it be the case that there is no class “of the things that are” yet there remains Being itself, uniquely, solely. This, Hegel himself affirms, with Thomas Aquinas after all, “is the true being”, seen as what must underly all as true substance and/or substrate or as, just therefore, the unique transcendental (cf. the final pages of Hegel’s greater *Science of Logic*) or the Idea, thinking “only” itself as and/or in “pure act”, in which all thinking finds its being as participating, as actively participated or, rather, absorbed, *aufgehoben* (by just the Idea). Thus it can even be equated with the very “method” of logic, “according to the way”, *meta hodon*, even as it is, understood as thought itself, thinking. This is the ceaseless activity of the divine “act” which God is, formal entelechy as such.

Even, then, the “transfiguration” vouchsafed to the three apostles remains, again, within the representational ambit of religion, since visible light is not yet the light of what we call, still using a figure, spiritual *enlightenment*. Even the word “spirit” derives from breath or wind, after all. Ultimately, then, this was a passing from one figure to another still, though one more directly representing the spiritual, as will be all our philosophy too if we write it down, with negation itself as the last figure of all (for absolute positivity, namely)! That is, a transfiguration, even where “supernatural”, may remain a figuration, the final state being rather transcendence of all objectivity in water flowing from one’s own belly, as another figure, the evangelical, had it.<sup>19</sup> Light, in itself our most positive figure, remains outside of logic or metaphysics, even if Life does not (according to Hegel, though for him it is still “only the Idea immediate”, i.e. a finite, absorbable category). Thus it was the proper means for the incarnate one, as part, summit even, of specifically religious revelation, to reveal himself as “glistening” white light, again, while as regards revelation itself, Hegel, for one, affirms, God *is* his revelation, or revelation simply, inasmuch also as he is love or being and “the like” but not any mathematical entity; such are second only of the three traditional or Boethian “degrees of abstraction” from matter. Hence Hegel is keen to distance Trinitarianism from any mathematical connotations.

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Gospel of John* 4, v. 14.

This is also the meaning, if one would consider, of that other saying, “No man can *see* God and live” (i.e. have or be life merely, as outside “the Concept”). *Venite adoremus*, remembering also, however, that adoration is the same as the abhorring of oneself in dust and ashes, as the saying goes, if it is not the forgetting or *loss* of self altogether in an identification with its object; – not the way for angels perhaps, but then we are not, one supposes, angels right now, whatever we are or shall become, i.e. when, on the premises defended here, the illusion of time is stripped away, which, of course, is not a “when” at all. We reach a point whence one might be able to understand St. Paul’s self-confessed determination (which he posits as *self*-determination, though he will also deny that: “I live yet not I”) “to know nothing but Christ and him crucified”. No doubt if he had been a professional philosopher as we have them today that would not have stopped such forceful self-denial, forceful, yet not aggressive, more like the “still small voice”, rather, which only those hear who already belong to it, we seem to be told. “Marvel not that the world hates you”. A question here would be, then: on which side does philosophy stand, with the world or against it in Aristotelian (perhaps even more Platonic) *athanatizein*<sup>20</sup>?

Undoubtedly Paul’s stand consists in a bringing to the fore of thought, of knowledge as he says, of *sophia* therefore, both an individual (though he calls him “anointed”) and the physical phenomenon, attributed to this individual, of crucifixion. That is, it is a species of thought’s self-denial indeed and that might well be the final so to say apotheosis of philosophy, such as might seem called for finally in its claim towards, its love for, wisdom, “a little of which is worth more than all the rest”<sup>21</sup>, and which thus must die inasmuch as declared lifeless in its former state. This would be *The Science of the Cross*<sup>22</sup>.

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We have then “The Analogy of God and the World”. This was the title of the doctoral thesis submitted by Professor Hampus Lyttkens to the University of Uppsala during the 1950s.<sup>23</sup> The title is accurate in its

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *On the Parts of Animals*, 6; also *Metaphysics* Z, ch. 3 or 1028b 3-4.

<sup>21</sup> Aristotle, *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Title of a study by Edith Stein.

<sup>23</sup> A copy of it was lent me by Peter Geach when supervising my own doctoral studies at Leeds University in the 1970s. In the main this is a study in depth of St. Thomas’s doctrine of analogy in its theological application particularly. Cf. our *Thought and Incarnation in Hegel* (CSP Newcastle-on-Tyne, 2020), p. 306, with the citations from Hegel there and on the immediately previous pages.

specification of our and his topic, leaving open as it does which of these supposed entities is analogous with which rather than proposing some two-way analogy in which, preposterously perhaps, nothing would be real and hence nothing analogous either. Wittgenstein, early or late, does not seem free from this ultimate or intimate self-contradiction. It is inasmuch as the reality of this analogy is not evident to everyone that a principle that “The limits of my language are the limits of my world” could have been proposed, on one understanding of it. But the principle is two-faced, inviting with equal immediacy a *critique* of language as such, of which indeed language-users, as intellectual, *geistig*, are capable and that principally. Thus this so to say oracular utterance can be found to make the world itself analogous, without having to say of what. Nothing, after all, limits itself, since it would exceed itself in so doing. Clearly “God” would name whatever is *not* analogous here, supposing, as we surely must, the world to be in fact limited. Even if space were infinite *in extent*, which we might suppose is a nonsensical proposition, that there should be just one infinite attribute, viz. extension, of an otherwise very finite entity, even then we are left with a finite being, not as such causing itself, *and nothing else*, left with as it were essential absurdity, itself conceptually absurd if no further explanation be forthcoming.

Many scholars or publicists have lately appeared to think<sup>24</sup> that mathematics somehow demonstrates the contrary, as if mathematics were not itself finite. Nor does mathematics even conceive infinity in proposing merely an infinite number, about which one may anyhow wonder, if one discard in physics infinite extension of place or time. Number, quantity, Hegel and Aquinas before him make plain, does not, again, belong to “the Concept”. This, in fact, is precisely the negative explanation of why it *seems* one could go on *counting* for ever. This is *not conceived*. Hence its puzzling fascination, for immature children typically. Hence, or equivalently, *numeri non ponuntur in divinis* (Aquinas) and hence, again, “It is useless to count” (Hegel). Hegel makes this statement in considering, in *The Phenomenology of Mind*, ch. VII, section *c*, how many good or bad angels there might be said to be, leaving open questions of distinction, insofar at least as numerical, between God and his messengers (good) or spiritual opponents (bad) indifferently. God, as it were, remains himself in opposing himself, as being infinity *in actu* or, as infinite being, the concept. Evil, in other words, has no independent being and is thus(!) even the same as good and so is “just not evil”. This is best interpretable, I would claim, as a consistent rejection of Manicheism, as contrastable with a “logical Manicheism” (Peter

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<sup>24</sup> E.g. M. Tegmark, *Our Mathematical Universe*.

Geach) of the true and the false in Frege's philosophy of logic, Hegel being here in fact heir to Aquinas, for whom evil is privation of good and nothing else, so that *malum est semper in subjecto (bono understood)*. No doubt the religious language in which humanity is to stand united in prayer, of young and old, simple and subtle, wise and foolish even, must keep to our immediate notions. Thus it prays for deliverance for us from evil, though not from knowing evil, finally unknowable as nothing, as indeed it is on these premises. Yet it is the gods who know evil, together with good, says the serpent to Eve. So that, as put forward in the temptation at least, was a misrepresentation or lie, as one would expect from that quarter. Evil is sham-being, Hegel states, *privatio boni* says Aquinas<sup>25</sup>. Yes, but well, to have nothing is to be, positively, very poor, to have positively nothing as we can also say. Hegel, anyhow, enjoins us to continue energetically discriminating good from evil, whatever he has said here, but as if avoiding a conclusion or confusion into which neither he himself nor Aquinas have fallen. Is there perhaps a remnant of layman's humility, true or fake (or can it never be less, or more, than both of these together?), here, something like a loss of nerve? Augustine was bolder, with his *felix culpa*, not after all merely that chancy paradox we easily imagine but something "inbuilt" rather.

Even previous to Hegel the metaphysical view of evil, in particular that most associated with Aquinas, known as the Angelic Doctor, removes it somewhat from that clinging sphere of mere approval or disapproval, positive and negative, to the opposition between being and that absolutisation of disapproval which is nothing, removes in fact the dualism, since being and nothing are not two beings. At this level, furthermore, we do not engage in distinctions without final difference between moral evil and evil generally, transcending here the Kantian moralism, merely posing as or believing itself to be the more sensitive. Thus evil not merely ought not to be but *is* not. Its proponents ipso facto enter an unreal world, evoking the response, more absolute than condemnation, "I never knew you". Hegel calls it, therefore, again, sham-being, while this is the reason for Aquinas's view that evil is always, i.e. is necessarily, "in a subject" which is itself good, just as a hole must be in something. By this the speculations of Hannah Arendt, in her *Origins of Totalitarianism*, as to the absoluteness of evil, unleashed by contemplation of the Auschwitz and associated phenomena, are totally baseless and worse than baseless, herself being the subject of this latter evil (baselessness), noble soul though she may

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<sup>25</sup> Hegel treats this dialectically. "The gods" know evil in knowing its privative nothingness as itself less than nothing, as the prophet will characterise "the nations". They know it in not being it. Cf. *Genesis* 3, vv. 5 and 22.

otherwise have been. It is here that an analysis of “ought” becomes called for, the claim now being that “the factual is normative” (Hegel). Implied by this, in fact, is that whenever we say of something that it ought not to be we are referring to a special class, at a further remove, of the things that are and hence ought to be, even those things that in some respect or other ought not to be, for example, with respect to man’s moral nature, he who does those things which he ought not to have done, as an old prayer has it. The good needs the bad, as being needs nothing and this latter can be taken either way without distinction<sup>26</sup>. It is told of a certain saint (or two) that when he or she complained to God that he had given him everything he received the reply that he had not so done. On his demanding the meaning of this God replied, very shortly: “Give me your sins”. Accept them, that is, as part of the picture. “Only sin can this destroy”, runs one hymn praising the redemption, while we yet know that without sin in the first place there would be no such scheme or story at all, at least as we have it. “Though your sins be scarlet they shall be white as snow!” This saying of the prophet asks to be set against what we have been saying of time. For we have always to try to take the eternal or God’s eye view, in prayer, in philosophy, in meditation. The things that we tend to say “shall be” are often the things which, just therefore, most truly are, the future otherwise, like dreams, being an *ens rationis* only, as St. Thomas puts it. Thus it is also said, “Your sorrow shall be turned into joy”, not replaced by but turned into joy, of which, it is suggested, a mother might most nearly get an inkling, not merely forgetting the loved child’s entrance (itself an exit) as originating in birth pangs but accepting them as part of her joy, into which they are “turned”. Like all analogies this limps a bit, as does everything that this dialectic touches except the dialectic itself, which is to say all speech, in its constitutive if doomed attempt, since grounded in representation, to fully capture thought or spirit, these or this blowing only where they will and that in freedom exclusively. It is only our or *finite* thought which appears to derive from words as naming abstracted “things”, states etc.

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We should rather speak, then, of the analogous being *of the world* (this is our titular point) as thus seeming to be set apart from God, who is thus, in Hegel’s word, the concept, i.e. not an item to be first discovered before or

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<sup>26</sup> On this cf. *Enc.* 91 and 92 with *Zusätze*. From Plato (*Timaeus*, 35) he derives “a statement of the nature of the finite, which as something does not meet the nature of the other as if it had no affinity to it, but, being implicitly the other of itself, thus undergoes alteration”, from which alone, we might want to add, time derives.

as run-up to conception. We rather discover ourselves and our thought first in Him, as we say, this “in” being all the same heavy with misleading spatial, hence material implications. In spiritual matters “in” stands rather for identity, best expressed, attemptedly at least, in a mutual reversibility, as in “I in them and they in me”, perhaps recalling Lyttkens’ title mentioned earlier, the analogy “of God *and* the world”. This suggestion of mutuality is a kind of first attempt of language, whether or not of Lyttkens, to capture the reality of concrete identity or identity “in” (again!) difference. This most fundamental of analogies is the analogy of human language as such<sup>27</sup>, in contrast to which “God has spoken only one Word”, from which, nonetheless, comes our analogous plural usage, “words”. In these matters, it might well seem, for once like Francis Thompson’s “nature, poor step-dame”, that we best “speak by silences”, Wittgenstein’s recommendation. But just as an otherwise contrasted “one Word” can seem more than close to this silence that the poet sets against it, so, if in reverse, Lyttkens’ title, just *in* contrasting God and the world, does not escape the suggestion of an amalgamation, possibly reductive. This is precisely the history of the later “modern” philosophy, still writhing about today however in the many who “linger shivering on the brink” of launching away, though this is but the old “Lord I believe: help thou mine unbelief”, after all, distinguishable from the case of those who “will not believe”, even after seeing, it is implied. This is a matter of love and its energy, then, concerning which no one can judge. Or, “as a man is, so does the end seem to him” (Aristotle). So everyone and hence everything must go on as it is, i.e. must “grow together until harvest”, in Christ’s words. He also shall have said, asked, as if hardly expecting it: “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” So what kind of a victory overcoming the world is that? Surely a very special kind, an analogy yet again, in fact, as if of victory in defeat, as if the Cross were itself the resurrection, as in a manner it is, or as the immortals are those who *have died*. Has God died? Did He? “O death, I will be thy death”, how else, though, but by dying, otherwise “abiding by self alone”? “Thou knowest that all that lives must die.” “Ay, madam, ’tis common” (*Hamlet*).

So life itself, it would seem ultimately to follow from the above, is not more than analogy for spirit, *Geist*, mind, while death, Hegel flatly declares, is itself “entry into spirit”, precisely St. Thérèse’s viewpoint as we cited it, spirit here not by any means serving as mere counter-part to matter, this latter rather dropping away as illusory while spirit, mind, is thus no *part* at all, knowing only itself rather. But what about the fresh air, or nature, in a

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. our *Hegel’s System of Logic*, subtitled “The Absolute Idea as Form of Forms”, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2019, especially the Preface (pp. ix-xxxii).

word? As spirit's externalisation, even in self-alienation, each person "counting for one" and no more, natural manifestations must be fresher than fresh when *aufgehoben*, taken up, by spirit alone, into spirit, as if we, the living, were to say, or would be able to say, that life is or would be "cancelled"<sup>28</sup> in resurrection. There is, strictly speaking, no "pale cast of thought", that idea after all being itself a thought. *Ave crux spes unica*, anyhow, or "accordingly" as one might rather say, was for long among the most sign-posted destinations in Western Europe, at crossroads and so on, it may be worthwhile recalling, even if the sentiment may now be too deep in our consciousness for sign-posting or, perhaps, for any evaluation, having come, so to say, too near for sight and thus "out of sight". "As a man is, so does the end seem to him" (Aristotle) meanwhile, though it may exceed his powers of representation.

The identity though, as we see, is one-way. God's being in us (relation of reason alone) is utterly dependent upon our being in Him (real relation) to start with, as effect upon cause. Aquinas might describe this development as from an ontic dependency (one-way) to one of (mutual) love. Yet causality, this relation too, Hegel would show in his logic (he will have read Hume), is reversible, identity mediating. So our discourse, our speech, is left free, more free even after we have made these remarkable discoveries of what *must* be so, this, necessity, being the action, the *act*, of the concept, as Hegel emphasises, rather than some swollen-headed decision of ours. It is his discovery of "the Concept" and its powers and function that urges the avoidance of the name "God" in final philosophy. Thus, it would seem, God is not named in heaven, as he is not named in the atheist McTaggart's thought, insisting as it does that we are ever *in* heaven to the annihilation of all place or, indeed, all otherness. Thus one can note a certain disgust in Scripture for the facile "Lord, Lord" and one may recall Meister Eckhart's prayer to be delivered from speaking too much of God. Hegel even calls such piety "sickening" or worse, perhaps because it seems not to notice the difficulties requiring ever further and more concentrated speech, thought or writing, since, he is quite sure, it is not that "of which one cannot speak" (Wittgenstein), nor is nor can there be such an object.

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So in speaking his Word, thus imaging himself, infinitely as it must be, God equally speaks, creates, an infinity of images ("it is useless to count") of that image, such that, just therefore, "there can never be enough" (Mother now

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<sup>28</sup> This meaning, to cancel, is also a facet of the sense of *aufheben* according to Hegel.

Saint Teresa of Calcutta's words, surrounded by starving children), quite independently of questions of sin and so on, though the adversary, the nothing, the absence (this is the true malevolence), is ever there. Quantity as such, in other words, lies outside the Concept<sup>29</sup>. Not only, then, would God have proceeded thus whatever man did (or might have been bound to do) but His, God's, assumption of a human nature fashioned so as to be perfectly susceptible of this (whatever we say of a supposed angelic nature), is so to say decreed as belonging to His being, necessarily, which is not to say unfreely but quite the contrary. The inescapable conclusion here is that this relation, *put* by history, we may as well say, as event rather, this closer than close relation between God and man, is a conceptual necessity<sup>30</sup>, derivable, if from nothing else, from the divine infinity, i.e. from the concept itself, from which a purely historical approach tends to fall away, indeed "putting by" in its "putting" or positing. "I have said you are gods; but you shall die like cattle", as the pre-Christian Psalmist saw things. Thus the divine person assuming, Son or Word "of God", assumes also the title "Son of man". The theological categories lie to hand, as lies also, we can begin to see, their systematic conceptuality. Not that God is first objectified as man's self-alienation, from which he, man, must return to himself, but that this return in self-discovery is inconceivable apart from progressive unveiling of the hidden God himself, called also revelation. This, which is truly called "mystery of faith", primarily but not exclusively in a eucharistic context, is precisely that. "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" asks the Psalmist again, as he also asks, in his less than final perplexity, "Wherefore hast thou made all men for nought?" By this, anyhow, one can see how the nineteenth century movement of atheism would be a movement in a Christian context, erroneously dubbed post-Christian specifically, however. What is misjudged as atheism, by those professing it or by onlookers indifferently, is or can be one expression of the truth of faith that we "know nothing of God", apart from what God himself, by his nature indeed, necessarily reveals or shows, to which our faith is the so to say demanded counterpart. Except you believe in me you can have no life in you, the historic Christ shall have declared, if we trust those reporting and/or proclaiming when they are guaranteed further to us by the contemporarily active Christian community or Church. Such faith, though theological, has to be a truly intellectual virtue, without which, in consequence, intellect is

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Enc.* 99 along with the important precisions to this statement added in the long *Zusatz*.

<sup>30</sup> Conceptual as the first identifying of it by faith in this particular event, in this man, is not conceptual. Yet the identification, once made, absorbs event into concept or, more nearly, into liturgy.

not perfected. Yet only the believer can see this. This is the “cornerstone laid in Zion”. This is what Hegel draws attention to when he remarks, without enthusiasm perhaps, on the difference of our situation from that of the ancient Greeks in the beginnings, as is supposed, of philosophy. It is something against which his faith tells him that the gates of hell cannot prevail, i.e. hell, its gates, must remain ever broken open, the conquerors pouring through those gates. So Hegel goes on to propose the new strategy demanded by the then, at his time and place, present situation. One has, so to say, to steal the enemy’s fire, in his eyes demanding first of all a rigorous critique of Kant, while acknowledging whatever credit remains due to Kant (“more of a phenomenologist than a philosopher”, comments Hegel), such as is supplied in the unsurpassed section of the *Encyclopaedia* entitled “The Critical Philosophy” (paragraphs 40 to 60 inclusive<sup>31</sup>).

Without this divine-human link, then, it might at least seem, God would not be God, conceptually again. It is not, therefore, something added on. Its genuine gratuitousness, like our creation itself, is rather the essence and being of all that one might worship. This is the import of flesh and of nature too, of the whole universe we would so impatiently explore. The *felix culpa* is thus even more *felix* than perhaps Augustine imagined. It is *felix*, namely, in its necessity, as the true must result *from the false* or, as it develops, less than (entirely) true, or so Hegel reasons, God remaining the great exception to this, except insofar as he so to say eternally results. Would this then be of the essence of *actus purus*, as it certainly is of the dialectic that pictures it? Yes and no, most probably, given that a maximum affirmation, as even affirming the negative, is the constitutive matrix of the (Hegelian) dialectic. Hence it is these *loci* of thought that Hegel takes as definitive, that the same things, situations etc. both are and are not, in discounting which our word “is” becomes, he says, “soulless”. On the face of it this *seems* the complete reversal of Aquinas’s thought. Yet the face indeed, what one *sees*, is the place for just seeming, the veil that must hence itself be veiled. St. Paul’s thought began with a vision. Does any philosophy begin, could it, with anything else? “With what must science begin?” Hegel accordingly asks and answers just this question.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> This is actually, together with the survey of Empiricism, the second part of “Three Attitudes of Thought to Objectivity”, inserted here (*Enc.* 26-60) bodily as what he calls a survey, “only historical and inferential in its method” (*Enc.* 25), from Hegel’s school-teaching days. See otherwise the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* for what is said here. Cf. also our Thought and Incarnation in Hegel, CSP Newcastle 2020, Chapter Five, “Thought’s Present Situation”, pp.328-340, in particular

<sup>32</sup> Hegel’s introductory question to Book One of *Wissenschaft der Logik* (ed. Suhrkamp 5, Frankfurt 1969, pp. 65-79, i.e. after the *general* introduction). For

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Etienne Gilson, in *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*<sup>33</sup> and other works, insists on the permanent validity of the Scholastic realism or “moderate realism”, against which he sets Kantianism as the typical Lutheran counter-product. Our claim throughout here, however, as in our previous studies, is and has been that Hegel continues and indeed further transforms without destroying these earlier versions of “Christian” philosophy by, among other things, taking full account of his immediate predecessor’s work and of the baleful effect it has had upon the children of the *Aufklärung* generally. This has been persistently overlooked by the so-called left Hegelians, whether blindly or deliberately, which really is just another case of those who “got it wrong” stealing this world’s limelight for a season, as was once the case with the medieval Averroists or, today and yesterday, the varieties of a persistently defended academic empiricism more proper to a physics untouched by the wand, so to say (this image is more usually given a negatively sarcastic function, e.g. by Findlay), of genuinely metaphysical and hence dialectical thought, making indeed of Hegel “the Aristotle of our times”, concerning whom suspicious chatter about Lutheranism or bold imaginativeness or about “waving the dialectical wand”<sup>34</sup> is simply out of place, not leaving philosophy its serene liberty to continue upon its transformative way.

Thus it is *in spite of* his merely inherited Lutheranism that Hegel achieves his great reconciliation, the mystical element in it being as much in accord with medieval and earlier spirituality as it may recall the mystical side of early Lutheranism in particular, if such is to be found, concerning which, as a historical question, it is not my brief to make any judgment here. To read Hegel’s account of “the critical philosophy”, i.e. Kant, in the first section of his *Encyclopaedia* is to find a more damning and dismissive judgment upon certain features of Kant’s *oeuvre*, though still more upon its admirers, while

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analysis and commentary upon his answer see our *Hegel’s Theology or Revelation Thematised*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2018, pp. 41-77.

<sup>33</sup> Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York 1940. See also his studies of Scotus or Bonaventura plus his more general historical studies and/or reference works on “Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages”.

<sup>34</sup> Cp. J.N. Findlay, *The Philosophy of Hegel*, Macmillan, New York 1958 (Collier Books 1962), still one of the best introductions to Hegel’s thought.

all the same giving credit where credit is indeed due<sup>35</sup>, than can be found anywhere else stemming from that time and place.

With Hegel, in fact, there no longer exists that dilemma that Gilson takes as given, between “idealism” and “realism”, as we have done enough in this and our earlier writings on Hegel to show. His thought most nearly resembles in aim and stature that of Aquinas’s developmental corrective to Augustine’s account of God-given knowledge or power of knowing, his illuminism, effectively, in its interpretation or reliance upon a text from the Psalter, viz. “In thy light shall we see light”, removing, or so it often seemed, intellectual cognition from the realm of purely natural powers. What Hegel does is to situate “cognition proper”, along with volition as also a species, indeed the fulfilment, transitional to the Idea, of cognition, in its, cognition’s, relation to a fully thought through account of infinity as co-terminous with as proper to divinity, as “first” wisdom indeed, that is to say quite simply or finally “the All”, as this understanding is found ecstasically in Francis of Assisi or systematically in John of the Cross or, inasmuch as mediated to Hegel, Eckhart.

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In reply to Gilson’s claim that without a realist acceptance or interpretation of creation, this dogma, plus everything thought might wish to say (i.e. think) about anything falls to the ground we may, therefore, advance not only the witness of those Christian writers somewhat misleadingly called mystics, a class inclusive of Augustine, Aquinas or (why not?) Hegel. For these surely include something to be found in all of us, in every Martha even. This must be part of any defence of our claim<sup>36</sup> that it is just here that we reach an account of creation *stricto sensu*. That strictness, indeed, lies in

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<sup>35</sup> This certainly cannot be said of Alma von Stockhausen’s challengingly negative “Catholic” account, almost sectarian rather, of Hegel’s achievement, one which we have been finding here and elsewhere inherits much of Thomist Aristotelianism, even though her rejection of her colleague G. Siewerth’s attempted reconciliation, if rather with Heidegger in the main, is sympathetic. Cf. “*Das Sein as Gleichnis Gottes*”, in *Indubitante ad veritatem* (Studies offered to Leo J. Elders SVD, ed. J. Vijgen, Damon, Holland, 2013, pp. 423-445).

<sup>36</sup> This claim is more fully and systematically set out in our study *From Narrative to Necessity*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle-on-Tyne, 2012, 325 pp., especially chapters Four to Ten, pp. 79-220. Cf. also our articles in *New Blackfriars* from this century’s first decade. We have noted that the world, rather than so to say duplicating or guaranteeing an intra-mundane “realism”, is better viewed, according to a well-argued modern catechetical and theological account (cf. footnote 11 above), as the first or foundational stage of divine self-revelation.

recognition of the nothingness of creation before or apart from God, “in whom we live and move and have our being”, as this nothingness is set forth again and again in Scripture or, still more, as how it is just what presents itself to the contemplative soul, issuing in the sight, the thought, of God as “all things”, *the All*, and not simply “my all” as it, Francis’s prayer, *Deus meus et omnia*, is regularly mistranslated. No doubt we have to acknowledge, though we desire nothing other than to do this, the moment when, at the furthest reach of our knowledge this same knowledge is left behind by what is thenceforth better called love, or “knowing as I am known” by St. Paul. This is precisely the penultimate move of Hegel’s dialectic, where precisely volition, the will as love, succeeds upon “cognition proper” as last step before the Absolute Idea. What we love is precisely the **Good** for us, in a sense “the reverse of the idea of truth” (*Enc.* 232, *Zus.*) as directed to *the world’s* “purposed End” – “that the world may believe”, says Christ; but also “I pray not for the world but for those thou hast given me”.<sup>37</sup>

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As such this is indeed something of “the Will”. Hegel, that is, steers clear of that rationalism often disfiguring ethical theory, wherein the gerundive or thought of what is “to be done” is almost unknowingly substituted for the actual practical syllogism<sup>38</sup>, of which, as Aristotle had stipulated, the conclusion is *itself an action* of some kind and not a mere proposition as to what ought to be but is not. Thus Hegel’s concluding union here of *theoria* and act or *praxis* as itself contemplated, in what, namely *theoria*, is “the highest praxis” (Aristotle again), is precisely logic become metaphysics or conversely.

Love for the good is precisely **Volition**, and that as such, such that even Milton’s Satan, or especially he, had to say “Evil, be thou my good”. Thus, it would seem, the “mortal sin” of the theologians cannot be seen or defined as the willing of evil known as such, since here, at most, it must be that evil itself has become known as, or mistaken for, good. This is the background to Hegel’s refusal to keep them dualistically apart in his *Phenomenology of Mind*. Evil, rather, is “sham-being”, leaving only a monism of the latter, of

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<sup>37</sup> The world stands condemned by its crucifixion of its maker, which is nonetheless the instrument of its salvation, whether *en masse*, as it can at least appear, or “one by one and silently”.

<sup>38</sup> E.g. by G. Grisez, in his otherwise excellent and in its time (and place) beneficial “The First Principle of Practical Reason”, available in *Aquinas*, ed. A. Kenny, London 1969.