

The Final Name of God

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Hegel's system aims at thought's encompassing self-relation. There are many ways of interpreting just what Hegel is trying to achieve in that self-relation and what kind of closure, if any, it demands. It is also difficult to be sure how Hegel intends that self-relation to include the myriad detail of the world. In this essay I look at two models of how that self-relation might come to grips with the detail of the history of religions. I argue that Hegel prefers the stronger of the two models, but that there are serious difficulties in carrying it out.¹

It seems clear from Hegel's various methodological remarks that he is working to complete the metaphysical tradition's aim of grounding and presence, and that he works within the Kantian notion of reason as the faculty of totality. In that Kantian vein, Hegel argues that a relation of thought to itself is required as condition of the possibility of conscious experience and practice.²

Interpreters disagree about what degree of closure Hegel believes is demanded in order to achieve thought's self-relation. I have argued elsewhere that there are at least two aspects: the logic is to encompass all categorial determinations by which any Other to thought could be conceived, and the logic is to involve categories describing its own self-referential structure. Hegel's closure is in the interconnection between these two: the system is complete because its self-referential structure necessarily includes the categories which encompass otherness.³ If the logic is in principle complete then the grammar of thought is known as such, and the system affirms that it possesses the categories to do justice any Other.⁴ There is nothing untouched by thought, though some things are touched only by being put in their place as necessarily contingent detail

¹ This essay has benefited from helpful comments an earlier version received when presented at the Department of Religious Studies at Brown University. It was published in *Hegel and the Tradition*. University of Toronto Press, 1997, 162-175.

² For a recent discussion of Hegel's connection to Kantian self-relation, cf. Robert Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism* (New York: Cambridge, 1989).

³ See my "What is Open and What is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel," *Philosophical Topics*, vol. 19, no. 2, Fall 1991, and *The Critique of Pure Modernity: Hegel, Heidegger and After* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

⁴ Hegel speaks of "the entire course [of the science of logic], in which all possible shapes of a given content and of objects came up for consideration." (Science of Logic 12.237/826; references are to the *Gesammelte Werke* volume:page and to the Miller translation page.)

that thought cannot penetrate.

But the world must, for logical reasons, contain more than logic. How does the system deal with the detail of history and life? How does it deal with the history and variety of religions? For religion is a special case. It is one of the historical phenomena Hegel studies, but it is also one of the ways spirit finally comes to know itself as encompassing all otherness. Since religion is a form of absolute spirit, the systematic demand for self-relationship and completeness will be more stringent in the case of religion than in nature or politics. Hegel demands that there be a final religion and a developmental story that demonstrates that finality. I will argue that such a story cannot be written.

The Need for Completeness in Logic and Religion

Hegel would say that the only way to appreciate the necessity of the system is to actually follow its development. Here I will only point out a connection Hegel makes between the claim to self-relation and the need for completeness.

Hegel argues in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that knowledge, conscious experience, and action ultimately require as their condition of possibility full self-relation. The philosophical system activates that self-relation. But the self-consciousness of spirit achieved through the system has to be complete. It cannot itself be a theoretical knowledge that stands off from the world across some gulf that is outside the system's own self-relation. There cannot be some duality which locates the self-presence of spirit to itself but is not overcome in spirit's self-relation. The final epistemological and ontological condition on the meaning of being is self-presence; it makes no sense to speak of a partial self-presence as somehow ultimate (as Hegel thinks was done by Kant and even Fichte).

In the Logic there can be no final bad infinity, no endless sequence of as yet unknown categories, since this would prohibit full self-relation. If the self-relation to be achieved in the Logic included some infinite task of self-discovery involving endless categorial novelty, either the self-relation would fail, or it would move to a higher level.⁵ Any supposed endless sequence of categories would mean that spirit was moving towards an state of comprehension that was not yet actual. And the distance from that state would express a duality spirit was on *one* side of.⁶ On the other hand, if spirit possessed

⁵ Also, since we are speaking of *categories* that are the essential determinations of what it means to be, if there were uncomprehended categories in endless novelty, the source of their determination (their being) would remain mysterious, and thought would not yet be self-determining in its relation to itself.

⁶ In such a case, there would be built in to the basic epistemological and ontological "action" a gap between its concept and its actualization. But (in an argument reminiscent of Aristotle's argument for the primacy of actuality over potentiality) Hegel would deny that it could be possible for such to be the case on the primal level. Correspondingly, post-structuralist attacks on Hegel and on metaphysics generally

at least a sketch of this ideal future state, the endless sequence of novel categories would then be encompassed within a higher level self-relation that in its own way included a set of final categories. In this volume, John Burbidge and George di Giovanni make the Logic into a higher level self-relation. a similar position can be found in Robert Pippin's book cited earlier. Burbidge would not characterize his position as involving a final set of logical categories, but he does regard the logic's method as final, and so provides a kind of higher level closure.⁷

How does all this affect religion? What is its situation with regard to self-relation and closure? Hegel's general definition of religion is that it is the relation of the subjective consciousness to God, who is Spirit. "In the philosophy of religion we have the absolute for our object, not only in the form of thought, but also in its manifestation as of the absolute."⁸ Taken speculatively (in Hegel's special sense of that word), religion is spirit that is conscious of its own essence, its own being (*Wesen*). Spirit is not abstract

can be seen as a reaffirmation of the primacy of potentiality, though more in pre-Socratic than Megarian terms.

⁷ A similar position can be found in Robert Pippin's book cited above. John Burbidge would not characterize his position as involving a final set of logical categories, but he does regard the logic's method as final, and so provides a kind of higher level closure around the categories that describe that method. Either the future logical novelty is not foreseen, in which case thought's self-relation is not complete or truthful, or it is foreseen, and the "place" of that novelty is described by a set of categories which are, in effect, the final categories of thought. In a note to his present essay Burbidge employs some of his final categories when he distinguishes formal from real possibility. (See my discussion of his position in "What is Open and What is Closed," cited earlier.) In his note Burbidge argues that for Hegel possibility is derived from actuality, so that the novel to-be-created categories are not yet "possible." (This raises the problem mentioned in note 5 above.) As I read him, Hegel is much more Aristotelian than Peircean about the primacy of actuality, and the completion of the system is more akin to the self-transparency and completeness of "thought thinking itself" in Aristotle (which is quoted at the close of the Encyclopedia). Nor is this an undue emphasis on the Kantian influence of the first Critique, as Burbidge charges, since the aim of complete architectonic and system runs all through Kant's works, and Kant claims that it is only by its self-established and self-referential completeness that the transcendental philosophy is proven to be correct. I would grant that there are aspects of the third Critique that threaten to undermine Kant's project, but the same is true of Hegel. It seems to me best to interpret Hegel according to his own programmatic assertions and

then show how these may not succeed. Otherwise we run the risk of reading back current favorite ideas into Hegel, which can ultimately reduce our confrontation with novelty and our need to question ourselves.

⁸ The quotation is from the Lasson edition of *Begriff der Religion* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1966), 32. Cf. also Hegel's comments in the same edition that spirit that does not appear is not (33). Spirit must be the encompassing negative of all finite forms, and appear as such to itself. (References to the one-volume English translation of the 1827 lectures on the philosophy of religion will be abbreviated LPR.)

subjectivity; it is concrete by being for itself as including its other. Religion actualizes spirit's self-relation.

In the Absolute Idea that concludes the Logic, finite determinations are taken up into comprehensive unity. Thought achieves self-relation by thinking all finite categorial determinations of objects as held within the moving self-referential unity of the Idea. That final category includes a structured recapitulation of the prior sequence, now thought *as* the subordinate moments of the final unity. By enacting in thought the dialectical process that includes the major categorial determinations of any being, the Logic shows how they all can be contained in the unity of pure thought knowing itself.

But this achievement remains in the medium of pure thought. It is not yet exhibited *to* spirit self-consciously *as* an overcoming in the medium of otherness, space and time. So the encompassing of otherness has not yet really been performed *for* spirit. That is, spirit *is* not yet actually itself, since its being is to exhibit its being to itself. For that there must be actual otherness and a actual comprehensive return from otherness to inclusive unity.

The historical religions record the changing degrees to which this overarching action and purpose are "revealed" to different communities. Studying these religions the philosopher can see how the particular distinctions and determinations constitutive of the various religious traditions are arranged into a developmental process that leads to the full revelation of spirit's self-relation with itself through nature and society. To use the Aristotelian language of the closing words of the *Encyclopedia*, the philosopher can study history as an *entelechia*, a process with a goal; but at that goal the philosopher discovers that history is an *energeia*, an action that has its goal within itself and is the eternal coming to itself of spirit.⁹ This is closure, *für sich*.

There is an analogue here to Hegel's famous claim that philosophy is its own age comprehended in thought. Religion also expresses its age. However, it is only in the modern age that we are in a position to affirm that philosophy and religion express the spirit of their times. The principle that each religion expresses the spirit of its time must be the result of self-consciousness about the structure of the process of having religions at all. That self-consciousness is a modern achievement. It is our comprehensive philosophy and final religion that allow us to affirm that philosophy and religion express their time. In affirming this, our own philosophy and religion express our special time in a way which was not achieved before.¹⁰

⁹ I owe this way of putting the point to a remark of Mark Okrent in conversation.

¹⁰ Earlier philosophies and religions comprehended their own time in thought, but they did so only because they articulated the leading principles or categories of their ages; they did not describe themselves as doing so, nor recapitulate the self-knowing circle that understands its own nature. Their

Self-relation and Historical Detail

Hegel is careful to distinguish between categories which tell us what it is to be this or that kind of being, and empirical concepts which fill in the details about the various kinds of being.¹¹ Logic is to provide an essential skeleton for the world, but the details are purely contingent. Such contingency is itself a categorically necessary feature of any world. When the categories appear in time and space, the media of otherness, they must appear embodied in detail that can be understood only through contingent empirical generalizations. For instance, the number and anatomical details of animal species are contingent, but the general hierarchy from matter through organisms to consciousness is for Hegel essential and necessary.

There is some trouble, though, in determining just what is to count as essential structure and what as contingent detail. Likewise it is difficult to determine what aspects of the historical record should be highlighted in the developmental story of spirit's self-return. As we will see, it is not easy to decide which aspects of the historical religions should be taken as the keys to their places in a developmental sequence.

It is also difficult to determine to what degree the finality of the logical categories limits future history. Since forms of life take their unity from logical categories, if the logic is complete then on some level no new shapes of life are to be possible. But that level could be quite general; Hegel certainly seems to believe that new nations and peoples will continually arise and have their conflicts, though their political arrangements will tend toward the rationally complete constitution he sees developing in modern times. No one nation is final.

But does this mean there can also be a continual series of new religions? On the contrary Hegel believes that in some sense we have achieved the final religion. Undoubtedly he expects that there will be new religious details, but they will not represent basic improvements on Christianity's set of representations of the absolute.

Representations and their Key

self-conception of was different from what philosophers can do now, and the new self-conception *is* the new self-relation.

¹¹ For example, in the Logic he insists that "Philosophy must know how to distinguish what is according to its nature a self-external matter (*Stoff*); in such a case the progress (*Fortgang*) of the concept occurs only in an external manner, and its moments can exist only in the proper form of externality It is an essential requirement when philosophizing about real objects to distinguish those spheres to which a specific form of the concept belongs (i.e., is present as existence), so as not to confuse through Ideas the peculiar nature of what is external and contingent, and have the incommensurability of the matter distort the Ideas and make them merely formal" (Science of Logic 21:203/212).

Here we need to pause and consider how religion structures the awareness it offers the community. In religion we are filled with the absolute and know ourselves as so filled. In worship and in action we relate the absolute to ourselves as subjects and we "enjoy" that unity.¹²

The unity is not a blank feeling of closeness; it has content that is provided by "representations" (*Vorstellungen*). These are necessary as the objective side of what is, subjectively, immediate faith and belief (LPR 144). Faith occurs

when the representations and feelings connect immediately with our sense of ourselves as individuals. We need faith if our self-awareness is to be directly affected. «FN1. Hegel argues that "only by means of this faith that reconciliation is accomplished with certainty and in and for itself is the subject able and indeed in a position to posit itself in this unity." But he also insists on the necessity of content and doctrine as the mediation that goes beyond the immediacy of faith (LPR 474f).» But we need content if religious experience is to be more than that inarticulate self-feeling which Hegel condemned in contemporary theologians. In his thinking about religion, one of Hegel's main targets was the claim that we cannot know God but can only intuit or feel him (Schleiermacher and pietism). Hegel's treatment of representation is often taken as downgrading religion for dealing with pictures instead of concepts. But in his eyes he was defending cognitive content in religion against those who would make faith into dog-like feeling.

Hegel lists three sorts of religious representations. The most common are *pictures*; the examples Hegel gives are interpreted as involving analogies, simile, and allegory. This is a wide category; it includes, for instance, the notion that God has a son, the story of the Fall, the images of the tree of knowledge and of the wrath of God. Actual *historical events* can also be used as representations, especially the person of Jesus (LPR 147). Finally, *non-sensible events* can be representations, for example the relation between God and the world, or creation represented as a special act from which the world arises. Though creation can be a theoretical concept, it is not truly philosophical; it remains a representation because the coherence of the sides (God and world) is not seen as necessary; instead we get a picture of a special external relation between separate entities. «FN1. Creation is a representation rather than a philosophical concept because it talks of one being making another separate being, as opposed to the speculative truth finding objectivity and being in the concept. Similarly most other concepts used in theology are representations; Hegel speaks frequently about the way the attributes of God are kept separate from one another (cf. LPR 421).» In this sense representations at times overlap with what Hegel calls concepts of the understanding. In theology (and in

¹² Religion is spirit that realizes (actualizes) itself in our consciousness (LPR 104; cf. the discussion of the necessity of religion on 132n47, and the discussion of explicit consummation on 191).

understanding) the concepts used to describe God and his relations are affirmed alongside each other, free and independent in their identity and meaning, with a contingent relation to one another that lacks speculative unification.

Thus, representation is not just pictorial; it can involve concepts, but these are treated as discrete items like images. The form of representation is that things are related simply to themselves, as if independent (LPR 149n85). This isolated determinacy (LPR 152) contrasts with the form of thought, which is an inner manifold that embraces connection, contradiction, and necessity (LPR 154).

For Hegel the content of representations can ultimately be separated from their form (LPR 145). In so doing we can get beyond the separations and isolations inherent in the form of representation.

How is this done? Hegel employs the traditional hermeneutic gesture of distinguishing outer and inner; there is some inner content that can be freed from its outer presentation. The inner makes itself manifest because there is a *key* for interpreting religious representations. That key is provided in advance by the philosophical system, in particular by the logic.¹³

The Bible is for Christians the basis . . . which strikes a chord within them, and gives firmness to their convictions. Beyond this, however, human beings, since they are able to think, do not remain in the immediacy of assent and testimony, but also indulge in thoughts, in deliberations, in considerations concerning this immediate witness. . . . But just as soon as religion is no longer simply the reading and repetition of passages, as soon as what is called . . . interpretation begins . . . certain presuppositions are made with regard to this content, and with these one enters into the process of interpretation. . . . The interpretation of the Bible exhibits its content, however, in the form of a particular age; the interpretation of a thousand years ago

¹³ This hermeneutical relation is one-sided. Cf. Peter Hodgson's introductory discussion about the logic as hermeneutic key (LPR 12, 14).

was wholly different from that of today. . . . So everything depends on whether this content [the presupposed forms of thought and propositions which we bring to the reading] is true. . . . If [theology] uses these forms [of thought] haphazardly, because one has presuppositions and prejudices, the result is something contingent and arbitrary. [What is pertinent here] can only be forms that are genuine and logically developed in terms of necessity. But the investigation of these forms of thought falls to philosophy alone. (LPR 399-402)¹⁴

The forms of thought developed by necessity are not for Hegel a clue taken from outside. The logic has already taught us that its categories are the essential structure of thought and spirit.¹⁵

The Final Religion

One effect of the philosophical interpretation of religious representations will be, as Hegel says, to "reduce the infinite names of God to a restricted set" (LPR 153). This happens in philosophy, but does it also happen in religion? Do we arrive at a final religion with privileged names and representations for God?

There is no final species of plant, no perfect arrangement of the continents, no culminating number of legs for animals. Why not say that religious representations are another instance of empirical detail that is noted but judged contingent by the system? Why not have one set of logical categories, but an endless series of new religious representations? Hegel does largely treat the Hindu gods this way: he discards detail which is not important as long as we understand the conceptual point, which has to do with the multiplicity of gods and the unity of Brahman. For the most part, what particular representations and gods show up in the Indian multiplicity doesn't seem philosophically significant to him (though he finds the Trimurti a foreshadowing of the trinity). Why not treat all religions this way? Even if the philosophical self-relation of spirit achieves a final stage, could that not have many different religious self-

¹⁴ Cf. also the remarks on history and theology (LPR 472) and the claim (98n59) that only with the closure of the logic as a guide can one move freely among the determinations of the world of actuality.

¹⁵ John Burbidge argues in a note to his essay in this volume that as presented in the *Phenomenology* and the *Encyclopedia* the relation is different, that religion "provides a necessary condition for absolute knowing or philosophy--it justifies the truth claims of the logic." However, even if one grants the claim that religion is a necessary condition, it does not follow that the relation is one of justification (nor is it clear that the logic makes "truth claims" in any straightforward sense). There are several senses in which religion is seen as necessary for the full self-return of spirit and for the historical development of absolute knowing, but, given Hegel's insistence on the independence of pure thought, their relation is not one of a fact or activity (religion) justifying another (pure thought). Nor are they the same activity, as I have argued in this essay. And in their dialectical relation it is logic that has the primacy in its fuller self-relation.

representations?

For Hegel, religion is not a contingent social phenomenon. It is absolute spirit coming to itself. Spirit cannot come to itself across an infinite series of *logical* categories; there must be a self-related grasp of its own structure. Still, we might imagine that the logic could provide a key for interpreting an indefinite series of *religious* representations. The Logic would provide a step back or above religion, which could then vary contingently. John Burbidge argues for a position similar to this in the essay included in this volume. I want to argue that such a position is not Hegel's intention, though it is in fact the best he can achieve with the history of religion.

Religion, as well as philosophy, is the being-for-itself of spirit. If there were an indefinite series of religious representations juxtaposed to a completed logic of categories, then any particular religious representation would become unessential to spirit's self-relation, since it could change without affecting that self-relation in any essential way. But religion is a revelation of spirit's nature to itself; its representations have the same content as philosophy. If there is closure in philosophy there should be at least some limitation on the variation of religious representations.

Religious representations include concepts as well as pictures and images. The theological concepts used in the doctrines of the trinity and the incarnation are, in Hegel's sense of the term, representations. What they represent is the speculative coming together of universal, particular, and individual, the self-relation of the absolute through otherness, and the presentation of spirit's nature to itself in the community. These speculative motions are themselves represented; they are not merely a logical key for interpreting indefinitely many religious representations.

We might imagine that many particular figures other than Christ could be interpreted as dying and rising again in the community, and as manifesting the union of the moments of the absolute idea. But any religion that did represent these speculative truths would have to be structurally similar to Christianity.¹⁶ By analogy, these other representations would be variations on the final religion in a way similar to how Hegel sees the constitutions of the various European states as variations on a final rational constitution.¹⁷

¹⁶ John Burbidge's candidates for new religious representations maintain such structural similarity to Christianity. Cf. his presidential address to the Hegel Society of America, "Is Hegel a Christian?" in *New Perspectives on Hegel's Philosophy of Religion* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992).

¹⁷ This raises, of course, the issue of the uniqueness of Christ, which Henry Harris has explored. Cf. John Burbidge's contribution to this volume for a position on this issue which seems to me to allow too many kinds of individuals to play the Christ-role, because it defines that which must be incarnated too loosely as "a framework for life in a community . . . the way the world really is--its ultimate determinate

This conclusion can be strengthened. Hegel finds that in the modern age institutions have become self-aware of their own structure and operation. Democratic governance is politics become self-aware. Art becomes so self-aware that its traditional function is ended. Philosophy completes itself as it becomes aware of its own motions and history. When spirit comes to itself, religion as such should also become self-aware.

That is what Hegel claims. Christianity is not just a better religion; it is religion as such become self-aware of its own nature. The very concept of religion (its function as the living concrete unity of god and finite subjectivity, as the reconciliation through absolute unity of absolute opposites without denying either one) has become the content of Christian representations (the trinity and the incarnation: God is become finite and takes on death, but rises to spiritual unity in the community). The doctrines of the trinity and incarnation are not replaceable. Christianity is not just another religion; its representations are religion knowing itself for what it is.

The Need for a Developmental Story

If it is the final religion, how does Christianity deal with earlier forms of religion? Any religion, in accord with its nature, *represents* its relation to other religions. The guiding structure of religious representation is separateness and independence. In this mode, religions exist side by side and can be judged by the criteria of representation and understanding. So religions represent their own individual histories as the replacement of inadequate gods by a fuller revelation.

Each religion has its own way of representing this; Hinduism, for example, uses its basic conceptual structure (the indefinite one with indifferently many determinate manifestations) to encompass other religions within its own fold. A monotheistic religion like Judaism or Islam will use its basic representations (single subjectivity) to represent its relation to history in more jealous and possessive terms. Christianity can measure others by the incarnation and the trinity, representing other religions as deficient aspects of this full revelation of inner multiplicity in the absolute. The former incomplete revelations are harmonized in the paradoxical representations available to Christianity. Thus Christianity can understand itself as the final reconciliation of the partial doctrines in other religions.

On the other hand philosophy *thinks* the history of religion according to the concept and absolute idea. It unites what representation keeps separate and it denies the

character . . . [that] sets the standard for action and behaviour." This seems to confuse a trinitarian description of the method of incarnation with the incarnation of the trinity itself. But the uniqueness of Christian religion for Hegel is that the concept of religion and the speculative trinitarian unities are themselves represented, not merely that they provide a framework for representing whatever framework or values are deemed ultimate.

independence of the historical religions; what Christianity represents as a replacement it knows as a self-development.

Spirit has its own actualization and self-grasp for its purpose. This ultimate encompassing being-for-itself can have no goal outside itself. Nor can it leave anything outside itself; everything must be touched or accounted for, even if only by being consigned to the space of those things that do not need a philosophical account.

But spirit's past forms are not contingent details, they are the record of spirit's self-return, and since spirit is the revelation of its own self-return to itself, the core features of its past forms have to be exhibited as having an inner necessity that correlates with the stages of spirit's externalization and self-return. The successive earlier forms will be encompassed within the final form. By traversing its history as a record of its own necessary movement towards itself, spirit will become itself. Hegel is committed to a strong story of developmental culmination in religion.

We could, though, imagine a weaker relation of philosophy to the history of religion. It was suggested above: philosophical understanding might see each religion as embodying structures of spirit, but not demand a final religion or a story leading to a culmination. Philosophy might step back from the particular religions and use the logical key to interpret their representations. There would be no incorporation of earlier forms, only a vision that placed them--not in a developmental narrative but in relation to the general logical preconditions that make possible any religion.

Hegel demands the stronger model. It is important that in its self-return, spirit catch up and redeem the particularities of finite spirit, and not just surpass them by a step back into their conditions of possibility. It is this inclusive closure which helps establish the absoluteness of absolute spirit.

Difficulties with the Developmental Story

In the stronger model the developmental story redeems the earlier forms of religion by seeing them as stages leading up to the final religion. This demands an ascending series of essential types of religion each of which has room for varying contingent detail. In his lectures Hegel attempts such a story.

However this task turns out to be extraordinarily difficult. Religions are many-faceted phenomena; it is not obvious what is the essence of each religion, or whether there is anything essential about the bricolage of practices, representations, and doctrines in the historical religions. Further, religions are not just objects; they are modes of self-consciousness. So the analyst has to take into account what they say about themselves,

and they say many different things. Amid all this, how does the philosopher pick what is to be the essential nature of each religion? Presumably he attempts to correlate essential representations with stages discussed in the Logic. But which representations and which stages? Faced with the internal multiplicity of religion Hegel waffled in his analyses of various religions and their placement in the developmental story.¹⁸

In this regard the varying positions of Greek, Roman, and Jewish religion are especially significant. As Louis Dupré points out, Hegel is unable to decide which logical pattern he should use to order their relations.¹⁹

The deep problem here is that the axes around which one might order a developmental sequence are not parallel to one another. If you order the religions according to the ascending universal unity of the godhead you get an ambiguous order (monotheistic Jews over polytheistic Greeks and Romans, but also universalistic Romans over particularistic Jews and Greeks); the axis of deepening subjectivity and interiority gives another ordering (ethical Jews over externalist Romans), while detachment from nature into spirit gives a third (poetic Greeks over Jewish minutiae of daily life), and so on. According to the system these axes should be parallel but in actual religious history they are not.

So we are forced to wonder: is there a right way to assemble religions into a developmental story? Given the way the Logic has developed its enclosure of particularity, and the essentialism involved in that claim, for Hegel there should be a right way but he has not found it. He keeps trying, despite the difficulty of deciding on the essence of historical forms, not to mention the problems of making all this fit into a dialectical pattern of determinate negation.

Do we really need a single axis and a single teleology? Think perhaps of the multiple

¹⁸ The various versions of the developmental story are summarized by Peter Hodgson (LPR 498-499); they are discussed in Walter Jaeschke: "Zur Logik der bestimmten Religion" in *Hegels Logik der Philosophie*, edd. Dieter Henrich and Rolf-Peter Horstmann (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1984), 172-188. Cf. also Jaeschke's *Reason in Religion: The Foundations of Hegel's Philosophy of Religion*, trans. Peter C. Hodgson and Michael Stewart (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 230ff, and the article by Louis Dupré cited in the next note.

¹⁹ "Until the final series of lectures delivered in the year of his death (1831) he kept changing the order and, more significantly, the principle of classification. . . . Which one was religiously superior? The free form but internal necessity of the Greeks, or God's sovereign freedom, subject to no formal necessity yet dominating life with divine commands? . . . The succession of particular religions follows a pattern of increasing internalization and universalization. Those two principles do not always follow an identical development, however, as Hegel's continuing hesitation about the place of the Jewish religion--internal but not universal-- indicates." (Louis Dupré, "Transitions and Tensions in Hegel's Treatment of Determinate Religion" [in *New Perspectives on Hegel's Philosophy of Religion* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992).

ways Ricoeur discusses for narrative to emplot events.²⁰ Unfortunately, that won't do for Hegel's self-comprehension as outlined in the *Logic*. It is crucial that spirit be able to posit its own motion as "the content of the finite" (LPR 412). Otherwise a foreign purpose is being categorized, and not pure being-for-itself. For Hegel, that was a flaw in the determinate historical religions. The final religion and philosophy should do better.

But it looks as if for religion, the weaker model may be the best philosophy can do: to present a formal self-awareness of the nature of spirit, while on the empirical level there is endless detail that does not get picked up into a unified teleology. Spirit's self-return would then be at best a step back from any religion to the (a?) concept behind it, not a step along a sequence of religions to a culminating self-consciousness in a final religion. The names of God would remain infinite.

It might seem that with this we have arrived at a form of "open" Hegelianism. But because the axes of evaluation are not parallel, the step back model cannot provide a hierarchical ordering of religions. At best the model gives a move from any content to its categorial structure and conditions of possibility; this does not allow any necessary connections between different contents. This in turn casts doubt on the applicability of determinate negation, without which it would be difficult to call any position Hegelian, open or closed

All this could have some far-reaching implications. If religions, at least, are organized with only typology and geography but no unique axial history, could that suggest that worldly history and the state might also lose their teleological finality? The situation is quite different with such institutional structures than with religious representations, but the cases might turn out to be more similar than Hegel expects. If there were no teleological story of development to be told concerning religion and these other areas of particularity, and yet the logic remained self-enclosing and complete, what would happen to the fit between logic and world? Would it become optional or pragmatic which categories fit which collections? Of course, if the logic itself became a multiply connected affair with many axes, then pure self-return would be threatened. Following considerations like these, many critics today substitute spatial for temporal metaphors, so we get dissemination instead of development. But even if chastened, Hegel's questions still remain: who are the We that know all this? What kind of self-criticism and self-knowledge is involved here? Can it be institutionalized and made common property? In such discussion all the sins and splits of modernity come home to roost,

²⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). Religious representation remains recalcitrant because Hegel has conceived the nature of religious images and representations too simply.

splits Hegel can still help us avoid making into our own absolutes.