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## Message from the President

*Francis Peddle*

Occasionally I am the recipient of various discussions and controversies via what is now known as Internet listservers. This form of communication can be most valuable. As always it depends on the quality and tone of the individual submissions. "Netiquette" is obviously still in its early stages of refinement. There is something about the spontaneity of the Internet, without the social restrictions of face to face contact, that seems to grant participants a linguistic license which often borders on the obstreperous. There are now listservers for almost every type of philosophical discourse - some freewheeling and anarchic, others controlled by various rules decreed by the manager of the listserver.

I was struck recently while on one listserver of how prevalent the temptation is for philosophy students to seek out secondary literature before they had even begun to study an original text. There were even requests for secondary literature from particular perspectives, such as an analytical reading of Hegel's *Logic* or a post-modern interpretation of Kant. The pitfalls associated with reviewing secondary literature before one has a thorough understanding of the original text are obvious and need no repeating here. It appears to me, however, that the philosophical condemnation of such practices is neither common nor fashionable. Graduate students therefore feel no hesitation

in making such admissions and requests. There is now no disciplinary shame in confessing your intentions to read this literature as a *modus vivendi* to allegedly understanding Plato or Aristotle.

There are several possible remedies to this situation. Quotations from secondary sources in term papers will result in demerits not advancement. The sighting and citation of secondary literature in classroom discussions will be strictly forbidden. Professors deeply immersed in such practices will have to exercise restraint. Survey courses based on textbooks designed primarily by the larger commercial publishing houses should be eliminated from all curricula. Finally, the classroom mantra at the beginning of every semester will be the understanding of the text through individual study, effort and reflection. Let the students know that they are usually capable enough.

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This issue of *ELEUTHERIA* contains Part III of "Metaphysic and Dialectic: Ancient and Modern" by James Lowry and "F.W.J. von Schelling and Post-Hegelian Nihilism" by Francis Peddle which are continuations of essays published in Volume X, Number 2, Fall, 1998. F.W.J. von Schelling is the last representative of classical German Idealism before its disintegration as a philosophical force around the middle of the nineteenth century. He remained an idealist all his life. His philosophical writings have

enjoyed a considerable resurgence in recent decades.

As an interpreter of Hegel he was astute, conceptually rigorous and often prophetic of later developments for which a critical understanding of the import of the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* is a necessary prerequisite. With his invocation of a positive philosophy, and his preoccupation with *Naturphilosophie*,

as opposed to Hegel's negative rationalism, many modern writers see him as more exemplary of a form of modern existentialism than as an idealist. The following essay is primarily concerned with the issue of Schelling's understanding of the role of nothing in relation to the Absolute in Hegel, and philosophy in general, and the implications this has for modern nihilism.

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## METAPHYSIC AND DIALECTIC: ANCIENT AND MODERN

*James Lowry*

### PART III - THE MODERNS

Christian mediation, as we have seen in Part II of this essay, is also a radical revolution. A new cosmology must parallel as natural the new emotion as consolation which as divine willful personality is beyond nature as the cause of nature. Christian doctrine is seen as a revolution because its understanding is thought to transcend worldly understanding. In this, such doctrine finds a powerful ally in Greek intellectualism; especially, in Plato and Aristotle Neoplatonically understood.

### CHRISTIAN HOPE AND DISINTEGRATION

Christian beginnings were full of hope and vigour and certainty. No less as a belief and then a doctrine and then a theology. Yet this wonderful youthful hopefulness and persuasion looked at as a mediator, as an eternal moment in a cosmic dialectic, brought forth,

like Gaia Cronos, an ungrateful child, reminding us of Shakespeare's incomparable metaphor - "how sharper than a serpent's tooth it is, to have a thankless child." A thousand years of Greek philosophy, another thousand of Christianity as unquestioned, and somewhat less to the end of our millennium, while in time is small, in human consciousness is more complete than time can tell - this being true in full consciousness of the irrelevance of contemporary natterings about Eurocentricity and the like. Thought transcends time and its own efforts of self-negation. We will see how futile this effort must inevitably be as we pass in review the thanklessness of the modern child as well as its precociousness. But it is a futility ultimately fraught with hope and promise and so it must be our task to understand it at least as well as we have the uniqueness of ancient intellectuality and Christian faith. For it is these three eternal moments in the dialectic consciousness of humanity that is both our birthright of self-understanding

and our unique gift in the being of the cosmos. We do not have here either mere open-ended historicity or a wheel turning mindlessly forever. We have the living breathing consciousness of thought in the crucible of human life and it is neither a mere willfulness nor mere inevitability, but rather the freedom of self-reference self-observed.

The theology of the Middle Ages could not sustain itself. The revolution of which it was the apogee became self-dismantled as it became more distanced from its Greek roots. Always in Christianity there was an uneasy relation between thought and will, faith and reason. St. Thomas had tried to hold it together by a synthetic intellectual thread, but the juxtaposition of Aristotle and Neoplatonism could not successfully cover over the problematic of revelation as the end of faith. Intellectual as Thomas is, his synthesis ultimately tries to combine the Aristotelian *Nous* with the Neoplatonic solution of emanation. Instead of binding the world and the principle together more tightly, it brings into conflict the Greek and Christian cosmoi. What must result is a disintegration of the synthesis into its parts. But since in dialectic the whole is always greater than the sum of its parts, the resulting division into faith and reason shows itself to be two forms with but one result. The forms are the wars of religion and naturalism (née empiricism) - the result is transcendental nihilism mixed with hedonistic consolation - a largely aesthetic brew only perfected in our own century.

### MODERN DISEMBARKATION

Theologically Aquinas is followed speculatively by Duns Scotus, logically by William of Occam. The trend of which they are the setters is willfulness and its twin - potentiality. One way to unify this break is to speak of a Renaissance, of an Enlightenment - fine words, nice words -

words which mask the negativity of their truth. Humanism is their result and a return to Nature abstractly is its consequent. The usual way to introduce this philosophically is to call up the shade of Descartes and discuss Cartesian dualism. Actually he is simply the first to codify in thought what happened in theology. It is not a coincidence that all modern philosophy up to Hegel, as well as all modern physics up to Newton, and poetry up to Goethe, is a struggle to preserve Gaia while enduring Cronos. God is not officially abandoned until Nietzsche or the world officially embraced until Kierkegaard. In the work of that unhappy pair we have the struggle of a poetic consciousness which piously gives up philosophy for aesthetics; leaving the field of rationality to empirical mathematics; the former aphoristically distressed to be in the world of Gaia, the other collectively excited about her son's infinity.

### EMPIRICISM AND ABSTRACT RATIONALISM

The empiricism of Bacon, Locke, Berkeley and Hume; the abstract rationalism of Descartes, Spinoza and Leibnitz are mirrors of each other in their genuine but hopeless adherence to the beyond on the one hand, and their equally genuine adherence to the here and now of appearance and experience. The dilemmas they represent are similar to those of the Presocratics and the resolution of them by Kant and Hegel parallel those of Plato and Aristotle. The struggle of integration we see in Scepticism, Epicureanism and Stoicism parallels the antics of Darwin, Marx and Freud, while the twentieth century with its aestheticism, killing fields, nihilism and Angst is a negative reminiscence of Neoplatonism.

The problematic of British Empiricism is relatively simple. It is dogmatic. It simply takes appearances at face value. But unlike the ancient form it is an *inward* empiricism. So

inward does it become that causation is finally done away with. Cause and effect become disengaged. Initially this is not seen as catastrophic because there is, of course, still theology or its ersatz - common sense. The problematic of Continental Rationalism is likewise pretty simple. It is dogmatic as well. Various paradigmata are put forward; either substance as a kind of physics as in Spinoza, or monadic hierarchies as in Leibnitz. What characterizes them is their imaginative quality - that is to say, like British empiricism they are willful explanations - in which cause and effect are either effectively disengaged or equivocated into unity.

#### KANT AS INTERMEDIARY

These relations can only be well understood by a conscientious reading of Kant, who started out in life as a rationalist and underwent the fire of empiricism. The results of this great and profound inner dialectic are to be found in the three Critiques, particularly in the first. This Kant, unlike modern scholarship, with its penchant for the trivial, be it in letters, unpublished lectures, even conversations, faithfully set down or not, well understood. Kant sees himself as a revolutionary and in this he does not exaggerate, if what is meant is that he intellectualizes the nascent differences between the Christian cosmos and the findings of Copernicus. In light of the full development of Copernicus' revolution in the relativity and quantum theory of the twentieth century, Kant is more intermediary than revolutionary. In his own mind he wished to reconcile the revolution with its roots. He would he says: "limit reason to make room for faith." In so doing he turns ancient objectivity on its head. Appearance becomes reality and space and time become mental paradigmata. Knowledge is no longer an ideality of being or correspondence between thought and being - rather, and *this is* revolutionary, knowledge is appearance as

an amalgam of sense and logic in which thought and being *cannot* be said to correspond since the "thing in itself" (Ding an sich) is unknowable.

Kant is very clever in the way he argues for this and he cannot be defeated on his own ground. The greatness of his philosophy is that it cannot be overlooked. Like Plato he demands to be either accepted or improved. With Kant we see the duality of faith and reason, the very duality that spelled the end of Christianity as the end of dialectic, as completely formed. In his philosophy we see "pure" or "theoretical" reason juxtaposed to "practical" reason. Kant is able to argue for this because he believes that turning *inward* will produce absolute theoretical "categories" (the basis of theoretical reason) and absolute practical categories which he calls "imperatives" (the basis of practical reason). Looking through his language to its meaning we have here the juxtaposition of the passive and active reason of Aristotle *reversed*. This is important because when Kant is taken to his logical conclusion the result is the nihilistic aesthetic narcissism of the twentieth century - expressionism pure and simple - whether in the form of loudness disengaged from harmony, colour from form, form from function, work from meaning, learning from education - in a word, rights as demands - pure willfulness in itself.

Kant was also thorough - he proved the necessity of his conclusions by systematically blocking off any exit to his thought - a thoroughness which contemporary critics and devotees would do well to observe - as it sets a much greater limit to their willfulness than they imagine. Kant's antinomies are the actual basis for his categories, deductions, regulating ideas and surds (Ding an sich). In them contrariety becomes helpless and its synthesis impossible. An absolute wedge is driven between the *a priori* and the *a posteriori*. Kant's tour de force here is to use Anselm's proof to disprove all

proofs of an Absolute Prius. Kant claims to be able to show that all proofs other than the ontological are cosmological. He then claims that the cosmological is a

subset of the ontological. And he then claims to refute the ontological by showing it is self-contradictory as circular.

What is fascinating in all this are three things. First, Kant regards the idea of contradiction as the ultimate logical determinate. Second, the imagination ("Einbildungskraft" - the power of unifying in a form) is the lynch pin of his whole dichotomous edifice. Third, the dichotomy demands some kind of synthesis which is provided by either (a) an absolute practicality *outside* of nature or (b) an aesthetic which mediates intuition and sense. But the problematic of these solutions is that a synthesis of thought and being, faith and reason, knowledge and experience is impossible. There is not only no synthetic *a priori*; there is no synthetic *a posteriori* outside of the imagination. Kant poses for modernity what Plato did for antiquity.

#### HEGEL AND ABSOLUTE HISTORY

Hegel began life as a student of history and then of theology. Philosophy came through Kant and his observation of Schelling, who was greatly enamoured first of Fichte and then of Spinoza, Plato and Neoplatonism. Hegel worked his own way through Kant, Fichte and Schelling and breathed deeply the romantic longings of post-Kantian idealism. But his empirical bent led him to a wonderful discovery. The way to solve the problematic of Kant was not by way of the ethical enthusiasms of Fichte or the aesthetic Naturphilosophies of Schelling, but by way of history seen through the prism of Greek philosophy, art and literature. Hegel is, in fact, the first significant European philosopher to know the Greek texts

in their original form and to have before him the corpus of *both* Plato and Aristotle as well as texts from later Greek philosophy, though to a lesser degree.

What is most remarkable about Hegel is his *historical* learning; and it was in *History* that he found the philosopher's stone. To understand the significance of this is not easy since we live in an intellectual world completely historicised. The Greeks really have no sense of history apart from nature. In this they are more akin to India and China than to modern Europe. History (ἱστορία) is a Greek word that means a kind of chain of events without any particular order save chronological. It is in Aristotle's words a series of episodes lacking the necessity of a plot. It is first in Christianity that we find developed a teleological history - a string of chronological episodes with inevitability. This is because God is seen to be active in the world and to have a "plan" for its redemption. Yet, oddly, this providential idea of history is not developed much until the Renaissance, which means that the development of Christian theology happens outside it. The reason is worth thinking about. It has to do with the fact that history in Christianity is subordinated to transcendental consciousness and is, therefore, somewhat epiphenomenal. History as a *secular* phenomena is at first tied in the Renaissance to divine activity, as, for example, in Vico. But it is somewhat naturalized in his thought through the biological idea of the cyclicity of life. The full development of the idea of history as a divine secularity occurs with Hegel, and the cult of historicity, which has reached epidemic proportions in the twentieth century, is to be found in nascent form in Hegel's notion of the Absolute as Begriff (concept).

Hegel's careful study of Greek philosophy led him to see through Kant's division of thought from being. Plato and Aristotle's thoroughgoing attack on empiricism gave him insight into Kant's assumptions and the confidence to

confront them. From Plato he learned dialectic, from Aristotle the unity of contraries. From Christianity he learned the idea that history is providential. By combining these ideas he believed that he could fashion an *empirical* solution to Kant's relentless criticism that would be superior to the dogmatic ethics of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* or the arbitrary aesthetics of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*. The *experience* of mankind in *human history* is in the Hegelian solution a divine self-consciousness as a development in *time* into self. Hence the study of history is the study of God Himself. This is a heady potion when drunk deeply, and Hegel devoted his life to observing this development both internally (the *Logic*) and externally (the *Phenomenology*, the various lectures). His masterwork in which he explicitly intends to present a synthesis of his final

findings is the *Encyclopedia*. The absolute self-dialectic is of Art, Religion and Philosophy as the result of Logic, History and Consciousness as inevitable, as rational self-development.

The implications of Hegel's solution to Kant's problematic at first seem unassailable. History is Experience. Appearance, logically understood, is God's Practice. Proof is not in the imagination but is Reality itself. Consciousness of Self is Divine Self-Knowledge. Mankind, as Universal, and God are One Consciousness.

Why Hegel's solution is finally an *interims historica*; how it gets played out in the twentieth century as the end of philosophy; and what the perennial revival of philosophy means will be the subject of the concluding essay in this series.

## F.W.J. VON SCHELLING AND POST-HEGELIAN NIHILISM

*Francis Peddle*

From its tentative first appearance in the "Amphiboly" of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, reflections on nothing and not-being gained momentum in the second half of the nineteenth century. It settled on popular culture as a pervasive dread and foreboding. In intellectual and literary circles it took the form of a crisis of consciousness, a *Fragestellung*, the self-abdication of reason, the disempowerment of ethical ideals - a general decay of civilized life and civil society. Many aesthetes in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries indicted and convicted philosophy as the source of these Cimmerian developments.

What is the basic difference between Hegel's discussion of nothing and the later experiential sense of it as all-pervasive and enervating? How did reflections on nothing, nothingness, not-being and non-existence become a translogical and unavoidable sensitivity? Is it only because thought is ineliminably determinate, that we are necessarily saved from pure nothingness in Hegelian logic? Hegel's opening proposition that pure being is the same as pure nothing is conceptual, innocuous and non-threatening. It is, lest we forget, a logical thought determination. Nihilism, in Dostoyevsky and Conrad, is non-conceptual, illogical and thoroughly menacing. Its power comes not from any integrity and propositional truth that remain after analytical examination. Its court of appeal is in a deep and dark sentiment, a primordial dread of an opaque externality that is neither illuminating nor sublimating.

Hegel's philosophy is primarily retrospective. It is a panoramic and living canvas of the cosmic eternal order that is monistic as well as

historically immanent. By the mid-nineteenth century philosophy and intellectual culture had become imbued with a utopian and futuristic orientation which did not necessarily eschew the past, but which certainly left behind the theoretical and contemplative character of Hegel's system in a philosophical agenda that was action oriented and politicized.

The first writer to characterize Hegelian logical metaphysics as negative philosophy was F.W.J. von Schelling. He was a contemporary whom Hegel criticized for abstractly representing the absolute in the identity philosophy, but who in turn criticized Hegel in the 1830s and 1840s for glossing over important transitions from being, nothing and becoming to determinate being and from conceptual logic to nature philosophy. Schelling's analysis requires close scrutiny for in the twentieth century he became viewed as an proto-existentialist. He can also be seen as a thinker who first exposed Hegelian metaphysics as a whole to the accusation that it is a fundamentally negative thought-orientation which hubristically deifies human self-consciousness.

In lectures recently translated as *On the History of Modern Philosophy* (tr. Andrew Bowie, Cambridge University Press, 1994, hereinafter, *Lectures*) Schelling, writing in the mid-1830s shortly after Hegel's death, surveys philosophical developments from Descartes to Hegel, Jacobi and his own work. In these writings we find riveting statements of why German Idealism, especially of the Hegelian variety, is untenable, rationally insupportable and theologically perverse. The fundamental disagreement between the two thinkers focuses

on whether the Absolute is a result, as Hegel consistently maintained, or whether it is something with which we begin philosophy and thought, *in toto*, and in contradistinction to the utterly unstable pure nothing. One's philosophical position on this matter has pervasive consequences for systematic understanding of the world and the relationship between the Absolute and finite being.

In Hegelian logico-metaphysics the inability of the thought-determination of pure being/nothing to maintain a total non-referentiality to all indeterminateness is, in the end, the inner source of its forward development into determinate being, into the concepts of reflection and ultimately into the total mediated determinateness of the Absolute Idea. In other words, the inability to sustain a total non-referentiality to determinateness, i.e., the inherent relativity of indeterminate pure being and pure nothing to determinate being, and also to articulated discursive thought and conceptual reflexivity, demonstrates in and of itself that the Absolute is necessarily a result. Pure being/nothing is nonetheless a thought-determination. Hegel's philosophical stance is unswervingly idealistic in the sense that there can be no consideration of being, whether indeterminate or determinate, that does not involve thought. The latter is thus "prior" to being, its negative other, and the Absolute, wherein thought and being are ultimately identified as a mediated immediacy, is necessarily an end product of the world-historical struggle of dialectico-speculative thinking. It is not difficult to move, as did the nineteenth century, from this metaphysics to various perverse forms of soteriological historicity.

On Schelling's view, as long as thought is understood as in some sense always there prior to being, any philosophical system erected thereon is intrinsically negative. Hegel's philosophy logicizes all reality. Logical categories are active and innately mobile. As long as

every particular moment or determination within the Absolute is relative and unstable then it must self-negate, push out beyond itself and re-establish its self-identity in something it is not. The Hegelian Absolute, as a totality, is not a moment, and is thus presumably stable, but there is nothing *within* the Absolute that is not relative and inherently negative. Schelling equates logic and negativity since Hegelian logic is essentially the movement and sedimentation of thought categories.

The factual priority of the Absolute, the original identity of being and thought within it, the subordination of reason and conscious reflection to being and the inability of logic to explain existence from within the system of thought-determinations are the basic notions which motivate Schelling to fasten onto "positive" philosophy as a corrective to Hegel's negative system of thinking. The Schellingian inversion of Hegelian logico-metaphysics is intertwined with the notion that thinking involves the investigation of possibilities, while it is impossible for being to be a possibility because it is necessarily an actuality. If Hegel's system of logic is primarily of the realm of the essential, i.e. God in His eternal essence before the creation of nature and finite mind, it is, on Schelling's view, a system of logical possibilities concerned with the revelation of the "essence" of things - a "kingdom of shadows" as Hegel himself says. Being thus becomes a reflection of thought and the perennial thought/being problematic is resolved, logically and negatively, on the side of thinking.

We need now to go back to Schelling's detailed analysis, in the *Lectures*, of Hegel's concept of the "beginning" in the system of thinking to understand why he believed that reason cannot be the only source of comprehending its own status and thus give a rationally articulated response to the question of why there is a world at all rather than nothing. Pure being is the first stage of thoughtful



objectivity in Hegel. How is it possible to say that the most objective moment in Hegelian metaphysics, for all subsequent mediation in the logic is an intensification of the subjective, i.e., a process of de-objectification (Schelling evocatively states that the Idea "eats up being" *Lectures*, p.153) or co-opting of objectivity into thinking, is *qua* the beginning of metaphysics an absolutely indeterminate nothingness or the mother of all negatives? And how can this indeterminate nothing contain an inner restlessness that propels it into greater and greater layers of articulated determinateness? Schelling's answer is instructive:

The fact that he nevertheless attributes an immanent movement to pure being means no more, than, that the *thought* which begins with pure being feels it is impossible for it to stop at this most abstract and most empty thing of all, which Hegel himself declares is pure being. The compulsion to move on from this has its basis only in the fact that thought is already used to a more concrete being, a being more full of content, and thus cannot be satisfied with that meagre diet of pure being in which only content in the abstract but no determinate content is thought; in the last analysis, then, what does not allow him to remain with that empty abstraction is only the fact that there really *is* a more rich being which is more full of content, and the fact that the thinking spirit itself is already such a being, thus the fact that it is not a necessity which lies in the concept itself, but a necessity which lies in the philosopher and which is imposed upon him by his memory (*Lectures*, p.138).

The crucial point in this passage is that Schelling challenges the necessity inherent in the concept. Hegel's response would be that thought and being are immediately identified and one in the trivial proposition - trivial because there is no content - that pure being and pure nothing are the same. It is, however, impossible to think of the logical category of pure indeterminate being without invoking

determinate being, or reflected being and the categories of the doctrine of essence. Thought can, on reflection, extract itself completely from the determinate finite world, but that still does not answer the question of why there is a world rather than nothing at all - a question at the core of the nihilistic *frisson* which so characterized post-Schellingian literary culture in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The sense of "objectivity" that Hegel attributes to pure being is not the traditional objectivity (*gegenständlich*) of that which is posited over and against an other because there is no opposition within pure being itself. It is the essential objectivity of a thought-determination that has emptied itself of all content, or all the content which an absolute subject is eventually able to appropriate to itself. No matter how you look at Hegel's beginning of philosophy, we are contemplating a *thoughtful*, and not a factual, beginning, a reflectively derived beginning - not one dependent upon the existence of a *Naturphilosophie*. Hegel's logic is thought as Idea in its essence unscathed by the inherent brittleness of nature or the temporal contingencies of finite mind.

It is Schelling's focus on the Hegelian inconsistency of pretending to begin the system of thinking with pure being, while in fact presupposing a thinking *being*, which brings him to the conclusion, utterly contrary to Hegel's intentions, that the *Logic* is something contingent and only loosely connected with his system as a whole (*Lectures*, p.146). If the universe is to be an intelligible result, then the Absolute cannot be thought as a pregiven subject which mysteriously contains the possibility of becoming an object. The Schellingian approach to the Absolute allows the world to be disclosed to us in ways that are not solely dependent upon the activities of our consciousness. Hegel's Absolute so interweaves the activities of rational self-consciousness and external nature that in the end it is impossible

to distinguish in his system between theoc cosmology and derivative human reflection. The latter can effect the total negation of determinate being, reality as such, and thereby allot itself a power unbridled by external restraint. Schelling maintains that Hegel can only do this through a doctrine of "double becoming."

Hegel's first definition of the Absolute is that it is pure being. Schelling's definition is that it is pure subject. Schelling characterizes the difference between the two as follows:

The difference between the Hegelian and the earlier system (Schelling's identity philosophy) as far as the Absolute is concerned is only this. The earlier system does not have a double becoming, a logical one and a real one, but, starting out from the abstract subject, from the subject in its abstraction, it is in nature with the first step, and it does not afterwards need a further explanation of the transition from the logical into the real. Hegel, on the other hand, declares his Logic to be that science in which the divine Idea logically completes itself, i.e. in mere thinking, before all reality, nature and time; here, then, he already has the completed divine Idea as a *logical* result, but he wants immediately afterwards to have it again (namely after it has gone through nature and the spiritual world) as a *real* result (*Lectures*, p.149).

The double becoming in Hegel is the dual presentation of the Idea as *logical* result and *real* result. It is on account of this dual becoming that Schelling thinks Hegel fails to answer the question why there is a world rather than nothing. He in effect accuses Hegel of a large-scale *reductio* to the level of the understanding insofar as the dialectical self-unfolding of the Absolute has two parallel trajectories - one real and one logical. Hegel would answer that Schelling's characterization of a double becoming is in itself an illegitimate exercise of the understanding since logic as an essentiality is non-existent without existence, both as non-

conscious nature and as self-conscious mind.

There are, then, two ultimately problematic and philosophically unsatisfying leaps in Hegelian metaphysics, from pure being via becoming to determinate being and from logic to nature. The former arises out of the conundrum of how a thinking *being* can think itself into nothing. The latter originates in the questionable de-subjectivization of the Idea or, in other words, why would the realized Absolute Idea, the highest, most mediated, most integrated and most articulated Subject make itself subjectless again by disintegrating into the fragmented, external and brittle determinateness of temporalized and spatialized nature (*Lectures*, p.155). The answer, of course, is that as the highest essential Being, as God, it would be the height of foolishness to commit such a sadomasochistic act.

In Schelling's view the reason why Hegel could not move beyond negative to positive philosophy was the inadequacy of his articulation of the circularity of metaphysics. Schelling states:

Later Hegel tried a further greater intensification, and even sought to get to the Idea of a free creation of the world. A curious passage in which this attempt is made is to be found in the second edition of his *Logic* - the passage was different in the first edition of the *Logic* and also obviously had a completely different sense there. In the second passage it is as follows: the Last, into which everything goes as into its ground, is then also that from which the First, which was initially established as something immediate, emerges, and "in this way the absolute spirit, which results as the concrete and last, the highest truth of all being, is known as externalising itself with freedom and as releasing itself into the form of an immediate being at the *end* of the development - as resolving itself to the creation of a world which contains everything which fell into the development which had preceded that result, so that all this (everything which preceded in the development)

is transformed along with its beginning, via this reversed position, into something which is dependent upon the result as a principle," i.e., therefore, what was at first result becomes principle, what in the first development was a beginning which led to the result becomes conversely something dependent *on* the result which has now rather become a principle, and thereby also something which must undoubtedly be deduced. Now if this reversal were possible in the way *Hegel* wishes, and if he had not just spoken of this reversal but had tried it and really established it, then he would already himself have put a second philosophy by the side of his first, the converse of the first, which would have been roughly what we want under the name of the positive philosophy (*Lectures*, p.157).

If a result must invariably become a principle, then one needs to go back down the stairs which have already been climbed. It must be remembered that in Hegelian logic everything only has its truth in what follows with God as the *terminus* and final cause of the progression. Each thought determination is the final cause of what precedes it. By this process matter without form is, for instance, the *ground* of everything. Can the Absolute become an effective cause by reversing this process? Schelling says this is hardly the case for then humankind, for instance, would become the effective cause of the animal world (*Lectures*, pp.158-9). Keep going backwards in the *Logic* and pure being, which is pure

nothing, is productively caused by the Absolute Idea. The free creation of the world is thus transformed into the creation of nothing. The interior necessity redolent throughout the *Logic* therefore does nothing to assure us of the necessity of the creation of the world. That the world may not have been created, i.e. its creation is an inexplicable contingency is a crucial component of later nineteenth century nihilism.

The question of why God would wish to sacrifice continually His freedom, His eternity and His essence is not answered by Hegel. Schelling believed that the question could not be answered if the Absolute is understood as a result of an active thinking process that from the human perspective participates comprehensively in divine self-knowledge. Schelling put forward the notion of a positive philosophy, in essence a counter-Hegelian Absolute, as the basis for a theology that would make disclosures to consciousness which were not wholly dependent on the activity of rational self-consciousness itself. In this effort he failed and post-Hegelian, post-Schellingian European thought collapsed into a naïve scientific positivism/empiricism on the one hand and a nihilistic subjectivism on the other which underwrote self-creation as the only substitute for eschewing any possible understanding of how the world was created.

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