

“Mind of God, Point of View of Man, or Something Not Quite Either? Some reasons not to be worried about Hegel’s critique of the limits Kant placed on human knowledge”

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In her illuminating essay, “Point of view of man or knowledge of God. Kant and Hegel on concept, judgment, and reason,”¹ Béatrice Longuenesse interprets Hegel’s mature metaphysics on the plan of his early transformation of Kant’s critical philosophy in the essay from 1802, *Faith and Knowledge*. Importantly, it would be the idea of an “intuitive understanding” that Kant had alluded to in the *Critique of Judgment* that would form the template for the “absolute idea” of Hegel’s mature system, but while Kant had utilized the notion to underline the type of knowledge that was *inaccessible* to the “point of view of man,” Hegel would criticise such an abstract opposition between purportedly finite and infinite cognitive capacities. In *Faith and Knowledge* Hegel accused Kant of failing to acknowledge the full implications of his own discovery, as in the process of his reasoning Kant had encountered a type of mental content that gave the lie to his own empiricist assumptions. In the “Dialectic of Aesthetic Judgment” of the *Critique of Judgment* Kant had broached the idea of the experience of beauty as an indeterminate presentation of the supersensible, implying that what God was capable of knowing was *not* irredeemably denied to human experience. But while Kant had failed to carry through this discovery, Hegel, seeing himself as true to the spirit of Kant’s revolutionary philosophy, would aspire to do so.

For Longuenesse, aspects of Hegel’s criticisms of Kant in *Faith and Knowledge* were continuous with those of his morally

¹ Béatrice Longuenesse, “Point of view of man or knowledge of God. Kant and Hegel on concept, judgment, and reason,” in Sally Sedgwick (ed), *The Reception of Kant’s Critical Philosophy: Fichte, Schelling, & Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), revised in Béatrice Longuenesse, *Hegel’s Critique of Metaphysics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), part II. Page numbers are given to the latter publication.

articulated criticisms in earlier works such as *The Spirit of Christianity*, but now they were made without any appeal to the moral role played by “feeling,” nor to the role of the historical Jesus. They had been, we might say, transposed from a moral–religious to a theological–philosophical key. Thus, Hegel now posits the idea of “a philosophical system that reap[s] the benefits of Kant’s Copernican Revolution while unifying what Kant divides: reason and sensibility, thought and being, freedom and necessity.”² That is, Hegel’s critique ambitiously tries to reconfigure the complete Kantian system, and “starts with a demand for a new type of moral philosophy [and] goes on with a search for the relevant metaphysics for which Hegel finds the key concepts in Kant’s third *Critique*.” This in turn leads to a “reinterpretation of Kant’s *magnum opus*: the *Critique of Pure Reason*,”³ such that Hegel challenges the claim from the “Transcendental Dialectic” that “ideas” have only “regulative” status and never properly provide *knowledge*. Since for Kant the idea of a divine intuitive intellect is meant to play a predominantly negative role in signalling the limits of the “point of view of man,” the collapse of the regulative–constitutive distinction for Hegel means the restoration of the human aspiration to know the mind of God. And as knowing the mind of God means knowing what God knows, this effectively amounts to coming to know the world as it is “in itself,” rather than as “appearance.”

Longuenesse’s treatment of the Hegel–Kant relation in this paper reveals her as what I will call a “qualified non-metaphysical” interpreter of Hegel within the on-going disputes over the commitments of Hegel’s philosophy. One of the striking features of Hegel interpretation over the last couple of decades has been the emergence of “non-metaphysical” or “post-Kantian” readings of Hegel’s philosophy, such as found in the work of Robert Pippin and Terry Pinkard.⁴ These readings are “non-metaphysical” in the

² Ibid., 165.

³ Ibid., 166.

⁴ See especially, Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel’s Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) and *Hegel’s Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Terry Pinkard, *Hegel’s Naturalism: Mind, Nature, and the Final Ends of*

sense of radically challenging the more traditional approaches within which Hegel had been regarded as having endorsed a *pre-Kantian* conception of metaphysics.⁵ Like the non-metaphysicalists, Longuenesse sees Hegel as having *accepted* Kant's critique of traditional metaphysics and as having attempted to find a Kantian way beyond the internal problems of Kant's own transcendental idealism. We should, she asserts "take Hegel at his word when he claims to have used Kant against Kant, and to have built upon those aspects in Kant's philosophy which pointed the way towards restoring 'knowledge of God' over the mere 'point of view of man'."⁶ But while her own *earlier* work had shown a "striking similarity" to the approach of Pippin,⁷ this post-Kantian dimension of her own interpretation has become qualified in her more recent writings, such as the essay in question here, by a more *Kantian* reluctance to endorse the project she sees Hegel as aiming at. Hence her return to seeking a more *Kantian* way beyond the limits of the historical Kant. She thus suggests "that instead of pushing the results of Kant's dialectic, in all three *Critiques*, towards a reconciliation of the 'point of view of man' and the 'knowledge of God', another more defensible option is to retreat once and for all into the Analytic of all three *Critiques* and to further elucidate the 'point of view of man': the nature of the ever more complex ways in which sensibility and discursivity, passivity and activity are entwined in making possible our cognitive and practical access to the world."⁸ To this end she seeks to find in Kant's *Critique of Judgment* alternative ways of exploiting those tensions in Kant's position that Hegel exploits such that the internal critique of Kant might bypass the reconciliation of "point of view of man" and "knowledge of God" that is at the core of Hegel's critique.⁹ Here the overall strategy seems to be that the real benefits to be found in Hegel's critique of the Kantian system need to be

Life (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁵ For a good survey of the objections to Pippin's neo-Kantian approach to Hegel see Robert Stern, *Hegelian Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) "Introduction," section I.

⁶ Longuenesse, *Hegel's Critique of Metaphysics*, 167.

⁷ *Ibid.*, xiv.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 178–9.

quarantined against a danger that is internal to Hegel's approach, a danger threatening the genuine insights of Kant's "Copernican Revolution" that had affirmed the finitude of all human experience and knowledge.

A different, less qualified endorsement of Hegel's way of challenging the limitations that Kant places on the human point of view is to be found in James Kreines's "Between the Bounds of Experience and Divine Intellect: Kant's Epistemic Limits and Hegel's Ambitions."¹⁰ In contrast to Longuenesse, Kreines can be thought of as representing a "revised metaphysical" interpretation of Hegel within the current debate. Like "non-metaphysical" readers, Kreines is critical of those *traditional* metaphysical interpretations which sees Hegel as simply having endorsed the sort of aspiration to metaphysics being criticized by Kant. But for a "revised metaphysicalist," non-metaphysical readings like that of Pippin go too far in accepting Hegel as continuing Kant's critique of the aspiration to knowledge of the "thing in itself". Rather, on Kreines's reading, Hegel was intent on *re-establishing* metaphysics in a revised form by exploiting a sense of "thing in itself" as knowable, but in a way that such knowledge would *not* be equated with that of a divine intuitive intellect.

According to Kreines, regardless of the commitments of expressed in *Faith and Knowledge*, the mature Hegel simply had no need for "the conception of a divine intuition and of objects knowable only thereby,"¹¹ and yet retained a sense of "thing in itself" knowable from the human standpoint. For Hegel, Kant's way of placing limits on human knowledge had failed to account for quite straightforward forms of human knowledge because it ruled out even "the possibility of strictly or purely empirical knowledge of natural laws governing natural kinds".¹² Such laws and kinds *can be known by us*, according to Hegel, and so in that we can surpass the limits that Kant had placed on human knowledge, we *can know*

¹⁰ James Kreines, "Between the Bounds of Experience and Divine Intellect: Kant's Epistemic Limits and Hegel's Ambitions", *Inquiry*, 50, 3 (2007), 306–334.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 312.

¹² *Ibid.*, 317.

“things in themselves”. Indeed, Kreines suggests, the features of the world accessible to thought have “in itself” status in the stronger sense of being “mind-independent” *überhaupt*, not just independent of “mind” in its *Kantian* construal.¹³

One feature that is common to both Longuenesse’s and Kreines’s readings is their commitments to a normative position that might broadly be called “left-Hegelian”. Like the original left-Hegelians, Longuenesse ties the metaphysically reactionary potential to Hegel’s aspiration to overcome the gap between the anthropological point of view and the “knowledge of God,” and thus refocuses the differences between Kant and Hegel in a more anthropological way around the “point of view of man.” For his part, Kreines writes as if the mature Hegel had no need of quasi-theological notions like the “intuitive intellect” at all, and Hegel’s theological register drops from sight. That is, both seem to implicitly accept the conceptual link between the theological and metaphysical dimensions of Hegel’s philosophy that had been endorsed by traditional metaphysical readings. What they differ on is the question of the degree to which these theologico-metaphysical elements were *actually* present in Hegel’s work. For Longuenesse they are present but are to be eliminated. For Kreines, they seem not to be present at all.

It is this shared assumption that a philosophically progressive reading of Hegel must be kept free from theological notions that I want to bring into question in this essay. Longuenesse makes a relevant and important point when she asserts that Hegel is critical of Kant’s “idea of God,”¹⁴ but, I suggest, it is clear enough from Hegel’s writings that he could not have been critical of *the fact* that Kant had an “idea of God” built

¹³ For Kreines, even what Hegel refers to as *Begriffe* (concepts) are mind-independent. “So Hegel’s *Begriffe*, including initially natural kinds governed by universal laws, are not mind-dependent in the sense we would expect given the term “concept”: the reality and the real effective impact of laws governing natural kinds does not depend on their being represented by us. They are not mind-dependent, but they are accessible only to thought”. *Ibid.*, 325. Kreines links his approach here to the approaches of Kenneth Westphal and Robert Stern. *Ibid.*, 333, n 38.

¹⁴ Longuenesse, *Hegel’s Critique of Metaphysics*, 181.

into his philosophy: rather, he was surely critical of the *actual* idea of God that Kant had presupposed. After all, we must presumably take Hegel at his word when he makes claims along the lines as that found in his lectures on aesthetics—the claim that philosophy “has no other object but God and so is essentially rational theology”.¹⁵

In this essay I concentrate on Longuenesse’s account of the Kant–Hegel relation and suggest that attempts to circumvent the specifically theological dimensions at issue here are misconceived and risk leaving intact Kant’s *own conception* of the “mind of God.” My general claim will be that if we come to understand *better* the shape of Hegel’s alternative idea of God, at least some of the worries that Longuenesse sees as surrounding Hegel’s *reconciliation* of the finite and infinite points of view might be seen to fall away.

In the following section I start with an anachronism that has been observed in Kant’s first *Critique* surrounding his treatment of “the mind of God,” and then go on to expand on the topic of Kant’s specific theological assumptions by relating his idea of God to that of the early church father, Saint Augustine of Hippo. Augustine, of course, had a huge effect on the conception of God in the Christian tradition, but it was not without opposition, and I contrast his conception of God with a very different heterodox one found in Hegel and traceable back through mystics such as Jacob Böhme to *non-Augustinian* ways of inheriting Platonic thought in the early church. With this contrast we are able to see how the polarities meant to be reconciled in Hegel’s approach are quite different to those portrayed from a *Kantian* perspective by Longuenesse. And this reconstruction, I suggest, shows how Hegel’s reconciliation

¹⁵ G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 101. Original German: G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, edited by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1969), vol. 13, p. 139. (Hereafter given in parentheses by volume and page numbers.) Philosophy, along with art and religion, belongs to what he refers to as “Absolute Spirit”, and these three realms having this same content—God—“differ only in the *forms* in which they bring home to consciousness their object, the Absolute.” Ibid.

does not threaten the generally “Copernican” aspects of Kant’s approach that Longuenesse is concerned to preserve. Finally, I conclude with some general thoughts about how we should regard Hegel’s theological views in relation to his metaphysics.

1. Kant’s Anachronistic Plato Interpretation

In his account of Plato’s ideas in the first book of the “Transcendental Dialectic,” of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, “On the concepts of pure reason,” Kant, in describing how for Plato ideas were “archetypes of things themselves,” adds that these ideas “flowed from the highest reason, through which human reason partakes in them.”¹⁶ Later, in the section of the Transcendental Dialectic treating the “ideals of pure reason,” he notes that an ideal “was to *Plato*, an *idea in the divine understanding*.”¹⁷ But as the editors of the Cambridge University Press translation of the *Critique of Pure Reason* point out, the idea of a divine mind as *container* of the ideas was not Plato’s and did not appear until the “syncretistic Platonism from the period of the Middle Academy.” From there it “was later adopted by Platonists as diverse as Philo of Alexandria, Plotinus and St Augustine, and became fundamental to later Christian interpretations of Platonism.”¹⁸

In the most general terms, it might be said that of the group of late antique Platonists mentioned by Guyer and Wood in their comment on Kant’s anachronism, it is Saint Augustine (354–430AD) who best represents those features of Kant’s Platonism to which Hegel was opposed. It could be thought that such an historical comparison is of little relevance for reflecting on the relations between the approaches of Kant and Hegel, but things can look different when Augustine’s conception of the mind is examined in relation to similar conceptions in the early modern period. Many have pointed to the structural similarities between

¹⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. and trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A313/B370. See also A318/B374.

¹⁷ Ibid: A 568/B 596.

¹⁸ Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, editorial notes to Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 746 n. 86.

Augustine’s account of the mind’s interiority and Descartes’ *cogito*, especially with regard to the role of the will in each.¹⁹ When this fact is taken in relation to the theme of the history of German idealism as involving a *challenge* to the Cartesianism of earlier philosophy—in Beiser’s memorable phrase, its “struggle against subjectivism”²⁰—the relevance of the Augustinian model of the mind might be seen in a different light. Moreover, commentators such as John Rawls and Frederick Beiser have pointed to what they have taken to be the distinctly Augustinian flavour of Kant’s “will-centred” approach to moral philosophy—that “voluntarist” dimension of Kant’s philosophy to which Hegel was particularly opposed.²¹

In fact, the figure of Augustine might be helpful in a further way, given that the voluntaristic features of his thought that reappear in Descartes and Kant seem to have coexisted in an unstable mix with *other* features that might seem closer to the form of Platonism that *for Hegel* best represented the point of transition from ancient thought to Christianity, and thence to modernity—the neoplatonic philosophies of Plotinus and Proclus.²² The views of the former had fed into Augustine’s defence of emerging Christian Trinitarianism, and not surprisingly, the perplexing doctrine of the Trinity had proved particularly contentious during the first centuries

¹⁹ The claim that Descartes was indebted to Augustine for the basic conception of the *cogito* was made by Etienne Gilson in *Introduction a l’etude de Saint Augustin* (Paris: Vrin, 1929), translated by L. E. M. Lynch as *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, (New York: Random House, 1960), and has more recently been taken up by Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), Ch 7. See also Stephen Menn, *Descartes and Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

²⁰ Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism, 1781–1801* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002).

²¹ John Rawls *Lectures of the History of Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 294; Frederick C. Beiser, “Moral faith and the highest good” in Paul Guyer, (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Kant and Modern Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 594. A now classic *strong* account of Augustine’s “invention” of the will is Albrecht Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

²² See, for example, Hegel’s introduction to the philosophy of the Middle Ages in G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 3 volumes, trans. E. S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), vol. III, 1–25 (19.493–513).

of the Christian era, and was again to become so for later periods as well. Significantly, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, an interpretative split occurred between the more nominalistic and voluntaristic views of the Franciscans, following Bonaventura, and the more Aristotelian-inflected views of the Dominicans, following Aquinas.²³ In very broad terms, it might be said that the voluntarists were happy to leave the trinity idea as a revealed but incomprehensible mystery, while the opposing movement thought it reconcilable with a philosophical theology. Luther had generally played it down or treated as a mystery beyond human understanding,²⁴ but within the particularly Dominican influenced *Swabian* variety of Lutheranism within which Hegel was raised, the trinity doctrine had been highlighted. Moreover, it was subjected to quite heterodox interpretations like that of Jacob Böhme, who took the idea of Christ as “son of God” as signalling the divinization not only of humankind but of the entire created realm. And Böhme was a thinker whom Hegel, as we will see, was to take seriously indeed.²⁵

2. Augustinian and non-Augustinian strands in Christian Conceptions of God

At the start of the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant comes out with a striking statement about the will: “It is impossible to think of anything at all in the world, or indeed even beyond it, that could be considered good without limitation except a *good will*.”²⁶ Jerome Schneewind has described such an equating of the

²³ See, in particular, Russell L. Friedman, *Medieval Trinitarian thought from Aquinas to Ockham* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

²⁴ Samuel M. Powell, *The Trinity in German Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 22.

²⁵ In the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel pairs Böhme and Francis Bacon as representing the birth of the modern era in philosophy. (Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. III, 188–216 (20.91–119). Böhme had been rediscovered by the Jena Romantics Tieck, Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel in the late 1790s. Henry Harris dates Hegel’s interest from 1804. H. S. Harris, *Hegel’s Ladder. 1: The Pilgrimage of Reason* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 94n49.

²⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. Mary Gregor, intro. Christine M. Korsgaard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 4.393 (here pagination (given in margins in English edition) is to volume and page number

good with that which is “willed by a will governed by the moral law” as a clear sign of Kant’s voluntarist inheritance. “In his early attempts at theodicy Kant worked with the voluntarist idea that to be good is simply to be what God wills. He gave up on the thought that God creates all possibilities; but he never abandoned the account of goodness inchoately expressed in the early fragments. In the mature theory this point emerges in Kant’s identification of practical reason with a free will governed by the moral law.”²⁷

While it is perhaps to overstate the case to say, as some commentators do, that Augustine had *invented* the concept of the will, this idea at least captures the extent of Augustine’s departure from the moral thought of the Greeks, a departure first and foremost established at the level of theology. As Albrecht Dihle has pointed out, even within the monotheistic pagan theology of later Greek antiquity, God, while having “the desire to create and govern the universe ... does not create *ex nihilo*. He moulds what was without shape, he animates what was without life, he brings to reality what was merely a potential. And, above all, he does not transcend the order which embraces himself as well as his creatures.” This god was more akin to the artificer of Plato’s *Timaeus*, who, rather than an absolute originator of the material world, co-exists with and works upon the world. Importantly, the activity of this artificer is informed by, and thereby *constrained* by, “ideas” external to his own mind. However, as Albrecht Dihle adds, the biblical cosmology that Augustine was to attempt to synthesise with Platonic thought was “completely different.”²⁸ The god of the Old Testament creates the world in an act of will, and in Augustine’s version, does so on the basis of ideas *in* the divine mind. According to John Rist, Augustine had come to think of the soul as an immaterial substance—a view, he adds, “unusual among western Christians of the age, though long familiar in the East.”²⁹ Moreover, the Old Testament God within whom Augustine

of *Kants Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1900-).

²⁷ Jerome Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998), 512.

²⁸ Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity*, 4.

²⁹ John Rist, “Plotinus and Christian Philosophy,” in Lloyd Gerson (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996),

located Plato's ideas was a God whose will was expressed in the form of laws, as in the story of the Decalogue. Again, as Remi Brague has pointed out, such an idea of divine law as issuing *from* some act of divine legislation was a notion largely foreign to both Greek philosophy and Greek religion.³⁰

Augustine's own voluntaristic *theology*, it is commonly said, was itself bound up with a distinctively new anthropology or psychology, and Augustine's conception of the self is often appealed to as significant for the development of modern subjectivistic concepts of the mind as found in the 17th century, especially that of Descartes. "On the way from Plato to Descartes stands Augustine," writes Charles Taylor in his influential account of the "making of the modern identity."³¹ The context in which this Old Testament voluntaristic theology was linked in this way to a type of subjective experience was Augustine's *Confessions*, purportedly portraying the experience of an individual struggling against his own bodily and, importantly, sexual inclinations. In this sense, then, in the case of both God *and* man the will came to be conceived as something fundamentally subjective and legislating, to be imposed *on* an external material order grasped in terms of its resistance to, but also in terms of its capacity to comply with, this subjectively projected order, resulting in a de-corporealized conception of the subjective agent.³²

It is roughly this dimension of Augustine's synthesis, I suggest, that underlies Kant's reading of Plato. As commentators have pointed out, Kant seems to have been clearly influenced by the interpretation of Plato given by Johann Jakob Brucker in his

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³⁰ Rémi Brague, *The Law of God: The Philosophical History of an Idea*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007), 22. There was an exception, however, Plato, especially in *The Laws*. Ibid, 26–27.

³¹ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 127. Phillip Cary, *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self: The Legacy of a Christian Platonist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) covers similar themes but not in terms of a comparison to Descartes. For a critique of these views, see Michael Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2003).

³² Thus Stephen Menn argues that it is the doctrine of the incarnation that required Augustine to add a will to Plotinus' God. *Descartes and Augustine*, 202–3.

widely read *Historia critica philosophiae*.³³ As is signalled by his reference to Brucker at the beginning of “the Transcendental Dialectic,” Kant disagreed with Brucker’s generally negative assessment of Plato,³⁴ but otherwise he seems to have followed Brucker, especially in his account of Plato’s ideas, and Brucker certainly would have given added weight to Kant’s “Augustinian” assumptions about the mind of God. In his Plato interpretation Brucker had consciously tried to separate the views of Plato himself from the neoplatonistic framework in which Plato had been understood by Renaissance by figures like Ficino or later Platonists like Cudworth. Brucker had been entirely hostile to the pagan neoplatonic “monism” of Plotinus and Proclus that he saw as a forerunner to Spinoza’s atheistic materialism.³⁵ But by the time that Hegel and Schelling were coming to engage with philosophy, this negative assessment of Spinoza was, of course, radically changing in the wake of the “pantheism dispute” initiated in the mid-1780s by Jacobi. However the Spinozism revived at this time was one that was being transposed from the more mechanistic framework of 17th century into the early biologicistic thought of the late 18th. Moreover, by publishing as an appendix to the 1789 edition of his *On the Teaching of Spinoza in Letters to Mr. Moses Mendelssohn*,³⁶ Giordano Bruno’s “On the cause, principle, and the one” (*De la causa, principio e uno*), Jacobi had further associated Bruno’s Neoplatonism with Spinoza. During the 1790s, the revival of interest in Platonism reasserted just that neoplatonic complexion that Brucker had resisted half a century before, with the neoplatonic Plato being particularly attractive to early Romantics such as Novalis, who saw in Plotinus a type of early version of the transcendental philosophy of Kant and Fichte.

³³ Gerhard Mollowitz, “Kants Platoauffassung,” *Kant-Studien* 40 (1935), 13–67.

³⁴ In his discussion of Plato at the beginning of the “Transcendental Dialectic” (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 316/B 372), Kant defends the relevance of “ideas” for political thought against Brucker’s criticism of Plato.

³⁵ Michael Franz, “Der Neuplatonismus in den philosophiehistorische Arbeiten der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts” in Burkhard Mojsisch and Orrin F. Summerell (eds) *Platonismus im Idealismus: Die platonische Tradition in der klassischen deutschen Philosophie* (München: K. G. Saur, 2003), 20.

³⁶ Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2000), Beilage 1.

Both Schelling and Hegel were clearly attracted to Plotinian thought as well as that of Spinoza, and especially to the particular role Plotinus had given to the processes of life. In the *Enneads* Plotinus had portrayed life as infused with the processes of intelligence or *nous*, the second member of a triad comprising the one, intelligence, and soul (En, nous, psyche).³⁷ A particularly clear application of the Plotinian processes of egress and regress from “the one” within the living realm is to be found in Hegel’s discussion of life in chapter 4 of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

[T]he simple substance of Life is the splitting-up of itself into shapes and at the same time the dissolution of these existent differences; and the dissolution of the splitting-up is just as much a splitting-up and a forming of members. With this, the two sides of the whole movement which before were distinguished, viz. the passive separatedness of the shapes in the general medium of independence, and the process of Life, collapse into one another.³⁸

This process, which in the *Phenomenology* is construed among living beings and linked to a picture of the dynamic biological realm as a struggle for life, is also applied by Hegel in the *Encyclopedia Logic* at the level of the *individual* organism in ways that parallel Kant’s discussion of the organism in the third *Critique*. Life is the “immediate Idea” that, in its immediacy is “*this singular* living being,” the members of which “are reciprocally both *means* and purposes for each other.”³⁹ Here, “the Concept” is realized “as soul, in a *body*,” the soul being “the immediate self-relating *universality* of the body’s externality.” The *separability* of the soul,

³⁷ Friedrich Creuzer, later Hegel’s colleague at Heidelberg and correspondent during his Berlin period, in 1805 had translated Plotinus’s “On nature and on contemplation and the one,” from the *Enneads* book, III. C.f., Werner Beierwaltes, *Platonismus und Idealismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2004), 84.

³⁸ G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), § 171 (3.142).

³⁹ G. W. F. Hegel, *the Encyclopaedia Logic: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with Zusätze*, trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting and H. S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991), § 216 (8.373).

signaled by the idea of its being “in” the body, simply refers to the body’s mortality, rather than the idea of some Cartesian substance somehow residing in the body.⁴⁰ The animal doesn’t die because a sole flees it, but “because it is the contradiction of being *in-itself* the universal, the genus, and yet existing immediately only as a singular being.”⁴¹ On death the animal “sinks back into” the universal, life, once more. Life, as an indeterminate universal that particularizes itself into determinate living things that inevitably collapse back into it, instantiates the neoplatonic “One.”

But the individual soul also has a non-finite aspect in that it is “*singularity* as infinite negativity,” a “*negative* unity that is *for-itself*.” Here, the separability of the soul from the body has a different sense—that achieved in a *judgment* in which the world becomes something *known* and thereby *for* a subject and so something that is other to it.⁴² Hegel had contextualized this capacity within the process of *reciprocal recognition*, the patterns of which constituted “spirit,” in which again we see an immediate indeterminate unity, a “we”, that splits into “I”s that return as mutually recognizing each other to a mediated “we.”⁴³ Here “Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged.”⁴⁴

It is this structure that is again expressed in *theological terms* as Hegel’s “triune” God. While spirit thus conceived is clearly *not* nature, neither is it abstractly *opposed to* nature as some self-sufficient transcendent being. The developmental processes of spirit are still embodied and located in the processes of nature (itself conceived as “the idea” in externality) such that “nous” could

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., § 221, Addition (8.376).

⁴² This is the type of separation to which Hölderlin had alluded with the idea that judgment, “Urteilen” involves a fundamental division or separation—“Ur-teilen”—from the world. Friedrich Hölderlin, “Judgment and Being” in *Essays and Letters on Theory*, trans. and ed. Thomas Pfau (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988).

⁴³ The famous “‘I’ that is ‘We’ and ‘We’ that is ‘I’” from Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 177 (3.145).

⁴⁴ Ibid., §§ 178 (3.145).

now be conceived as distributed across and immanent within the reciprocally recognizing individuals making up the historically developing human community, while dependent on no particular one of them.

It is clear that Hegel's conception of the processes of both life and thought, while starting from abstract universality which is the analogue of the Plotinian "One," cannot be understood as grounded in any ego-logical idea of a spiritual self-aware entity in the manner of Augustine's or Descartes' versions of the divine or human mind. Plotinus' "henological" one resists any characterization,⁴⁵ including characterization in terms of what is normally thought of as a *mind*, as the Plotinus scholar E. K. Emilsson puts it: "The One doesn't even know itself, because self-knowledge requires some distinction between knower and known, and if it were to know itself, it would have to know itself as something non-simple."⁴⁶ Given that "the One" conceived abstractly is all there is, the ideas are in some sense "in" the one, but not as ideas in a mind or properties of a spiritual "thing". The ideas can only be portrayed as elements at the level of the second hypostasis, *nous*.⁴⁷ Such non-Augustinian readings of the neo-platonic trinity were to be found within the tradition of heterodox interpretations of Christianity to which Hegel was drawn.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ As Dieter Henrich has pointed out, Platonism can be contrasted to Aristotelianism in as much as it identifies "unity" rather than "being" as the central concept from which all reasoning begins. Platonism is, as he says, a "henology" (from the Greek "*to hen*", the one) as opposed to an Aristotelian "ontology". Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism*, ed. David S. Pacini, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 85–6).

⁴⁶ Eyjólfur Kjalar Emilsson, *Plotinus on Intellect*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1.

⁴⁷ On the relation of Hegel to ancient Neoplatonism, see Jean-Louis Vieillard-Baron, *Platon et L'Idéalisme Allemand (1770-1930)*, Paris: Beauchesne, 1979), 267–324, and Beierwaltes, *Platonismus und Idealismus*, 154–187. On the attraction of the Jena romantics to the Böhme, see Paola Mayer, *Jena Romanticism and its Appropriation of Jakob Böhme: Theosophy, Hagiography, Literature* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999).

⁴⁸ See, for example, Cyril O'Regan, *The Heterodox Hegel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

3. Hegel, Böhme and the Fate of the Divine Mind

The synthesis of such neoplatonic ideas with Old Testament cosmology within the early centuries of Christianity had been a controversy-ridden process. One extreme concerning the compatibility of Greek philosophy with Christianity had been expressed by Tertullian (AD 160–225): “What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What has the Academy to do with the Church? What have heretics to do with Christians? Our instruction comes from the porch of Solomon, who had himself taught that the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart. Away with all attempts to produce a Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic Christianity!”⁴⁹ But those not as adverse to “Athens” (or, perhaps “Alexandria”) as Tertullian sought in Greek philosophy ways to make coherent the intellectually perplexing idea of three “persons” in one God from the Old Testament, one influential move here being that of Marius Victorinus (AD 280–365), the “Augustine before Augustine.”⁵⁰ In his transformation of the pagan idea of triunity Victorinus had collapsed the hypostasis of nous *back into* “the One,” personalizing it and, in line with the Old Testament, giving to “the Father” a clear priority *within* the three “persons,”⁵¹ and thereby setting off subsequent disputes as how to understand the relations among them.⁵² The consequences of this move of personalizing the One can be seen as separating Kant’s more Augustinian–Cartesian conception of God from the more *Plotinian* one that Hegel was to embrace, courtesy of Jacob Böhme.

In Böhme’s triune deity, at least as Hegel portrays it in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, the Father or the “One” is no prototype of a willing, self-conscious subject. The Father is

⁴⁹ Tertullian, *Heretics*, 7, in J. Stevenson (ed.), *A New Eusebius: Documents Illustrating the History of the Church to AD 337*, (London: SPCK, 1987), 167.

⁵⁰ Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, volume V, trans. Neil Buchanan (Little Brown, 1899), 35. Thus Harnack writes “Augustine made him his model in the crucial period of his life, and although he understood enough Greek to read neoplatonic writings, yet it was substantially by Victorinus that he was initiated into them.” *Ibid.*, 33.

⁵¹ Rist, “Plotinus and Christian Philosophy,” 403.

⁵² On the difference between the Franciscan account with its focus on the *emanation* of the son from the father from the Dominican “relational” account see Friedman, *Medieval Trinitarian thought from Aquinas to Ockham*, ch 1.

rather “the unrevealed existence, just as the neoplatonic unity is without knowledge of itself and likewise unrecognized.”⁵³ For Böhme it is the *Son* who is the “I,” “the word, the Separator, Revelation ... the source of all difference, and the will and implicit Being which are in the powers of all natural things.”⁵⁴ Hegel quotes Böhme attacking those who, in the name of a unitary God had denied the Trinity: “You say, there is but one Being in God, and that God has no Son. Open your eyes and consider your selves: man is made according to the similitude and out of the power of God in his ternary. Behold the inward man, and then thou wilt see it most plainly and clearly ... this is the Son which is born in thee.”⁵⁵ Böhme portrays the Son both as an I (*ich*) and as nothingness (*Nichts*) by the word play “Icht”—for him, says Hegel, the “true negativity is the ‘I’.”⁵⁶ The I is negation in the sense that it is that *for which* the world is presented in cognition rather than simply *part* of that world.

Hegel certainly thinks of Böhme as a rough and ready “barbaric” thinker, whose expression is limited to “religious and chemical forms,”⁵⁷ but in spite of these restrictions Böhme’s account of the Trinity captures the basic shape of the “thought determinations” or categories of Hegel’s own logic. Thus Böhme’s exclusive idea, “the thought that permeates all his works—is that of perceiving the holy Trinity in everything, and recognizing everything as its revelation and manifestation, so that it is the universal principle in which and through which everything exists; in such a way, moreover, that all things have this divine Trinity in themselves, not as a Trinity pertaining to the ordinary conception but as the real Trinity of the absolute Idea. Everything that exists is, according to Böhme, this three-fold alone, and this three-fold is everything.”⁵⁸ The idea of God, and, in turn, the idea of his creatures, could not be more different to that found in Kant.

⁵³ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, volume III, 198 (20.101).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 202 (20.105).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 213 (20.115).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 206 (20.109).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 211 (20.113).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 196 (20.98–99).

4. The Internal Logic of Kant's Idea of God

In "Point of view of man or knowledge of God" Longuenesse considers an objection to her claim that the Absolute of the mature Hegel can be seen as a successor to the "intuitive understanding" of Kant's third *Critique*. The specific objection she considers comes from Kenneth Westphal,⁵⁹ who might be considered to be, like Kreines, a "revised metaphysicist". Not surprisingly, the general outlines of Westphal's and Kreines's criticisms here are the same. Hegel may have flirted with the notion of "intellectual intuition" found in Fichte and Schelling, so this objection goes, but by the time of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* he had abandoned anything like the notion that Kant had discussed in terms of the "intuitive understanding".⁶⁰

Longuenesse responds that while Hegel did indeed abandon the notion of intellectual intuition, significantly similar features to his earlier notion of the "intuitive intellect" are present mature successor notions such as the "absolute idea." Hegel had wanted to separate his early approach from that of Schelling and from any suggestion of some immediate "given" to consciousness as found in the notion of "intellectual intuition." Later notions such as those of absolute knowledge or the absolute idea had to be seen as achieving a content as a *result* of cognitive inquiry; they did not have determinate contents from which inquiry *starts*.⁶¹ But, she points out, in the *Science of Logic* we still find Hegel "chastis[ing] Kant for having ignored the standpoint he had himself defined as the only true one: that of intuitive understanding."⁶² Furthermore, the distinctly theological language of Hegel's "ever-renewed insistence that he means to reinstate metaphysics as knowledge of God"⁶³ runs throughout his mature works.

Longuenesse surely offers a challenge to the *revised metaphysicists* here to account for this continuing imagery in

⁵⁹ Kenneth R. Westphal, "Kant, Hegel, and the Fate of 'the' Intuitive Intellect", in Sedgwick, *The Reception of Kant's Critical Philosophy*, 283–305.

⁶⁰ Longuenesse, *Hegel's Critique of Metaphysics*, 190.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 190.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

Hegel's mature work. It is hard to take this language seriously and still claim that the world, for Hegel, had basic knowable features that were mind-independent (including independent from *any* divine mind) as Kreines, for one, claims. It is precisely this language that had led traditional metaphysical interpreters to the idea that, for Hegel, the world *is* the contents of God's mind. Longuenesse thinks that there is an element of truth in the traditional view. It exists as a *threat* within Hegel's overall plan to *follow* Kant in his criticism of traditional metaphysics, and the threat is to be avoided by reinterpreting Hegel's insightful criticisms of Kant back into a more Kantian framework. Nevertheless, Longuenesse's response, I suggest, fails to capture how Hegel's theological objections to the *idea* of God that Kant presupposes are of a piece with his criticisms of central *logical* features of Kant's thought—that is, the logical framework within which Kant's articulates the “point of view of man.” Fully appreciating Hegel's critique here, I suggest, can allow us to see how Hegel can make good on Kant's ambition to preserve the empirical realism of Kant's account and yet deny that thinking allows us to access a *mind-independent reality*, that is, preserve something of Kant's combination of empirical realism and transcendental *idealism*. Kreines is right that Hegel has no use for the transcendent God's mind presupposed by Kant, but Hegel can relinquish this because he thinks he has a better concept of God available, one without a transcendent mind but nevertheless with a type of “divine” mindedness distributed over the members of the human genus understood in a way that harks back to the Neoplatonists.

In the “Transcendental Ideal” in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant describes the idea of God as resulting from the *realization*, *hypostatization* and *personalization* of the “idea” associated with a particular type of *inference* pattern, the disjunctive syllogism. The link between these disparate thoughts becomes less opaque when the Aristotelian roots of Kant's transcendental logic are recalled. Like Aristotle, Kant relies on “term negation” to distinguish the *denial* that a predicate can be said of a subject (a “negative” judgment) from the *affirmation* of a *negative* predicate of a subject

(an “infinite” judgment).⁶⁴ Such an infinite judgment with its term-negated predicate can therefore stand within a disjunctive syllogism such that an inference can be made from an affirmative judgment of the form “A is B” to a denial of its corresponding infinite “A is non-B” or vice-versa.⁶⁵

The distinction between these forms of negation is crucial for understanding the genesis of the idea of God in the “Transcendental Ideal”. First, Kant says that every concept “in regard to what is not contained in it, is indeterminate, and stands under the principle of *determinability* [*Grundsätze der Bestimmbarkeit*]: that of every two contradictorily opposed predicates [*kontradiktorisch-entgegengesetzten Prädikaten*] only one can apply to it.”⁶⁶ This “merely logical principle” “rests on the principle of contradiction [*Sätze des Widerspruchs*],” that is, it holds between an affirmative and its corresponding *negative* judgment. But while every *concept* falls under this principle, every *thing* stands under a *further* principle that he calls the “principle of *thoroughgoing determination* [*Grundsätze der durchgängigen Bestimmung*], according to which, among *all possible* predicates of *things* [*Dinge*], insofar as they are compared with their opposites [or contraries, *Gegenteilen*], one must apply to it.”⁶⁷ From this point of view the relevant judgments to be considered are an affirmative judgment and its corresponding *infinite* judgment. Thus, rather than considering every thing in relation to “two mutually contradicting predicates [*einander widerstreitenden Prädikate*],” the principle “considers every thing further in relation to *the whole of possibility*, as the sum total of all predicates of things in general; and by presupposing that as a condition *a priori*, it represents

⁶⁴ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A72/B97.

⁶⁵ Here “A is non-B” represents the affirmative predication to A of a term that is the contrary of “B” as in Kant’s example, “the soul is immortal”. What Kant calls a “negative judgment” would, by contrast, have the form “A is not B”, which for Aristotle represents the *separation* of the terms A and B. Within modern post-Fregean logic such a content would be thought of as derived from the external negation of the proposition “A is B”. I explore these issues further in *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), chs 3 & 4.

⁶⁶ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A571/B599.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, A571–2/B599–600.

every thing as deriving its own possibility from the share that it has in that whole of possibility” and “thus deals with the content [*Inhalt*] and not merely the logical form.”⁶⁸

This idea is, in Kant’s terminology, a “transcendental ideal” or “*Prototypon transcendentale*”—a representation of the “whole of possibility”, whose parts are all thoroughly determined in terms of the totality of such opposed predicates.⁶⁹ However, it is really only a whole of *possibility* from the *human* point of view: from the perspective of the *mind of God*, all modal distinctions would collapse and the “whole of possibility” would be equally one of actuality and necessity.⁷⁰ It is, in fact, an “All of reality (*omnitudo realitatis*),” an “unlimited (the All),” that grounds “all true negations [*alle wahre Vereinungen*]” which are “nothing but limits [*Schranken*].”⁷¹ This is the *first Critique*’s equivalent of the “intuitive understanding” of the *third*. Reason demands that we hold such an idea of a unified ground to all determinately existing beings as a regulative idea, but under the influence of the transcendental illusion, we realize, hypostatize and personalize it, and the result is the idea of God—or more particularly, Kant’s *Augustinian and voluntaristic* God, whose infinite cognitive capacity defines the limits of our own mental capacities.

It is easy to recognize various component conceptions of God in Kant’s description. Simply *realizing* the idea (or realizing and hypostatizing), as in Kant’s idea of the *omnitudo realitatis*, would result in something like Spinoza’s God; further *personalizing* it would give a transcendent monotheism. Even if the idea of the Trinity can be found in Kant’s idea of God,⁷² it is clear that idea of

⁶⁸ Ibid., A572/B600. Translation modified and final emphasis added.

⁶⁹ Ibid., “The Second Book of the Transcendental Dialectic”, ch. 3, section 2.

⁷⁰ Longuenesse, *Hegel’s Critique of Metaphysics*, 173–4. As Longuenesse points out, although Kant introduces the intuitive understanding as “a merely negative notion, [he] nevertheless gives a vivid account of what the world might be like, as known by such an understanding”. This modal peculiarity is one such feature. Ibid., 173.

⁷¹ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A575–6/B603–4.

⁷² Or perhaps the combination of “hypostatizing” and “personalizing” would result in the Trinity, as the Nicene Creed had settled on an account of the Trinity as three *hypostases* in one *ousia*.

the Trinity for Kant is in no way as central for him as it is for the likes of Böhme and Hegel. Thus Kant points out in *The Conflict of the Faculties* that the doctrine of the Trinity when taken literally “has *no practical relevance at all* ... Whether we are to worship three or ten persons in the Deity makes no difference.”⁷³ It is only when we read a *moral meaning* into this article of faith that it would contain an intelligible belief that “refers to our moral vocation.” Thus in *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, the Trinity is seen as symbolizing the various relations within which an individual stands to the moral law which it simultaneously legislates and obeys,⁷⁴ and the same interpretative approach broadly holds true of the associated doctrine of the incarnation. Were we to think of the Deity as “‘dwelling incarnate’ in a real human being and working as a second nature in him, then we can draw nothing practical from this mystery: since we cannot require ourselves to rival a God, we cannot take him as an example.”⁷⁵ It is *only* by taking Jesus “as the *Idea* of Humanity in its full moral perfection, present in God from eternity and beloved by him.”⁷⁶ That is, it is crucial for Kant that Jesus *not* be represented as *actually* divine: were Jesus to be God then we mortals could not take his life as embodying moral examples we could follow.

Hegel, of course, like Kant, thinks of the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation as employing figurative forms of thought, but for him the significance of this content so presented is very different. Hegel is critical of Kant’s idea of reducing the significance of Jesus to the status of anything like a moral exemplar: rather, the significance of the doctrine of Jesus as the second person of the Trinity resides in the fact that *by necessity* the divine must assume creaturely form and, thereby, undergo the fate awaiting all particular creatures. “‘God has died, God is dead,’

⁷³ Immanuel Kant, “The Conflict of the Faculties,” in *Religion and Rational Theology*, trans. and ed. Allen W. Wood and George Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1996), 264 (7.39).

⁷⁴ Immanuel Kant, “Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason,” in *Religion and Rational Theology*, 166–7 (6.140–2).

⁷⁵ Kant, “The Conflict of the Faculties,” in *Religion and Rational Theology*, 265 (7.39).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

Hegel declares in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* from 1831, and continues, “this is the most frightful of all thoughts.” Jesus’ death signifies God’s death. This is, of course, a representation, a “*Vorstellung*,” and a more conceptual way of expressing this is to be found in Hegel’s further expansion of the idea “that everything eternal and true does not exist, that negation itself is found in God.”⁷⁷ And the “I” is this negation. Four years earlier, quoting the words “God himself is dead” from the Lutheran hymn of Johannes Rist, Hegel interprets these words as expressing “an awareness that the human, the finite, the fragile, the weak, the negative are themselves a moment of the divine, that they are within God himself, that finitude, negativity, otherness are not outside of God and do not, as otherness, hinder unity with God. Otherness, the negative, is known to be moment of the divine nature itself. This involves the highest idea of spirit.”⁷⁸

Hegel’s rejection of Kant’s idea of God rests on his rejection of the logic of the conceptual infrastructure that underlies its generation. Kant is explicit concerning how we are to conceive of the relation of finite entities to their transcendental ground, the *omnitudo realitatis*: they are “negations [*Verneinungen*]” of the ideal, “mere limitations [*blasse Einschränkungen*] of a greater and finally of the highest reality; hence they presuppose it, and as regards their content they are merely derived from it.”⁷⁹ But this begs the logico-semantic principle of which Hegel is resolutely critical, a principle that, in the *Science of Logic*, he calls simple “identity-with-self” and that in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* he attributes to Plato as the “affirmative principle.”⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. III, *The Consummate Religion*, edited by Peter C. Hodgson, translated by R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, and J. M. Stewart, with the assistance of H. S. Harris, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985), 323n (17.291).

⁷⁸ Ibid., 326 (17.297).

⁷⁹ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A578/B606. Moreover, in going on to compare the negations of the ideal to the way that spatial figures are rightly regarded as “possible only as different ways of limiting infinite space”, Kant draws attention to the way that his conception of pure intuition itself presupposes the priority of the affirmative principle.

⁸⁰ G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (London: Allen and Unwin, 1969), 411–416 (6.38–45); Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol.

For Hegel it had been Proclus, the later pagan Neoplatonist, who had most forcefully challenged Plato's affirmative principle in his commentary on Plato's *Parmenides*.⁸¹ While Plato "declared Being to be superior" to non-being,⁸² Proclus had countered that it is *not* true "that assertion is always superior to negation." In particular, there is a special case in which assertion "takes a second place" to negation and in which "negation expresses that type of Non-Being which is beyond Being."⁸³ It is precisely so in relation to "the one," since conceiving of the one as "non-being" exempts it from being the subject of assertion that, says Proclus, "wants to lay hold of some Form." It is necessary to avoid treating the primal entity as "being" because it "is ... above form, and it is not suitable to apply to it any of those attributes which are proper to secondary things, nor to transfer to it attributes proper to us."⁸⁴

We can see at work here a challenge to what Laurence Horn has called the "asymmetricalist" position on the nature of logical negation. *Asymmetricalism* regards negative statements as "less primitive, less informative, less objective, less godly, and/or less valuable than their affirmative counterparts."⁸⁵ In contrast, Hegel aligns himself with the Proclean stance that negation cannot be understood as the negation of some primary affirmative claim that is independently meaningful. Böhme had portrayed this in religious form by calling the first principle (the Father) "the Yes" and the second (the Son), "the No," but, as Hegel again quotes him, "The One as the Yes ... would be unknowable in Himself ... without the No. The No is a counter-stroke of the Yes, or of the truth."⁸⁶ This is

II, 140 (19.155).

⁸¹ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol II, 60 (19.82). Elsewhere, Hegel refers to the "great sagacity" expressed in Proclus' treatment of the one and its "negations." Ibid., 437–348 (19.471–472).

⁸² "It is quite clear what relation Plato himself in the *Sophist* (258ab) declared Not-Being to have toward Being, and that he declared Being to be superior." Proclus, *A Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, trans. John M. Dillon and Glenn R. Morrow, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 426.

⁸³ Ibid. p. 426.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Laurence R. Horn, *A Natural History of Negation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 3.

⁸⁶ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, volume III, 209 (20.112).

why any intelligence (“the word” or “the logos”) is associated with the Son and not the Father—that is, is characteristic of the being that *dies*, not some purportedly transcendent and immortal one. Of course the “Holy Ghost” the third person of the Trinity, represents the union of the Father and the Son, but this does not detract from the main point—Hegel’s criticism of the construal of the God of classical monotheism as a type of super-individual Cartesian *mind*. Kant had diagnosed the type of error leading to taking the “idea of God” in a metaphysically constitutive way in terms of the Transcendental Illusion, but Hegel, as it were, seeks to block off this error further up-stream by criticizing the very thought of a uniformly positive “all” that *could be* subject to the processes of “realization, hypostatization and personalization.” Thus despite the immanent nature of Spinoza’s God, it too presupposes the affirmative principle, such that were Hegel to be thought of as a pantheist, his would be a pantheism of a Böhmist, not a Spinozist, stamp. Hence Hegel refers to Böhme’s as a “pantheism of the Trinity”.⁸⁷

All this suggests that Hegel’s opposition to Kant’s “idea of God” or the “intuitive intellect” cannot be reduced to the epistemological criticism of intellectual intuition as some type of immediate acquaintance with a quasi-perceptual “given” from which thought commences. And yet despite the difference between Hegel and Kant here, Hegel’s criticism of Kant might *still* be thought of as an immanentist one, as there is a definite sense in which Hegel’s neoplatonic-styled criticism of the tendency to treat “the One” as a determinable object has features that are akin to Kant’s criticism of the transcendental illusion. Thus Proclus’ rejection of the attempt to “lay hold of” the *form* of the “One” can look like another way of making the point that Kant made in terms of the confusion of the world known as a “distributive unity” of empirical facts (that is, something corresponding to a network of propositions) with the world known as a “collective unity” (that is, as a large substance with properties).⁸⁸ But if it allows Hegel to

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 170 (20.70).

⁸⁸ “That we subsequently hypostatize this idea of the sum total of all reality, however, comes about because we dialectically transform the **distributive** unity of

capture something of Kant's critique of traditional metaphysics, it does so in a way that allows him to circumvent the Augustinian–Cartesian residuum of Kant's critical position, that is, the residuum that expresses the limitations of the human point of view by the contrast to an omniscient and omnipotent divine mind. By denying the very idea that a type of transcendent single deity could be understood as *having a mind*, and by associating reason (logos, or “the word”) paradigmatically with “the Son” understood as finite and creaturely, Hegel had, I suggest, sought a way of combining “mind of God” and “point of view of Man” in ways such that the opposed Kantian concepts are transformed.

For Hegel, human beings are radically finite and so denied a view of the world “as it is in itself”—this is his Kantian heritage. However, this picture is achieved not by insisting on an unbreachable barrier between human knowledge and godly omniscience but by undermining the conceptual coherence of the very idea of such omniscience. There is still a way of capturing the finitude of our epistemic capacities and the limitations of what we can know, and religious *Vorstellungen* come in handy here in reminding us of our limitations—reminding us what it is about us that is *ungodly*. But there are better and worse ways of both imagining and conceiving of the nature of God, and from Hegel's point of view, Kant is eminently criticizable on just this count. Hegel thinks that his own idea of God, which represents the conceptualisation of the type of religious *Vorstellungen* found in heterodox Christians like Böhme, provides a better way.

Theology and Metaphysics in Hegel

According to Longuenesse, Hegel's reorganization of Kant's critical system as a whole had started with the demand for a new type of moral philosophy. This seems right, but Kant's moral philosophy was accompanied (Kant thought necessarily so) by a concept of *God*, and for Hegel this appears to signal the need for a new idea

the use of the understanding in experience, into the **collective** unity of a whole of experience; and from this whole of appearance we think up an individual thing containing in itself all empirical reality”. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A582/B610.

of God as well.⁸⁹ Hegel's new idea of God—a God who *necessarily* comes into the world as a finite man with real but finite powers of self-transcendence—provides us with a new normative image in which we are meant to recognize ourselves. Of course, this is exactly what Kant objects to: Jesus cannot *be* God because were he divine we finite creatures could *not* recognize ourselves *in* him—couldn't recognize in *his* actions possibilities of our own. And shouldn't we heed Kant's and Longuenesse's warning about the, at the very least, self-deluding idea of humans uniting with the divine—*becoming divine*? Kant's voluntaristic and radically transcendent God at least prevents our falling into such a self-conception. Must not this be a good thing?

There are far too many issues to attempt to take up here, but perhaps a possible direction of an answer might be gestured to. One possible Hegelian rejoinder here might be to point to the structure of the concept of "recognition" that would be presupposed by the notion of *recognizing* our unity with God. Hegel's notion of a "recognized" unity surely has built into it an irredeemable moment of *difference* between those united by reciprocal recognition—a difference made explicit in the notion of the "unity of opposites," for example.⁹⁰ To take just one example, for Hegel the modern state cannot be simply modeled on the unity of the family as it was in Aristotle, because Hegel takes family relationships as "immediate" and one-sidedly recognitive, and so needing to be balanced by the inverse (and equally one-sided) "mediated" relationships of civil society. In civil society, any "identity" achieved between members (as rights-bearers, for example) is abstract and attenuated, and not constitutive of some concrete "we," as in families. In Hegel's political theory, one function of civil society is to prevent the "absorption" of individuals

⁸⁹ All these considerations, I suggest, can operate in abstraction from the question of *belief* in God. Hegel was an idealist, and we should not be surprised that he could take the *idea* of God to be important in this way.

⁹⁰ Once more, this testifies to Hegel's neoplatonic heritage, courtesy of Cusa and Bruno. See my *Hegel's Hermeneutics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 57–62. A more contemporary dimension of this idea would be found in Hölderlin's notion of the "separation" involved in conceptual judgment, together with the Kantian idea that "recognition" always involves a moment of conceptuality.

into an unmediated (totalitarian) state by establishing a realm for the operation of abstract rights.⁹¹ Moreover, the recognitive relations constituting the religious community seem to require this same structure for Hegel—hence for him the necessary development of the moment of individual concept-wielding subjectivity within the religious community with modernity, a moment that he identifies with Protestantism and, in particular, Böhme’s theology. In turn, we might treat Böhme’s *Vorstellung* of the Trinity as showing how the moment of difference between the trinitarian God and individual humans is to be maintained.

In Böhme’s new image of God, we see the movement characteristic of our *own* rationality, the movement from sensuous immediacy to the concept, but in an inverted or *reversed* way, as in a mirror.⁹² That is, if our characteristic movement is to move *away from* sensuousness to the mediation of concepts, God’s characteristic movement starts by moving in the opposite direction: God moves “down” to us, as it were, mirroring our climbing the conceptual tree and “going up” to him. But the next phase of the trinitarian image has Christ, the anthropologized God, *leaving* us to reunite with his transcendent father after death, so as to complete *him*. Consequently, if I am to think of *myself* as something like an inverted instance of this triune God, I should think of *my* characteristic movement as involving, as an essential moment, a return *to* the limited sensuous existence from which I started, and, as a living creature, a return to the universal “life.” In short, the idea of difference and inversion present in Hegel’s concept of recognition works against the effectively *idolatrous* or *fetishistic* idea that reason is going to liberate me *completely* from the finitude of human existence, including the finitude of my epistemic existence. There simply is no “thing”—no “I”, or “ego” or “soul”—to *be* liberated from the concrete conditions of its own existence in the way that is pictured here.

⁹¹ I have argued broadly along these lines in *Hegel’s Hermeneutics*, chs 8–11.

⁹² That the human mind mirrors God’s in a finite and perspectival way was a central element of Leibniz’s metaphysics and comes from the tradition of christian Platonism. For an account of the role of “reversal” or “inversion” in Hegel’s concept of recognition, see my *Hegel’s Hermeneutics*, ch. 3.

Here, as elsewhere, for Hegel the *true religion* will be the enemy of idolatry and false gods. We should resist the lure that conceptual thought will take us to a place free of the limitations of our finite being: the God of *that* conception is dead. But from Hegel's point of view, the idea of such a God still lives on as the defining contrast involved in Kant's conception of the finitude of the point of view of man. The heritage of this can only be a type of skepticism in which humans feel cut off from the world "in-itself" and limited to appearances, and in this Kant was in the thrall of the voluntarist and nominalist theology of the late medieval period that built on those aspects of Augustine's thought, separating them from his erstwhile Platonism. And as with medieval voluntarism, the downplaying of reason was accompanied by a reassertion of *fideism*, the reassertion of "faith" over "knowledge" as Hegel alleges in his essay of 1802. We might say that, paradoxically, Kant's anthropological thought binds his own Copernican revolution *to* a religion via an implicit idea of God, and Hegel's alternate theology is meant to free Kant's thought *from* that religion.

If this sketch is at all headed along the right track, then we might regard Longuenesse's departure from the "non-metaphysical" or post-Kantian reading of Hegel as unnecessary. When read within the framework of his own "idea of God", Hegel's attempt to reconcile the "point of view of man" with the "knowledge of God" does not represent a threat to Kant's Copernican revolution. The condition of this, of course, will be that Hegel's *theology* be not simply read as an expression of any *pre-Kantian* metaphysical stance. I can here give no argument for this other than bringing into question why it *should* be read in the traditional way. Theological language belongs to what Hegel calls "representation" (*Vorstellung*) and its *philosophical* import only becomes apparent when translated into "thought." How we understand the commitments of Hegel's theological language will be dependent on how we understand the commitments of his philosophy *überhaupt*, and, as we have seen, there are many now who read Hegel in opposition to traditional "metaphysical"

interpretations.

There is a separate question, however, as to whether humans can, on Hegel's account, be constituted as finite reasoning subjects *independently* of their participation within the world of *Vorstellungen*. As we have seen, Hegel's "idea of God" is not that of Kant's, but this in itself should not foreclose the question as to whether Hegel is, like Kant, an *idealist* about God in the sense of God being "mind-dependent"—that is, dependent on the recognition of "his" creatures who, of course, are themselves mind-dependent in the sense of dependent on the recognition of each other.⁹³ Hegel's approach, I suggest, allows us to understand how entities can be mind-dependent in this sense of recognition-dependent, can be *real* without having the "in itself" mind-independent "there-anyway" status that revised metaphysicalist Hegelians want to reinstate. We might think of paradigms of such entities as, say, bearers of institutional roles (parents, siblings, spouses, prime ministers, policemen, teachers, etc.) or more abstract normative statuses (rights-bearers, knowers, moral agents, etc.), all of which are in some sense "mind-dependent," but in ways that are not dependent on any *individual mind*, either finite or infinite.

Many of the resources for grasping Hegel's thought in ways that challenge the older traditional "metaphysical" readings are, I suggest, to be found in Hegel's religious thought. Hegel's writings on God should not be discarded, avoided or overlooked in the attempt to rejuvenate his philosophy in ways that are relevant to the present time.

⁹³ I am not suggesting that for Hegel these intersubjective patterns could be described *without* a role for the "god" that is bound up with them; such a view would reduce Hegel's position to a Feuerbachian humanist projectivism (which is in turn closer to Kant). A closer analogue to Hegel, I suggest, would be Nietzsche's late romantic attempt to account for the way humans create themselves in creating their gods, such that we could conceive of no underlying anthropological "essence" that *could be* projected and personified in some god. The sense in which Hegel's God is dependent on human recognition once more seems to fit with Böhme's theology in which God had been construed as dependent on his creatures as they were on him.