New Blackfriars

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Happiness and Rationality

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Abstract

Happiness and rationality are the same. Philosophy and Religion (and Art) have the same Content. There is no absolute contingency. The world is rational. A philosophy of theology is premised to any theology of philosophy. Revelation of *glory*, manifestation of manifestation as such, not of anything *else*, fulfils religion, "interpreting spiritual things spiritually".

Keywords

McTaggart, Aquinas, Hegel, happiness, reason, religion, philosophy, self

Happiness . . . Happiness and contemplation was a favourite topic. Anyhow, here I start off, for orientation's sake, by noticing a difference between Hegel and McTaggart. Or one might ask, what has Hegel to say about happiness? Whatever it is it is hidden, discrete, not to the fore. With McTaggart, on the other hand, it is manifestly the motor of his thought. It is why he is called mystical, why too, maybe, he says that Hegel's philosophy is more mystical than perhaps Hegel himself realised. This is because the happiness factor is just what McTaggart himself wants to bring out in it.

McTaggart connects the setting of mankind towards happiness, i.e. towards fulfilment and perfect flourishing, with rationality. The world is perfect and has to be so, as Leibniz and others, the whole of philosophy in fact, had stressed before him. All manner of thing shall be well, as one "mystic" or more or less illiterate thinker put it, with just the emphasis, all manner of thing, proper to a *rational* insight.

If we agree with Hegel that *life* is a finite concept, including or going over to its opposite, naturally productive of death, if we see death as irrational, contradicting rational *nature*, then we will place our reality beyond life and even perhaps beyond being and existence. "The life that I live now I live, yet not I . . ." Any subjectivity is absolute subjectivity. We have no distinctly perceptible right to speak in absolute terms of *an* absolute subjectivity, such that we might ask "How many?"

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Hegel places absolute knowledge at the summit of the dialectic. McTaggart demurs, pointing to the imperfect reciprocity of "cognition", whether as knowledge or as will. He argues for a further category, one might call it love, perfecting or harmonising knowledge and will. The Biblical "knowing as I am known" is assimilable to this. The phrase crowns a passage praising love as alone abiding when knowledge, like "faith", shall have vanished away.

McTaggart concedes that Hegel might or might not be in agreement with him. He is sure, he says, that Hegel believed in personal immortality[1] since this, McTaggart thinks, is manifestly needed for happiness. I would agree, while leaving open the degree of identity between the personal and the individual, a possibility of all being "members one of another", *in* one another, as the figurative religious expressions have it.

We should not see McTaggart's use of the name "love"[2] as signalling an especially "ethical" happiness. Even in religion charity modulates into delight (*delectatio*). He insists on the significance of the emotions, repressed under dualism as explained by the weaknesses of a fleshly constitution not yet glorified. Mystics such as John of the Cross wrote and thought with the aid of the dualist paradigm.

We should admit that a felt or longed for happiness is a main motor of any genuine philosophising. The face or person, the piece of music, the water lapping at the boat gives *joy*, which one seeks not just to have again as it was. One seeks to wrest from it its secret. The emotions, then, are important. Hegel too, it can be shown, preserved a lasting respect, despite criticism, for the "emotional" school of Jacobi. Finally, for these reasons, "music is a greater revelation than the whole of religion and philosophy" (Beethoven), as giving rise to them. This judgement, furthermore, anticipates the thematisation of the category of revelation in *The Phenomenology of Mind* as belonging within the *philosophy* of religion and not as dualistically robbing philosophy of its *natural* absoluteness, this being that very connaturality of reason with immortality to which we adverted above. It elicits further interpretation of the *potentia obedientialis* invented by the "supernaturalists". Nothing is above *rational* nature.

Not only so but it is the same *content*, Hegel ever repeats, which art, religion and philosophy equally embody, though the form of philosophy, of knowledge, be, as perfect, the abiding form for this content. It has, therefore, the other two within itself. It *contains* them. Only so could a Boethius, who there is reason to think was identical with the saint and martyr Severino, have found supreme consolation therein. Aesthetic delight, adoration, these emotions *belong with*

[1] J.M.E. McTaggart, *Studies in the Hegelian Cosmology*, CUP 1903, ch.2.
[2] E.g. at the end of his *Studies in the Hegelian Dialectic*, CUP 1896.

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perfect knowledge. Therefore the "sons of God shouted for joy" at the creation, beings far removed from those "pure" spirits a dualist philosophy conceives.

As for immortality and infinity, for Hegel the other, constituted as I am, only at first limits me. The other is a *self*, like myself, to whom I indeed am the other. Both are self *and* other, so there is no limit. We pass over into one another. So I am infinite, in and through the others.

> The reconciling *Yes*, in which the two I's let go their opposed existence, is the existence of the I expanded into a duality, and in it remaining identical with itself . . . : *it is God*.[3]

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The promise that He, the Spirit, Holy or holy, "will lead you into all truth", *is* precisely a promise that our wisdom will "accomplish" religion, that "revelation" will cease to be seen as coming from "an alien dark power", that divine knowledge is "closer to ourselves than ourselves". This was recognised by many Church Fathers, a progress from blind faith to *enlightened* understanding. This is and was the true Enlightenment, *Aufklärung*, *Illumination*.

Again, and in illustration, the truth of an absolute *predestination* is a figurative presentation of our eternal reality. We are not contingent, since the free will we depend upon is absolute and necessary, this being the final and dialectical perfection of freedom. The whole posits itself in what, therefore, is more than "part" and, contrariwise, the part posits itself in what transcends any notion of a composite whole. The contradictions, the mutual repulsions, are relative, the final truth is an identity, of "all in all", i.e. all in each (as each is in all). *Sumit unus sumunt mille*, writes Aquinas, in a poem, of the communicant at Mass and this is just what the professedly atheist McTaggart describes in that second chapter referred to in our Note 1. "The eye with which I see God is the eye with which God see me," wrote Eckhart, drawing the thread at least equally tight. The All, that is, is in each "part".

This being taken up into absolute freedom, in self-transcendence, is our true and supra-temporal state, represented in religion by a necessary bestowal of the *lumen gloriae*. In arriving at the end, the "promised land", we come home to ourselves. Philosophy, and the love it embodies (incarnates), accomplishes this.

It was always impossible that we, that I, should be contingent. Every and any I can only be absolute. Can we show this?

[3] G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, Haper Torchbook, New York 1966, p.408.

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One, any "one", can ask him or herself, "Why should I be one of those who exist?" Why should I form part of a world? A question admitting of no answer is an invalid question. Therefore there is no world apart from my, your or his or her consciousness, taking each and any such consciousness individually and absolutely. So, again, we beget one another and from all eternity, neither born nor dying. This again entails the dialectical destruction of life. Life neither is, was nor can be. *Viventibus esse est vivere* is a simple refusal of philosophical truth. *Esse* is *esse* or it is nothing, and we have still to ask if existence is itself worthily predicated of God, of the Absolute Idea which thinks itself. What has been called necessary being could be superseded insofar as an egoless consciousness, as infinite, is rather the norm, each in all and all in each, "members one of another". Here "though he be dead yet shall he live" takes on a deeper sense than promised resuscitation, as of one who "sits in the heavenly places", predestined, unshakeable, necessary. "By faith!" This remains the condition and philosophy asserts, from Socrates to McTaggart, that this a holding to the truth that "The world is rational", since reason cannot rationally deny itself and outside reason, the known and knowable, there can, necessarily, be nothing.

The content appears in religion as one *in* whom we should believe. This is one presented as "the man", identified with any other, "I in you and you in me", "members one of another". What you do to any other you do to me. This truth is presented in terms of consideration for the poorest or "least". There is no special viewpoint here, however, since it has to be so if each has all within him, the unity, and this unity includes all without difference. This is the truth which stress upon "the least" would preserve, and not some sickly preference or election of the weak and damaged, such as revolted Nietzsche. Again, though, there is no one who is not the poorest and least, since he is nothing without the whole, the "system". Yet the converse, again, is equally true.

So the simile of vine and branches has universal application, whether or not this would exhaust its meaning. Each is vine to all the branches, making each branch vine in turn and not *a* vine, which is mere collectivism or "communism", but *the* vine. "He that has seen me has seen the Father." This enunciates a principle of universal application. *Ecce homo*.

This again is not betrayal of religion but its accomplishment, by thought itself, not by this or that thinker in his putative finitude. It comes in the fullness of time, as prepared by religion's development and with no denial of its role. In eternity, called the heavenly Jerusalem, the seer saw no temple, just as he saw no sun. There was no question, then, of a material world purified in its materiality by being shorn of religion. Idealism, identified by Hegel as *the*

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philosophic consciousness, is the converse of this, achieving unity not by negation, but by negating negation.

Where one receives then a thousand, indeed all, receive. *Sumit unus sumunt mille*. This is our liturgical crisis, its real ground, that living now in this intuition we can no longer say why we meet, those who do, to celebrate sacramentally. The veil of sacramentality, of ritual symbolism, is ever being more fundamentally torn apart. Devices such as house masses, liturgical "reform" itself, are all attempts to accommodate a system itself superseded in the widening of philosophical consciousness. This lay behind the Reformation, as subsequent history showed, itself prefigured in Eckhart and others called mystics, in an Augustine, convert philosopher conscious of duties to "the people" (*populus christianus*). The principle of democracy, however, while protecting religious conscience everywhere, exponentially requires that the right to a reasoning consciousness be developed by all, that there be no "people" or "masses" (no pun intended) but community, and this is the salvation of Christianity itself. The people who should be taught only in parables were a passing phenomenon merely. No one, be they good Samaritan or mother or grandmother, wants or ought to want to remain such simpletons. Thus the absolute religion does not refuse transcendence of its inherently imperfect form (as religion) towards philosophic wisdom, the being led into all truth.

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Regarding liturgy Thomas Aquinas admits as much, conceding that the theory of sacramental signs applies to any and every finite appearance, which is therefore dialectically transubstantiated, as we might for a moment put it. On this see the main *Summa,* IIIa 60, 5, i.e. the whole article with objections and replies, especially the third reply, where a positivist or fideist stance has to counter the whole weight of what we are developing here. Man has after all, it is there implied, to be restricted (*arctari*) by divine law (*legem divinam*). This is Aquinas's fourth type of law[4]. It corresponds to a positive and hence miraculous divine intervention in history distinct from the normal providence (Hegel's "cunning of reason") and decreeing through the mouths of chosen human representatives, in the first instance one personally (hypostatically) identified with the intervening divinity as no one else is. If any other representative were thus identified, a possibility that Aquinas admits, he or she would

[4] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theol.*, Ia-IIae 90.

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then after all be the same divine person as the one first revealed or manifested.

Such an approach, however, illustrates the imperfection of religion, even the "absolute" religion, *qua* religion. It obscures the "content" which philosophy must bring to light and "accomplish". Revelation is thus the very movement of thought effecting this, the highest motion of Spirit and not some extrinsic constriction of it. The appearance of constriction is due to the magical or *exclusively* religious mentality of those first receiving the more enlightened teaching, which by its own power and beauty is destined to sweep the world. In itself it is sovereignly free as coming from within, as having the very form of spirit, of love. The outside, or how it appears, is so very much transcendent just inasmuch as it is innermost and most intimate, recalling us to a half-remembered joy or hope. It is in no respect alien. It thus corresponds to the (Platonic) account of knowledge as being a remembrance, *anamnesis*. Thus the revelation presented itself as knowledge and knowledge of knowledge, knowing as one is known, knowing God, the Absolute, and, just therein, "the one he has sent". This phrase, again, concludes a whole tradition of a mission or sending of *prophets* in a pre-philosophical culture. Everyone, however, is equally necessary to the totality in unity and so must say, or aspire to say, "The words I speak . . . are spirit and life." This after all is the only reason for speaking as such, communication with one another. Intercommunion is itself spirit's essence and ingestion. *Sumit unus sumunt mille.* This inspired line bears much repeating.

That which was true, known from the beginning, this we are declaring. We are ever at the beginning or born anew and there is no world grown old. Alpha is omega. The snake swallowing his tail turns himself inside out in contradiction of all forms but the *forma formarum*, absolute identity of all with all.

This joy, then, is not ultimately something we have never had. It is our own ultimate ground and positing, with which philosophy, our constitutive love of wisdom, is ever and anew making contact, our window upon the timeless and heavenly where ideally and thus indeed really we sit. In that sense we would not seek if we did not possess. In a curved space the rectilinear is impossible, a "fragmentary" perception merely.

Questions of revelation and transcendence, and even those of beauty and glory as their own arguments for realities grasped with both intellect and will in one cognitive faculty, are posterior to consideration of the "I" and the "we". I and we: the "we" is the attempt to merge subject and a world. We do have a world, have the other as other, that is, but we have all of it within self, necessarily. Such absoluteness is the very meaning of consciousness, though there is here a deeper question, regarding not merely what is necessary to

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consciousness but the absolute necessity of consciousness itself, that there cannot be a contingent consciousness.

We speak here of thinking, of spirit. As for animal consciousness, we know nothing of it from the inside, which alone is how consciousness is known. We may venture to say, however, that if there were an inside animal consciousness, an animal subjectivity, then it too would be absolutely necessary. That would be "what it is like to be a bat".

"I" names the unity which *we* make up. It is not "the ego", which is third person, but I. It is not even I who write, veering again to third person, nor I who am conscious, necessarily "personal", as we say, subject. Now how can this be, how can I be, unless as necessary, hence timeless, not here or there in a space, unconditioned? The gap between me, subject, and any phenomenal description of my particular nature, history, parentage or genetic make-up is infinitely unbridgeable. I, subject, ask myself how or why I might be one of this number of others, other subjects even (though I make no commitment here) and there is no possible answer, i.e. the question is impossible. I am indeed "absolute source", this being the sense or definition of "I". There is and can be only one I. I am absolute. But this is not a question of language merely. "The community" is a construction. I was never a baby waking to consciousness. Time itself, after all, is phenomenal, how things appear to our "fragmentary" perception. This baby could be described in infinitesimal detail and still nothing would be shown and not a step taken in the direction of showing how I come to be (and not, say, someone else), how I can possibly have become concerned in this. If I could not, then it is all my construction, as I myself am reciprocally constructed by others or even by the others that I myself construct. But then all are one, in absolute need of one another to be at all. The self, that is to say, is an ambiguous and paradoxical construction.

In proportion therefore as I am discovered to myself the world, where each thing is itself and not another thing, is negated simply.[5] All is I, who am, in identity. If I were produced by something outside myself I would not *be* myself. Putting it differently, if I were not a baby then I am not now a man or a woman. We are, rather, the angels of tradition, of whom Aquinas felt forced to conclude that they were created with the cognitional species of all things within them, proto-version of the Cartesian innate ideas. This was because

[5] Cf, Hegel, *Encyclopaedia* 70: "But it is stupid not to see that the unity of distinct terms or modes is not merely a purely immediate unity, i.e. unity empty and indeterminate, but that - with equal emphasis - the one term is shown to have truth only as mediated through the other; - or, if the phrase be preferred, that either term is only mediated with truth through the other."

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he could not in any other way preserve difference between them and an infinite and hence omniscient creator. The plain inference, all the same, is that they are uncreated, are necessary in the Leibnizian sense (Aquinas countenances *created* necessary beings, e.g. angels, souls, prime matter). Otherwise they are below the human, their knowledge not being got by their own powers.

The salient point is that there is no reason to struggle with this obscure matter, these hypothetical big brothers and guardians in an alien but ever so real world, except on a particular deficient interpretation of monotheism. In a philosophy of identity there is no hierarchy of beings. Insight into the humanity of Spirit evokes the spirituality of any and every consciousness, the taking (assumption) of it into the absolute and infinite, "thought thinking itself". Life "runs away" as having "the germ of death" within it but, and therefore, we, as *subject*, are not alive, absolutely speaking, but *more* than that. We are not indeed we as we spontaneously think it, but "members one of another", each possessing the unity of all.

This entails, further, that all such thinking, propositions or making judgements, is itself as illusory as our babyhood or our being found under a cabbage leaf (though this image all the same would confirm at least our backward immortality). It all belongs to that fragmentary skein we call consciousness, overcome partially sometimes in music or dreams, their *content* at one with that of art, religion and philosophy. There is an Australian tribe who believe firmly and soberly that their ancestors created the world. Here we say we are our own ancestors.

If the content should transcend consciousness we can only represent this as a fulfilment and overcoming of fragmentation, as every judgement strives to identify or de-fragment, in copulation, subject and predicate. Here we evoke sexuality and its own brand of striving, at once desperate and joyful. So we might note the claim often surfacing in the homosexual sub-culture that the indiscriminate loving or coupling there encouraged, not so much bi- only as *pan*sexuality, is a release into spirituality taken as identity, as with our *sumit unus sumunt mille*.[6] The wind blows where it will and it is a constant of research that beneath what we may find repellent and unnatural constants of value may yet be found, as promiscuity recalls, *mutatis mutandis*, love of enemies.

[6] Cf. Daniel Gaborró, "Nuestros besos salvan al mundo", *Zero*, Madrid, No. 102, pp. 118–120. The "gay" community appears here to want to take over the Messianic role of, say, the proletariat in Marxism. Absurdity or development? Both groups, anyhow, were "despised and rejected of men", a constant for saviours in our culture, from Jesus to the mythical Frodo. But that things are the opposite of what they at first seem, like dialectic itself, lies at the origin of philosophy as well as of all prophecy.

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A realist philosopher such as Maritain might here object to a "confusion of the orders" but it is just this principle, of not confusing them, that is in question all along the line. We can deal similarly with the objection against judging that we make no judgements, this step which, like the ontological argument, takes us out of and away from "the world" in "sovereign ingratitude".

The absolute primacy of self, for whom and in whom are all things, conditions without removing realities of religion such as revelation and prayer, though we may also say it sublates them in the Hegelian sense. God and I are one, and the latter, when understood, is prior, without taint of alien hostility or a finite patriarchalism. In religious history God, the concept, is refined towards identity of self. This is revelation or, as it is called in theology, the history of salvation. Yet it is this unveiling of God, the Absolute Idea, which unveils self to self as absolute universal, first and total.

It is this self, the true but trans-empirical, closer than close in identity, which is approached in prayer, spontaneous or more deliberate. Prayer is confession of these truths, in praise or petition, authentic talking to self or, finally, silent meditation or contemplation. All that is written down proceeds from this, in proof of the unity there of all with all. Hence it was taught, again, that the soul is only known in the knowing of others (Aquinas), never self-perceived as isolated particular. It is rather identified with the concrete universal in Hegel's logic. Bare particulars, it is easily shown, are in the end abstractions, lacking all quality.

For in the end everything is left as it is and we but "work upon the trunk", as Confucius puts it. The timeless eternity of the self is represented in the Augustinian-Platonic divine ideas, such that any act of creation of temporal or finite entities is itself necessarily atemporal and atemporally necessary. Such necessary or irrevocable emanation is itself the perfect freedom, without shadow of doubt or turning. The Word, indeed, is one with its utterer in an interchangeability of concept. Hence there is but one Word, one going forth and returning in recapitulated Spirit, holding all things in one, the Concept. *Non moriar sed vivam*. "But you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God." As immortal, then, we have passed beyond both life and death, music ever returning.

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Election or necessity consists in being or having been or being about to be one of the actual number of beings (or number of actual beings). All such beings are, *qua* beings, rational, which is to say conscious. This position therefore either excludes the rationality of computers or affirms their subjectivity, their subjectivity, whether individually

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or generically. Such a computer would be a spirit. "I will put my spirit into them."

One says one of a number, yet one has to transcend number here, as infinity has to be infinitely differentiated. One transcends existence as well. The mystical body, even if proportioned, cannot have limits. How else explain that I, just I, sit here and think and breathe? Outside of me all is nothing, since all that is within me is outside of me, in apprehension. I am that relation, that identity of outside and inside, in which alone the whole unity is realised, is actual, is thought (as thinking itself). "The eye with which God sees me is the eye with which I see him" and Eckhart prays to God to deliver him from talking about God.

It is in thinking, the activity, that the Trinity, the Absolute, is manifested and it is in the Absolute, therefore, that thinking has its seat. It does not then arise within nature, since this is phenomenal, where we might seem to encounter it as an evolutionary development. Thinking itself situates evolution, rather. Thinking is I; I am thinking, consciousness. So all thinking is within me and I in all thinking. This thinking, moreover, finds its unity in just one thought of itself, one Word, which is thus silence. I am myself, absolute universal. Such a universal can only be found, realised concretely, as individual, "personal".

"Whom he foreknew . . ." The Absolute is the *choice* of just those persons who are, who choose one another. Yet there is no choice or decision as to who is a person, who, on our part, shall be *accorded* this right. Any "who" has it as such. Conversely, one cannot *imagine* a person. The personal just *is* the actual. If one would succeed in imagining a person then that person would *be*.[7] Personality, rationality, is *prior* to being, more formal, as all that is (or is not) is relational, having the other, all others or all that is other even back to the otherness of self, as other. It has no parts, all in each and each in all. Thinking does not exist, thinking thinks. One of the things that thinking thinks is existence. Act, not being, is paramount and so being, our notion of it, is resolved into act, not *actus essendi* over again but *actus purus*.

The mystery we call God is found to be one with self. This is not self-evidently atheism so much as it is, rather, the denial of self as finitude. This was and is the basic truth of absolute religion, as its main symbol, the Cross, makes plain. "In order to come to that which you are not you must go through that which you are not" (John of the Cross). There are many ways of doing that, self-denial, "as having nothing yet possessing all things." This symbol, this Golgotha, is

[7] Cf. the story "The Circular Ruins", *Labyrinths*, by J.-L. Borges.

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fearsome to nature and yet, in its presentation as "grace", perfective of it in the sense of a total transcendence. For nature itself as a whole, along with death, is mere phenomenon. Regarding grace, the prayer of St. Francis is explicit: "it is in loving that we are loved." This again illuminates those other sayings, "When I am weak then I am strong", "Dying we live". *In* its denial the self is affirmed as universal and divine. "It is in giving that we receive." If this is definition, then we do not initially receive a power to give. Yet "we love because God loved us." This is that primary election in which we mutually participate. This identity of elicitation and reception destroys both together as anything other than interim concepts.

In this sense the self derives from all history and "a person is a person through persons" (Bantu proverb). History then is entirely dependent upon the self in equal measure and the self can read off its necessity there. So God, it is confirmed, is essential to the world, which is none other than his Word incarnate. That is, there is no world, no nature, only the unities of Spirit "thinking itself". Such "acosmism" would be wrongly identified with pantheism, Hegel points out. Isaiah's drop of water on the rim of the bucket intends the same truth. The American presidential candidate, when asked challengingly if he believes in God, should reply that he believes in no God fashioned or conceived by the thought of man and that that is belief in God as the Bible understands it.

If there is question as to why or how we, just I, any I, can exist, then here that question finds its ground and possibility as question. There is no proportion or possible link between the self-consciousness through which all is mediated and the objectivities or objectivisations called nature. The same though applies to positive or, rather, positivist theology. Only philosophy can give the key to, as it has learned from, the vital practices of religion. It is in this sense alone that it can be called the handmaid (*ancilla*) of faith, being in fact its living and self-perfecting substance, not separable from "mysticism". Experience of God *means* just this thinking become knowing and not anything else. In this sense no one who thinks errs as and when he or she thinks, however stationed in history or in the development of his or her life. Thus to read, to study, think, is to remember, to see one's own knowledge unfold in rational understanding.

As Platonism must pass over into sceptism and the Sophists into the medieval transcendence, so must every thesis contain the germ of its contradiction, until thinking passes from judgement to perception, perceiving itself as perceiving. There indeed it may "keep silence". The esoteric is the exoteric, as the transcendent is the most immanent. These are not clever paradoxes but sober truth, were not truth itself inebriate, like the fat man on a donkey, drinking wine, entering Jerusalem, head and tree colliding.

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The theory of the "multiverse" in physics implicitly identifies possibility and necessity, as in idealism. Expounding the *via tertia* Aquinas remarks that in endless time "what can happen at some time does happen". Similarly though, what does not happen could not happen. The superseding of life by ideal rationality, which is final subjectivity, finds illustration in the late Luciano Berio's "Rendering" of the unfinished piano sketches left by Franz Schubert for a further or tenth symphony. Berio's orchestration of these sketches alternates with composition in his normal trans-narrational style. Yet the work forms a unity such that with repeated hearings the orchestrations, so close to Schubert's own when in life, are more and more heard in clear awareness of Berio's calm and passionless interpolations. We thus have life at its loveliest itself opening on to the Idea transcending it.

Here we might recall Findlay's suggestion[8] that Hegel's philosophy is finally an aesthetic. It renders a vision of reality taken as a whole, as we find in Poe, Goethe, Blake or Joyce, while clearly conscious, again, that thus, thinking the whole or thinking "with the Concept", we arrive at and have arrived at the inebriate truth.

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So in philosophy one grasps the unity of all things, as is prefigured within the frame of art, the picture, building or circumscribed piece of music. The identity can be called egoless, which means the same as that all is ego, I, myself. I am that; this is I. Or we might say, as well, this is *thou*. "This also is thou; neither is this thou." The other I apprehend is within. Without is within, "closer than self".

Can one then say one is necessary, that subjectivity has infinite value? Hegel derives this from the saying that "God wills that all men be saved", a saying from the "pastoral" epistles variously explained away in much pastoral and religious writing.[9] What, one might rather ask, are men? What bounds them, or any one of them, or me? The intuition, issuing in the question of how I, just I, can be *one of* the finite number of selves one sees walking about, gets explained by a *gratuitous* creation. A seemingly impossible *gift* of self to self is postulated, demanding I be there beforehand. Or we must say that creation, as we would expect after all, transcends gift. Gifts are a part of our language *within* creation. Again, an "external" power

[8] J.N. Findlay, *Hegel: a Reexamination*, Collier Books, New Yory 1966 (Macmillan 1958).

[9] Hegel, *Ibid.* 147, subtext.

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could not give inwardness, consciousness. There is then no external. Rather, "I and the Father are one." We should not exclude previous meditation from the speaker, whoever he may be. So it has to have wider, universal application. "Before Abraham was, I am." Yet we hear of the God *of* Abraham as a God of the living, the ever-living. Yet we can as well say that Abraham never lived, that life itself "runs away" in our attempt to conceive of it.

I, my idea, which is not simply another's idea of me, cannot have begun. My idea is I in self-consciousness. The other is the same, self, beloved. We beget one another as it is "in loving that we are loved". The saint here enunciates the plain and dialectical truth, as the cause is the effect. If I cannot not be I am thus in my vanishing, into other, as being is non-being. Here is the background to thinking God as love.

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Idealist accounts of reality are often rejected as improbable. Here we forget that the immediate sense-object is internal and that the act of sensing is cognitional, "mediate" in Hegel's language. This does not contradict Aquinas's thesis[10] that this immediate sense-object or *species* (appearance, one might translate) is (not *id quod* but) *id quo*, that by which the *res* (sc. "common-sense" reality) is cognised or perceived. For it is part, indeed the whole point almost, of idealist philosophy too that what is immediate is not itself perceived, does not form part of even the common-sense or unreflected world. It is, as *species intentionalis*, argued for from common experience, as *signum formale* on the retina or elsewhere on "the body". Body itself though, in all consistency, must then equally be a construct. Theologically we say that God, *nous*, reason, *created* "the world".

If we do not make this improbable move which, claim Hegel or Parmenides, is *the* philosophical move, then we have the unexplained common-sense world, the latest attempt to explain which *on its own terms*, or leaving the first *mediated* data in place, is evolution. This hypothesis is not merely improbable, statistically and in other ways, such as how it stands to the general reciprocity observed in nature, but self-contradictory. The brain, say, has evolved so as to "explain" its own evolution.

A loss of philosophical nerve, I mean a desertion of (or by) reason, easily occurs. Thus Peter Geach, after well explaining McTaggart's Hegelian account of reality, says that we "had better" go on believing in the common-sense world of space and time, though here he equally

[10] *Summa theol.* Ia 85 2.

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deserts contemporary natural science.[11] This seems to be because he thinks that the theological doctrine of creation demands, as part of it, a "realist" view of common experience. But there is no reason to think this. It is like thinking that Hebrew or Latin are "absolute" languages or the speech of heaven.

Geach merely see-saws here. Such see-sawing is disservice to religion, which requires internally that philosophy "accomplish" it, as the existence of theology developed from initial commentary and interpretation or "prophecy" itself shows. What philosophy adds is a reflexive situating of this "sacred" practice itself.

Involved here is a deconstructive interpretation of the paradigm or category of revelation, similar to that made by K. Rahner upon the basic notion, but not the thesis itself, of "inspiration" (of, say, Scripture). Trinitarian theology is another example. Yet this theologian complains, in *Sacramentum Mundi* (1968), that there has been no Trinitarian theology since the fourteenth century, not seeing that in Hegel's work it has returned with all the vigour it had in the mind of St. Augustine, who had single-handedly explained or "accomplished" the mystery previously.

The theologian, that is, does not explain or accomplish the ground-category of revelation, upon which he makes his or her "science" parasitic, though it thus remains only halfway between fundamentalism and rational explanation, equivocally see-sawing in fact. Similarly Newman had proposed a doctrine of development without noting that this must in logic require development too of the doctrine of development he thus initiated. Nor can bounds be set to ecumenism, once admitted as method or *modus operandi.* In fact it is simply dialectic, in which everything finite is consumed as if, or rather because, it never was or is not.

Rahner speaks of believing the Apostles. This is his account of "the faith of the Church". It includes an unexamined or unthematised notion of such faith as might apply if the Apostles stood here in front of us, though even here epistemological queries abound. Belief is not knowledge, for example. Volition is at work in it, even choice. He "saw and believed". A compelling illumination is implied, which is yet a personal interpretation, called "grace", a revelation from the "heavenly father" or Absolute.

But if the Absolute is itself Reason (*Vernunft*), is Reason itself, then the distinction that "grace" would make seems merely fancied. Hence Rahner went on to say that everything is grace. Similarly, for Hegel absolute necessity is freedom. The mysterious, here, is not the irrational but, rather, the mystical, knowable to Spirit that "judges all things". This though is no longer mediation, since Spirit

[11] Cf. P.T. Geach, *Truth, Love and Immortality,* Hutchinson, London 1976.

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effects all that it beholds and, hence, is. Knowledge is dialectic process, not a transition from one real state to another. It is attainment of the singular or infinite reality which "ungratefully" negates the way thither since it is knowable not merely to us but alone absolutely knowable in itself. This is the same as to say that it alone knows itself. There is no subject which is not subjectivity or absolute.

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"Whoever listens to you listens to me," since all utterance is verbal or of the "Word". All done to another is done to all, as each is "all things to all men", as subjectivity is necessarily form of forms, as love is the "bond of being" in universal sympathy. To take any one of these texts in restrictive literalness while leaving the others from this source in their infinitude is but to repeat the incomprehension of "Lord here are two swords", eliciting the weary reply, "It is enough". Yet a choice is indeed at work, a refusal to be taken up or transcended, the error of Simon Magus, seeking to reduce understanding to power relations. We receive everything, the All, the whole, from one another, in reciprocated Gift, *donum*, a name for Spirit.

One should overcome "the letter" everywhere, quite apart from questions of interpolation, discrepant versions, textual corruptions. All these phenomena, after all, may well be instances of that "cunning of reason" of which Hegel speaks. This simply means that reason is reality, as death is life's only possible outcome. Time itself is a figure of dialectic as a whole, though but one category (of Nature) within it. The present, the Now, is the *result*, negating all that has gone before and "produced" it, to the point where it "no longer" is and hence never "was".

Thus the *tu es Petrus*, though referred to time and space, belongs in Scripture to a contemplative pattern within which talk of a rock, *petrus*, ends and climaxes the deeply mystical "Sermon on the Mount", the latest three-chaptered summary of Judaic wisdom and an extended manifestation of Spirit. One is well-founded, built on a rock, if one "hears" this teaching, as having nothing yet possessing all things, no longer making judgements. One has passed from death to life in love, self in all. This is at once revelation and true philosophy, overcoming "the world" of common-sense and practical prudence.

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In the film *Reunion* (2002) a mother cannot accept the death of her child. She believes she sees him bodily, embraces him and believes that at least one other, his sister, sees him. He says that he has to go away and asks her to go with him. As she prepares to do this,

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by suicide, the sister tells her that she, for her part, only pretended to see him. This restores the mother to continued life enriched with positive memory of the departed one whom she believes will "see her again". "If I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you." He will teach you all I have said unto you. Similarly with the lingering around the grave. "He is not here, he is risen," as Hegel loved to quote, and indeed the Resurrection is extended theologically into eternal glorification beyond Ascension in the "heavenly places" where we "sit with Christ", we who "are dead". The Marcan climax, "Why seek you the living among the dead?", seems to know nothing of a tomb emptied of its corpse, or at any rate to attach no transcendent significance to this possibility. A possible decision among the Marcan group not to report "appearances" ("and they said nothing" etc.) gets explained by the theory of a "lost ending". An "ending" is indeed supplied by a later hand, discrepant in style and outlook, but treated now as "inspired", which it may well be. We "interpret spiritual things spiritually", thus "accomplishing" the figurative representations of religion and not "reducing" it. The Gospel urges us to understand (believe) without signs and wonders, which are a concession to "this generation". The appetite for them embodies a defect in virtue and understanding.

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