

<p>The Logical Origin of the <i>Hegel Myth</i> H. S. Harris</p>
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There is a “mythical” interpretation of Hegel according to which the real protagonist of history is the “World-Spirit”. The World-Spirit “marches” through time and space. The *Phenomenology* gives the clearest account of the “march” in time; and there is as at least this much to be said for the “myth”: it enables us to see clearly that the supposed references in the text to the “Black Stone” of Mecca, and to the Indian caste-system of the “Laws of Manu”, are **not** intended by Hegel. We can see this because they do not fit properly in “the march of God into the world”; and the position clearly stated in the text is that “the whole Spirit” (i.e. the Absolute Spirit, or the *religious* consciousness of “God”) is in time.¹

Just where the temporal march begins in the *Phenomenology* is ambiguous. We can accept Walter Jaeschke's view that the “Light-Essence” is Yahweh as long as we refer it strictly to the “God of Abraham”, and accept the young Hegel's view that Abraham experienced *theophanies* in Nature.² This has the considerable *logical* advantage of forming “religion” into a proper conceptual *circle* of experience. But it is *methodically* dubious because it is not “observational” — or at least the observational evidence is weak. What makes me prefer to identify the “Light-Essence” with the Ahura-Mazda of Zoroaster is *first* the fact that Persian religion was part of the Greek cultural heritage, while the Jews remained as invisible in history as their God was in concept; and *secondly*, the fact that Hegel makes an unmistakable reference to Yahweh in his discussion of *Greek* religion (Miller, §720). Yahweh is not the primitive Light-Essence of Natural religion, but the Light-Essence of Understanding, the power that will *appear* in Greek Religion as *Fate*, against which even Zeus is helpless.³

For the “Hegel-Myth” this controversy is not very important. The Spirit “marches” out of “nowhere” (the invisible Jewish experience) or out of Susa (which will fit better into the spatial dimension of the myth when we get to it) into our Greco-Roman and Christian-German history. It moves first to Greece; and then in the Hellenistic world of Alexander and his successors it becomes **explicitly** “the World-Spirit”. The establishment of the Roman Empire and of a Pantheon legally regulated by the Emperor (who is recognized as a **living** “God”) is the “Unhappy Consciousness” of this World-Spirit — which existed in Classical Greece as **True** Spirit (a perfect harmony of Spirit with Nature, or in other words, as a World Concept in which true humanity was a “second nature” that is self-created within the divinely given order of subhuman Nature).

With the conversion of Constantine, the Roman **Empire** (which as **Empire** moves eastwards to Constantinople) becomes the Universal **Church**. The Unhappy Consciousness now becomes a reconciled “faith” in that other properly divine Emperor who has sent his “Son” “far away and long ago” to be born and die as a finite being just like ourselves.⁴

The “Unhappy Consciousness” thus **reconciled** in the spreading of the Gospel, is the **germ** of “Faith” proper. Faith proper is born world-historically with Luther’s rediscovery of what St. Paul called “the witness of the Spirit with our spirit”. But in order for Paul’s intuition to become the experience of the World-Spirit, the Roman Church had to lose its last empirical connection with the Son of God as “Son of Man”. Thus, with the failure of the Crusades, the world of “Culture” lost its last link with the “Beyond”, and the conscious evolution of human rational autonomy (as the spiritual “vocation” of **every** human child of God, not as the “second nature” of the consciousness that could demonstrate its “freedom” in a life and death struggle) could finally begin.

In and through this evolution the “cultured” society of the social “estates” ordained by God was liquidated; and the ideal conflagration of values in “absolute Culture” leads to the real conflagration of the French Revolution. With the “advance of the undivided Substance of Absolute Freedom to the throne of the world” (Miller, § 585) the alienation of the Beyond as **authoritative** is overcome. The **self-estrangement** of Reason ends here; and in the promulgation of the “Rights of Man and citizen” Heaven is supposedly transplanted to Earth. But the Terror proves that Heaven on Earth is directly identical with hell; and the advent of the “absolute Religion” begins in “another land” (i.e. Germany empirically and Kant’s noumenal Kingdom of Ends ideally). What happens in that land is that the last figure of Divine Authority — the God of Practical Reason — **loses** his authoritative status, and becomes at last the “Spirit” of the Divine Man who proclaimed the forgiveness of sins.

In this Providential “march” the overcoming of “estrangement” does appear to the finite consciousness to be its own work; but all the “religious” movement in the story appears to be the motion of the “object”. It is **God** who reveals himself in the successive shapes of our Culture. Thus, we **can** (and if we are determined to preserve the “standpoint of consciousness” we **must**) regard Hegel’s speculative philosophy as the quest for and the discovery of the truth about “**God**” (this being the ordinary name for the *Sache selbst*, or the “absolute Object”); and as long as we understand what is logically involved in the fact that God’s self-revelation takes place **phenomenologically**, the maintenance of the standpoint of consciousness does no harm. (It is even morally **helpful** in many contexts to see Hegel’s philosophy in this theological way, although it leaves the problem of the Fool who “says in his heart, there is no God” without any hope of a rational resolution.)

But alas, Hegel at Berlin thought that (except for the logical evolution of finite consciousness which gave “phenomenology” a necessary place in his “Real Philosophy”, i.e. the interpretation of his actually present world) the *Phenomenology* had become superfluous. It was still **valid** of course; ⁵ but it was no longer pedagogically necessary. The higher standpoint of “pure thinking” was now firmly established; and beginning students could be introduced to it by a much shorter and easier route that went no further back than Descartes and Locke.

Moreover, the Berlin professor, firmly established in a State-salaried professorship, now felt that he had a positive **duty** to act like a Philosopher-King, and to provide the philosophical **myths** that his society needed. So Hegel duly presented World-History to a general audience as a “theodicy”. He justified the ways of God to man by showing how “Divine Providence” uses

“world-historical individuals” to bring about the **universal** consciousness of the human vocation to rational freedom.

The “march of the Spirit” myth now took a **spatial** as well as a temporal dimension. The Spirit was presented as coming to birth at the eastern edge of the Old World. It marched westwards through the great Asiatic “substantial” cultures until it came to the Middle East, where the genuinely **historical** march (the march in time) can begin. By implication, the great Oriental religions and cultures do not have any significant history. This spatial myth provided an ideological foundation for the imperialist attitudes and policies that the European nations had adopted in both the New and the Old worlds ever since the “modern” (German-Christian, i.e. Lutheran) age began. But when that spatial myth is examined in the light of the Lutheran “witness of the Spirit” it blows up in our faces. An army of learned Europeans (all secure in their professorships) could propagate this harsh Gospel; but the “witness of the spirit” came from Lutheran Denmark where a voice was heard asking why Divine Providence cared so little for the salvation of the Chinese or “the hitherto undiscovered tribe in Monomotapa”.⁶

It is certain that **in some sense** the philosopher-king believed his own myth. But he was definitely enough of a Lutheran to know that it did not “justify” and Christian conception of “Providence”. What then was his **philosophical** conception of the “Spirit” as it first appears in history? How should we **conceive** “the Light-Essence” which forms the hinge between the temporal myth that justifies itself “in experience” (i.e. through the recollection of the cultures that have already gone to their Last Judgement in history) and the spatial myth which nothing now can ever justify for because our own history has shown it to be the very shape of evil in our present generation (in **mine** anyway)?

If we will but attend to the supposedly “superfluous” Science of Experience the answer is not difficult to find. Simple Consciousness becomes aware of “the Infinite” (i.e. of the Absolute as a conceptual object) when the Newtonian Solar System “inverts” itself into the self-conscious world of “Life”; and when we try to observe ourselves rationally in the living environment, the “infinity” (or universality) of natural life disappears from view into the unfathomable mystery of a “stream of life that is indifferent to what kind of mills it drives” (Miller, § 285). “To him who looks at the world rationally”, said the philosopher-king propagating his myth, “the world looks rationally back”. This **absolutely indifferent stream** was how “the Divine Life” looked back at the rational scientist who was not yet in a position to propagate myths. This is the enlightened philosophical concept of what took place in the religion of Zarathustra as the “Light-essence.

Being the point of origin for **natural** religion, the Light-Essence cannot have a **positive** ethical dimension at all. It is essentially sublime, i.e. negative of everything finite.⁷ This God is not a “self” because It does not recognize any other self. Its worshippers —and even its “ministers” (its prophets and kings) — have no independent being. Even the “mills it drives” (the biologically distinct kinds of life) have not been marked consciously yet in this streaming forth of the divine. The “Light-essence” is the religious apprehension of **Time** as the Concept that “is there by not-being” in Sense-Certainty at the beginning of the *Phenomenology*. The distinct “mills” begin to be acknowledged only in the Religion of Perception (“Plant and Animal”) that comes next.

Philosophically speaking, then, “Providence” is originally just **natural life**; and it is the maturing of social consciousness that produces the cultural movement of human history. Wherever despotic power fails, and finite communities are able to express their “freedom”, we shall find first a world of warlike tribes, dominating the peaceful cultivators of the soil, and then an empire based on Understanding, in which the wild spiritual “animals” are domesticated into divinely ordained “castes” which each follow their own craft (as in the Egypt described by Herodotus). In its subhuman forms natural life simply takes **every** viable shape that the environment will allow; we cannot organize it rationally into any model of mathematical continuity (any “great chain of Being”) because the chanciness of the earth (and of its climate) breaks up the pattern everywhere, leaving the real Concept of Life dismembered as a kind of jigsaw puzzle with many missing pieces.⁸ Upon this natural stage, the self-creation of human consciousness becomes a contingent interaction between opportunity and insight; and “Providence” is just a convenient name for the fact that insight is always only partial. Every insight into an opportunity offered by the natural and cultural situation creates by its own “realization”, the opportunity for a new insight which will “comprehensively invert” the direct intention of the original one.

The expression “comprehensive inversion” needs some explication at this point. Two kinds of **inversion** are involved in a phenomenological notion. First there is the **simple** inversion that happens as a spontaneous reaction to the realized concept. Thus, the rational insight involved in the religion of the Light-Essence can be expressed as “We don’t matter at all, we exist only in order to show forth God’s glory.” But then “Plant and Animal” expresses the natural and necessary opposite response: “We **do** matter **to ourselves**, and there **is** (there **has** to be) a God who cares precisely **for us** and for our life”. This reaction can hardly be said to involve a **new** insight at all, and it happens by natural **necessity** rather than by springing from an “opportunity”. It simply supplements (and **corrects**) the original intuition. When the problem of our importance is solved **universally** (in the “**Plant** Religion”) all that happens is that an Earth Mother joins the Sky Father; the resulting religious concept is perfectly stable. Instability arises because (in spite of the universal Sky Father) “our importance to ourselves” can have either a “universal” or a “particular” interpretation. Every **particular** community has **its own** Gods (and especially its own **War** God (for whom it is the only “animal” that counts). The resulting social disorder is an **opportunity** for cultural insight; and the re-stabilization of **this** situation involves a **comprehensive** inversion. We continue to use all the rhetoric of the “Light-Essence”. But now some human authority must act for God to establish and maintain the order that is the known will of the Divine Lord. Originally there was spontaneous submission to God. Then there was the contradiction between spoken submission and acted self-assertion. Now there is humanly imposed submission. Of course the “understanding” of what God wills is still only the comprehension of natural necessity. If someone does not stop the tribes of the Nile Valley from fighting one another, agriculture becomes impossible and famine ensues. But no doubt famine did happen often enough everywhere. It was the peculiar natural conditions of life in the Nile Valley that made the Egyptian religion into quite a different mode of consciousness from the simpler divine despotism of Susa.

What happened in Greece was at a different level altogether because it was not driven simply by natural necessity. The Greek achievement was **essentially** fragile. Cities could (and did) wipe one another out, with general massacres and enslavement. Eventually the whole system was overwhelmed by military conquest, and a new order — the order of universal Reason — was slowly created. Hegel’s confidence that because this new order was **rationally** necessary it could not be

overthrown was a matter of faith, not of logic. He **believed** that every genuine advance towards a rationally balanced system of institutions (where “**rational** balance” is what is produced by the process of “comprehensive inversion” that I have illustrated) must have a reliable self-preservative power because it increases our insight into the rational meaning of the essentially religious sense of community that has produced it. Hence he **believed** that the French Revolution was **final**, and that whatever the ideas of 1789 were effective, revolution would never be necessary again. Now that the Communist International has decisively failed we cannot say that he was certainly mistaken about that. In the perspective of his own time he would of course have agreed that a revolution might still be necessary in Czarist Russia. But he believed (indeed, he explicitly **said**) that nothing resembling Oriental despotism could be established in any “modern” State; and about that he was mistaken quite badly.

These rational beliefs of his were not **logically** guaranteed, any more than his beliefs about **natural** necessity were. He thought that there would always be peasants who could not become educated enough to be effective participants in rational politics: that women must be kept out of politics because the great majority of them have to become mothers with home and children to look after; and so on. None of these empirical beliefs matter philosophically — just as his (possible) belief in a **real** Providence that marches through the world does not matter. What is **logically** guaranteed is first that we must labour together to maintain and improve the community of “justice” and respect for conscience that we have achieved actually; and secondly, that **regression** is always possible, because Reason and Freedom are “identical”. (I have put **justice** in quotes because being a proper Hegelian “Concept” it is a dialectical contradiction. It seems both “fair recompense” and “equal opportunity”; and the two ideals are mutually contradictory. Thus it is **actually rational** that society is **always** “unjust” — see *Phenomenology*, Miller, § 430.)

I have said earlier that **nothing** can now justify the myth of a spatial march of Providence for us. I am certain of that, because we have seen the myth used to justify a return to the warfare of the “spiritual animals”. It has been made vividly obvious to us that any claim by one human community to be closer to God than the rest is morally revolting. Hegel was well aware of this. The necessary social foundation for the speculative **observation** of Religion is the achievement of a human community in which the inevitable equality of finite human **imperfections** is recognized; and the observer of Religion must understand that “the whole Spirit” is realized in **every** religion. The aim of philosophical observation is to identify the logical moment that is **perfectly** realized in each “shape” of social-religious experience. Then the place of that logical moment in the logical system of cognitive self-realization is what determines how completely the other moments of the Absolute Spirit can be rendered self-conscious. But all that is determined by this logical interpretation is the kind of **knowledge** of God and the self that is possible. It makes no sense to say that one kind of absolute cognitive experience is **better** than another. When we reach “Religion” in the *Phenomenology* we have left already the world of moral judgement — the world of good and bad, better and worse — behind us. So the right answer to that voice from Denmark was that the qualified user of Hegel’s spiritual map on which (as the same voice said) the whole of Denmark is a mere pinpoint, ought to be well aware that anyone can be “saved” in any religion, and that properly qualified Hegelian would concede as a probable empirical conjecture that Zarathustra’s experience of the Light-Essence was deeper and more “authentic” than the experience that some anonymous Danish *Privadozent* actually had of the God of Universal Love.

Hegel says that the Absolute Spirit “picks out” the logical moment that it needs to realize at each stage of the journey (Miller, § 680). But this is mythical not just because the Absolute Spirit is destined too be translated into **our own** absolute self-knowledge (which leaves its status as the absolute **object** of consciousness in a highly ambiguous condition) but because the Absolute Spirit **cannot** do any “picking out”. The Spirit is simply bound to go on to the next stage of its logical development whenever opportunity and insight come together appropriately. It is the philosophical observer who has a **choice**; and Hegel exercised that choice at Berlin. He arranged and rearranged the world religions in different orders, because he saw different characteristics as logically important at different times. (That no **moral** judgement was intended at **any** stage of his struggle with the problem is guaranteed by the fact that the “Roman religion” is always in the **middle** of the order; and the *Phenomenology* shows us that for the World-Spirit the Roman religion represents the moment of absolute moral **despair** when “God is dead”.

Unlike the phenomenology of finite consciousness (in which every “shape” is constituted as a **whole** by the cumulative progress of the observation) the phenomenology of Religion is ‘mythical’ because **we** must make the logical choice (or impose the categorical sequence of logically determined choices upon the chronological sequence of cultural experiences). This does no moral harm as long as we are dealing with cultural experiences that are over; everyone is free either to ignore or to criticize our interpretation by employing other categories for the same material. But when this cultural mythmaking touches living experience, the interpretation cannot avoid taking on a moral dimension — and the moral dimension of that judgement is one that usually falls short of mutual forgiveness. Hegel himself insisted wisely (at Berlin 1827) that educated Europeans cannot appreciate authentically the Bhagavad Gita because we do not have the cultural formation to which it belongs (*Berliner Schriften*, 137ff). But he did not explain why Providence cared so little for the Chinese; and already by then (1827) — and before he even had formulated the spatial myth publicly — Schopenhauer had undermined his comfortably complacent adoption of the standpoint of external observation; *The World as Will and Representation* was published in 1819.

Schopenhauer is interesting because he returns to what we have seen to be the logical point of origin for the “Hegel-Myth”. Schopenhauer’s “Will” is directly identical with Hegel’s stream of life that is indifferent to the mills it drives; and Schopenhauer looked to Hindu and Buddhist philosophy as the only source for conscious liberation from our natural bondage to the Will. His view is dialectically consistent with Hegel’s general position, because the Hindu intuition “Thou art that” expresses the fundamental claim of what is called Objective Idealism; and Nirvana is the “Night” out of which the Light-Essence itself is born.⁹

Hegel’s interest in Religion was **entirely** socio-political. He could cheerfully consign Hinduism and Buddhism to the logical rank of “substantial” religions, because they are the communal consciousness of societies that are “substantial”, i.e., of societies in which self-expression does not — and cannot — take the form of an active assertion of individual independence. Nothing else mattered to Hegel because his task is to comprehend a community in which the active cultivation of self-expression was recognized as the climax of rational achievement. The Marxists were logical in seeing the Hegelian philosophy (which had sublated religion) as the proper instrument for the universalization of that kind of active freedom. But Hegel understood his own philosophy as the comprehension of (and consequent rational reconciliation

with) all of the necessary economic and social limitations upon the enlightened ideal of individual freedom that the failure of the French Revolution had made manifest.

In the Hegelian perspective we can fairly interpret Schopenhauer's philosophy (and its influence) as a turning away from the problem of "the rational society" (which was now solved in principle) and towards the deepening and enrichment of individual self-knowledge. A new beginning was necessary, and it went right back to the natural origin of human consciousness. Schopenhauer was morally pessimistic because he inverted Plato's dictum. Instead of "persuading Necessity" Reason was persuaded by its necessity (i.e. by the rationality of the actual); but of course rational consciousness could not be **happy** about that. The Marxists maintained the Platonic dictum in its direct form (the actual must **become** rational — which was how Hegel glossed his own dictum in 1818). But that Marxist programme has now visibly come to grief; so pessimism is left in sole possession of the field. If it is true that "history has ended" how can we be philosophically **happy** about the permanence of things as they are?

Pessimism (like Marxist evangelism) was always a healthier reaction to the triumph of Hegelian rationalism than the comfortable logical superiority that was prepared to justify imperialist colonialism as God's Providential plan. All three reactions were "Providential" of course. The imperialist duly infected the colonial peoples with the ideals of 1789. But Josiah Royce was right when he sought to persuade his Boston audience (essentially serious Protestant optimists like himself) that Schopenhauer's pessimism was "a natural and healthy turn for the idealistic philosophy to take". At the conclusion of his own lecture on Schopenhauer he declared his Hegelian faith thus: "if the world *will* be tragic, it *shall* still, in Satan's despite, be spiritual".¹⁰ This seems to me to be the proper way to express the moral point of view from the neutral standpoint of "absolute knowing" (and the neutral standpoint is, after all, in a small way, a moral achievement). William James was mistaken certainly in calling **Royce's Absolute** "a moral holiday". But a moral holiday is exactly what the "Hegel myth" is (even when we understand it **properly**, i.e., in its **logical** sense).

It was the influence of Schopenhauer, no doubt, that caused Royce to give such careful and sympathetic attention to Hindu and Buddhist thought in his Gifford Lectures (1899-1900) on *The World and the Individual*.¹¹ This was the beginning of the properly **Hegelian** dissolution of the Hegel-myth; and what is important about the return to the "substantial" conception of ultimate reality, is that the divine becomes **personal**.

It is not clear just what is logically involved in the final transition from Religion to Absolute Knowledge in Hegel's system. It is supposed to be a transformation of the form but not of the content. As far as I can see the "content" is a human religious community which knows itself first inwardly "in God" (at the end of the *Phenomenology* Chapter VI) and then outwardly (in nature and the cultural world) through the recollective "religious" experience of Chapter VII. The "identity" of the community (as a "We that is I, but also It") is **represented in the "absolute religion"** by the Christ-figure as the Incarnate Logos. But this is a *Vorstellung*; and it is the form of *Vorstellung* that must be given up in the transition to philosophy proper. One thing that is logically certain is that all fully moral "atheists" (all the fools who say in their hearts there is no God, but without falling away from the absolutely forgiving moral standpoint of the Broken-Hearted Conscience) must be received into the **philosophical** community. Hegel's "Absolute" is

still the “Invisible Church” that was the “rallying point” of the youthful revolutionaries in the *Stift* at Tübingen.¹² They found this watchword in Kant’s *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* [1792; 1793] (and in Lessing). And I suppose that the young Hegel would have included the Indian sages (along with Nathan and Saladin in Lessing’s play *Nathan the Wise* [1778/79]) in his “Invisible Church” from the first.

For myself, I continue to be an unabashed Hegelian idealist, not so much because I am committed to Royce’s theory of the Infinite Community (as indeed I am) but because I hold firmly to Peirce’s thesis that “Man is a sign” (which was itself the inspiration for Royce’s theory in its final mature form). When I first found that thesis in Giovanni Gentile’s *Genesis and Structure of Society* (1946) I did not know — any more than Gentile did — that it was already eighty years old. But I recognized the logical origin of it at once when I read in the *Phenomenology*, a few years later, that the concept of Spirit is “an I that is We and a We that is an I”; and the *Phenomenology* is sixty years earlier than Peirce’s essays. The logical primacy of the community of rational interpreters methodically requires us to **invert** the “standpoint of consciousness” (in which the singular thinking subject is primary, but the object is what is “real” or “true”). So now finally, by following the logic of the thesis that “God is spirit” I have here come around to a position of perfect agreement with Iris Murdoch’s argument that “We need a theology which can continue without God”.¹³

Being primarily a moralist, Iris Murdoch is more attached to the religious objective mode of consciousness than I am. The ‘speculative’ tradition according to which “we live and move and have our being *in* God” is one to which she does not refer often. It is from that tradition, of course, that “absolute idealism” springs; but for Iris Murdoch “God” can never cease to be an “object”; and that is perfectly right and proper, since (even for someone like Eckhart who thinks and writes with the **speculative** tradition) Religion is a mode of “experience”. Thus, when Murdoch advocates “theology without God”, it is because she wants “the Absolute” to return to its original **Platonic** objectivity. Her philosophical translation for “God” is Plato’s “Idea of the Good”.

I agree that this return to the beginning is now necessary, precisely because most of the religious will continue to disagree both with Iris Murdoch and with me. They want a divinity who is both “real” and “personal”. But they will never agree among themselves either about whether He is **one** or somehow **manifold** (as in the Trinitarian doctrine, for example); or about whether He is Lawgiver and Judge, or Father and friend (or how the two roles can be reconciled). Lately, of course, the question whether He is not more properly “(S)he” has become a burning issue. But for those among whom all of these questions are seriously canvassed, the view that the divine is either **impersonal** or **suprapersonal** will continue to be unpalatable; and Platonic “separateness” is an “estranging” factor.

The necessary elimination of the Hegel-Myth (the supposedly **real** “March of God into the world”) from our religious discourse, and the recognition of the identity of Hegel’s Absolute with that of Hinduism — the identity of Royce with Schopenhauer, or of Plato’s supreme Idea with Hegel’s¹⁴ — prompts one final reflection. The real nemesis of Hegel’s Idea has been the attempt to take over the word “real”. Hegel insisted (rightly) that the place of the old “metaphysics” must be taken by “Logic”. But he continued to talk as if Logic (because it is absolutely “objective”) is “real”. The *Sache selbst* in philosophy, he says, is “the actual cognition of what truly is” (Miller,

§73). But he goes on to show that “what truly is” takes many “true” shapes. The major achievement of the “Science of Experience” is to have put them into an intelligible historical order of development. But the objectivity of Logic is what belongs to the **Platonically** “Real”, not to the empirical concept whose many-sidedness is exhibited in the *Phenomenology*.

We all learn as children (even as babies before we can talk) that “the real” is what will not allow us to ignore it, what will trip us up and hurt us if we do not recognize and respect it. We cannot possibly dispense with that concept of “reality” in its ordinary sense. Why must we darken counsel (and create pseudo-problems for ourselves besides) by insisting that “only what is spiritual is truly **real**”? That sort of persuasive rhetoric is all very well for the religious (among whom it will never in fact be **completely** persuasive). But that does not belong to **philosophy** at all, and it will not (**should not**) persuade any philosopher who is not persuaded already. The philosopher’s proper business is not with persuasion, but with clarification. If we substitute the adjective “logical” for “real” we shall have to add still some qualifier (such as “concretely” or “existentially”) because “logical” has a firmly established ordinary use too. But we should then be doing justice to the claim of Paul Valéry: “The proper, unique and perpetual object of thought is that which does not exist”.¹⁵ Royce’s “the world ... **shall** be spiritual ” is an implicit acknowledgement that it is just as true that “the spiritual is what is **not** real” as it is that “only what is spiritual is truly real”. Royce’s “real” Absolute was a **useful** myth — but it remained a myth in spite of all his logical struggles. As far as I can see — but I admit both to ignorance and to prejudice — Bradley’s Absolute was not even morally useful.

In any case, Hegelian **philosophers** must have done with myths. We are **not** cultural kings. We must leave that role to the disciples of Allan Bloom (or to anyone else who cannot learn from Heidegger’s awful example to steer clear of it). If we can school ourselves to say only what is conceptually unambiguous, we shall rid the philosophical community of a great mass of useless verbal disputes and polemics. We shall then be able to do what we ought to be doing for those who want to argue about whether “God exists” (and what [S]he is like); and we shall not have to hear those who are our rightful brothers and sisters saying that even “ more sinister” than “the outrageous implausibility of the whole [Hegelian] machine ... is a lingering shadow of determinism, and the *loss of ordinary everyday truth, that is of truth*”.¹⁶ The “outrageous implausibility” of the dialectical machinery will never cease to be canvassed — and I suppose it never should. Something better may indeed be possible — though I doubt it. Even the so called “Anglo-Hegelians” (including Royce) disliked and distrusted the dialectic; and Peirce, who is the greatest philosophical logician after Hegel, could find “nothing but music” (i.e., “outrageous implausibility”) in Hegel’s Logic. But Popper’s accusation of “determinism”, and the supposed “loss of truth” — that is a kind of **outrageous nonsense** that we can get rid of just by talking properly.

¹ See Miller, § 679. *For the religious consciousness* it is “God” who moves to “reveal Himself”. Indeed, *for consciousness* it is *always* “The object” that moves “necessarily”, and not its own concept of the object that is changed “freely”. It is the observable possibility of **regression** in consciousness, that establishes the “freedom” of consciousness (in its Augustinian perspective as the freedom of disobedience) — the freedom

of “obedience” only becomes obvious when “disobedience” has been comprehended. The option of simply refusing to go forward also exhibits conscious freedom. But that only makes the “necessity” of the argument itself harder to grasp. Luckily this is not a problem in Chapter VII of the *Phenomenology*.

² See Walter Jaeschke, *Reason in Religion: The Foundations of Hegel’s Philosophy of Religion*. Translated by J. Michael Stewart and Peter C. Hodgson. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990, chapter II, section. 5.

³ This is where the Mosaic God **logically** belongs in the “march of the Spirit”; and (as far as the “God of Abraham” is concerned) we ought not to **begin** with an **immature** Concept. Hegel never does this elsewhere in his “Science of Experience”.

⁴ Jerusalem and the Jewish experience enter into the historic progress of the World-Spirit only when they are universally **recollected**.

⁵ This is clearly implied by the fact that he gave a spare copy with some proof-corrections to a Greek student in one of his classes, (who took better care of it than Hegel’s professional friends did of many of his papers, so that our own “Critical edition” is now indebted to that student), and again by the fact that in the last months of his life Hegel began to prepare a new edition of his first big book.

⁶ See Soren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* [1846], Princeton, 1941, p. 135.

⁷ This is another argument against the identification of Yahweh as the Light-essence in the *Phenomenology*. For surely it is **essential** even to **Abraham’s** relation with God that he is **recognized** by God as the father of God’s own “people”. **Sublimity** is certainly the most important characteristic of Yahweh —that is why there cannot be any **image** of him. But I do not believe that even in his most rigorously logical mood Hegel would ever have claimed that sublimity was Yahweh’s **only** essential characteristic. It has to be conceded however that in the Berlin years Hegel did not maintain this absolutely simple doctrine about Ahura-Mazda either. In his lectures Zoroaster’s religion becomes “the religion of the Good”. This admission of the ethical aspect as primitive to the concept of Absolute spirit, is in my view a **logical** improvement of the “biography of God” as related in the *Phenomenology* — and not just a historical correction resulting from improved knowledge. But then, of course, I think that Plato must be recognized as the fountainhead of rational mythology, as well as being the father of dialectic. The author of the *Phenomenology* felt he had to choose between the two Platos because the myths belonged to the romantic aristocrats of the spiritual life whom he was determined to displace. So not everything that the Berlin philosopher-king added to the Jena-Nuremburg record was regressive. In the *Phenomenology* the transition from “forgiveness” as the only **absolute** moral duty becomes much easier to comprehend, if we begin “Religion” with the identity of the “Light” as the “Good”. But for my **present** purpose the more **abstract** concept of the Light-Essence is a “fortunate-fall” because it makes the correctness of my thesis about the “river of Life” more evident. (I hold that that thesis is correct **anyway**.)

⁸ This conception of the (logical) **impotence of Nature** is perfectly adapted for the reception of the evolutionary hypothesis.

⁹ Miller, § 585: “the night of its essence” will not fit either Yahweh or Ahura-Mazda. We have to remember the circularity of the Concept, and recollect the Logos as the Light shining in the Darkness, in order to understand what Hegel says. But the “recollection” of the “stress of life” validates Hegel’s description as “experience”.

¹⁰ *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy* [1892], New York, George Braziller, 1955, p. 266 and p. 264. (Once upon a time, the Harvard professors, at least, knew how to use “shall” and “will”. Now we are all forgetting.)

¹¹ 2 vols., London, Macmillan, 1900-1.

¹² See Hegel, *Briefe von und an Hegel* (4 Vols.), edited and annotated by Johannes Hoffmeister with volume 4 edited and annotated by Friedrich Nicolin. Hamburg,

Felix Meiner, 1952 to 1981. Letter 8 [Hegel to Schelling, end of January 1795]. (*Hegel: The Letters*, Translated by Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler with commentary by Clark Butler. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1984, p. 32.

¹³ Iris Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*. London, Chatto and Windus 1992 [Based on the 1982 Gifford Lectures given at the University of Edinburgh], p. 511.

¹⁴ Hegel’s “Idea” is the Idea of the Good conceived **concretely** — i.e., in its actual activity of informing the whole of “what is”. If we identify the “Light-Essence” as “the Good” this becomes explicit. But if start from its Parmenidean name “the One” we can see the conceptual identity that holds from the first paragraph of “Sense-Certainty”. Hegel’s way of envisaging “the dialectic” **in experience** has two important

consequences. First, he is not (in any significant **empirical** sense) a “monist”; and secondly, he can deal with the “problem of evil” without having to utter any morally outrageous Neoplatonic paradoxes. The *Phenomenology* is the story of the “errant cause” — or of “how evil is comprehended within the Divine Being” (cf. Miller, § 778-80).

¹⁵ I do not know exactly where this comes from. I cite it from Iris Murdoch, *ibid.*, [as endnote ¹³] p.506 (and she is depending on Simone Weil).

¹⁶ Iris Murdoch, *ibid.*, [as cited in endnote ¹³ above] p. 490. Emphasis in the original.