

MEMORY AND FORGETFULNESS: A Theme of Christian Metaphysics

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Introduction

This paper aims at a critical theology of communications. It is based on Hegel's presentation of the point of the story of western metaphysics: Its inability to "hold on to death". The power of that critical presentation of the metaphysical-scientific project derives from a communicatively, i.e. relatingly conceived Absolute which has taken death, difference and finiteness into itself: Only by relating himself in finite terms, can God communicate adequately. In doing so, he tells not only his, but also the world's story. Presenting himself, he presents also the world's nature; placing critique, negation and death into his self, he criticizes death-forgetful and God-defensive mankind. In telling the world's story, a story which is forgetful of death, and therefore defensive against the dying God, God tells his own story. Reminding man of himself, he also reminds of metaphysics' God-amnesia. The paper leans strongly on Theunissen's theological Hegel-interpretation and argues on the basis of the "atheism", disclosed at the end of western metaphysics, as a constitutive moment of theological reflection. It is critical of contemporary religions of "meaning-bestowal" and "nomizing" "holiness", drawing from the sociology of knowledge or from nineteenth century Kantianism. It is also critical of theologies standing close to these movements. But this critique becomes apparent only toward the end of the paper, after the dialectic of memory and forgetfulness has been elaborated as a central issue of western metaphysics in the first part. The second shows how that dialectic is closely associated with the conception of a deathless God, which conception triggers the compensate: knowledge of death and finitude having been repressed, ideological meaning now has to be produced. The third part of the paper indicates how in Hegel's thought the termination of western metaphysics is disclosed with its inner logic. This logic is characterized by the intimate relation of God-amnesia and a repression of the knowledge of death. This close association having been "elevated" as the inner working of western metaphysics at its end, the fourth part develops Hegel's logic as a narrative source of critique, which in the fifth and final portion is shown to have trinitarian structure.

1. The Dialectic of Forgetfulness and Memory

In his essay *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life* (1874) Nietzsche argues that life is not conceivable except that it

is nourished in a historical context. And yet he elaborates on the common experience that a life which never forgets its historical heritage never can be considered an independent, autonomous life. Forgetfulness and memory thus lead a dialectical existence in the healthy life. Nietzsche considered the Christian metaphysic of the occident such a context within which the autonomous human subject has been nurtured. But that very nurturing therefore paradoxically also promoted the negative impulse to reject the parent. Nietzsche's characterization of the dialectical relation of autonomy of thought and the tradition of metaphysical speculation represents a new but not unproblematic stage in the development of that history. New, because it asserts with uncompromising clarity the claim for autonomy on the part of the thinking and acting subject. But therefore also problematic because thought and action, theory and praxis, and culture and self are in fact not maintained in dialectical tension with one another. That tension is surrendered in favor of the "freedom" of the subject which consequently emerges in solipsistic irrationality. Nevertheless, both Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics and also his defense of the freedom of the subject are essentially to be affirmed. He shares both interests with Hegel. From the perspective of Hegel's critique of metaphysics the philosophical development succeeding him becomes theologically of great interest. This interest arises when we realize that Hegel's Absolute thematizes the "not", the negativity and hence the nihilism of western metaphysics as a constitutive element of the Absolute itself as it becomes manifest at the end of its own history. Manifestation, that is, appearance of the character of metaphysics and its termination thus coincide. But this coincidence includes the coincidence of the absolute autonomy of God together with the absolute autonomy of the human subject. Both are contingent upon one another. But the dependence could appear only after the non-communicative aspect of the traditional concepts of "God", "being" and "thought" had been disclosed. Hegel's *Logic* understands this disclosure as an essentially communicative, revelatory event, an event which takes place not apart from but rather in terms of the history of western speculation. "The interpretation of the Absolute is its own doing... which begins with itself as it also arrives at itself". (Hegel, 1812;II:160). It is important to observe that for Hegel this is no mere interpretation but an act: The interpretation's "doing is the reflecting movement itself." (1812,II:163).

Furthermore, this act is essentially a critical movement. It negates the other's self-knowledge. The alienation caused by the other's knowledge of self apart from the Absolute is critically "elevated". This means two things: It is criticized for what it is: an incomplete, ultimately impotent self-transcendence. But being identified as such it is already "overcome", that is, negated. Hegel's use of the word *aufheben* in this twofold use of elevating, identifying and characterizing of what it is on the one hand and overcoming, rejecting and criticizing it on the other

are at work in this dialectical movement.

Hegel's philosophy as a whole must be seen and was understood by him as an "elevation and preservation" or sublation of the "substance" of philosophy. Philosophy here is understood in the sense of the western tradition of metaphysical speculation. More precisely in the *Logic*, western metaphysics is at the same time critically displaced or forgotten as also realized or "remembered" (1812,II:39; Theunissen, 1980:15ff; see Hegel, 1812,II,32,104f,308,320f; see Ritter, 1965:13ff.) and identified for what it is. The reason for the metaphysical "project" (Heidegger, Marcuse, see Ahlers, 1970,1971), namely its God-amnesia, is critically elevated and therefore overcome or negated. This critique has become the foundation of a "critical" theology (Hegel, 1812,I:47, Theunissen, 1980:38f). The purposes for the metaphysical project since Parmenides are simultaneously elevated as also critically overcome in the self-knowledge of the Absolute. Since defense against God and life has been the primary motive behind this project, the critique involved in the Hegelian dialectic can be understood in the sense of a negative theology. (Theunissen, 1980/95-101). Our dialectic of forgetfulness and remembrance must therefore be understood as a "representing critique" of all thought (1812,I:45. Theunissen, 1980:15ff).

2. The Deathless God of Metaphysics and the Production of Meaning

This dialectic, elevating, specifying and criticizing the nature of the tendency of man metaphysically to transcend himself must be understood then as the bracket of any meaning-world and self-producing human endeavor, an endeavor which in the metaphysical project has taken on its most profound and far-reaching form. In the confines of that bracketing definition this human tendency emerges as having a thoroughly pragmatic purpose: to hide — and thus to cause to forget — the fickleness and vulnerability of human life. It is a frailty which Nietzsche identified throughout his work. This defenselessness — which has theological-christological implications — takes in Nietzsche's anthropological observations the form of the argument that man is not well-integrated into his natural environment and that he is vulnerable to the threat of meaninglessness. The metaphysical and scientific project compensated for this weakness; it had to be turned into strength or repressed or covered up as best as possible. One favorite means to accomplish this, both Hegel and Nietzsche saw, was the identification of thought and being achieved in the thought of Aristotle's "God"; Descartes accomplished that same stabilization for modernity in his formulation of the ontological proof. In both instances the purpose of thinking the infinite deity was to render reasonable the reflection of the subject and to guarantee its existence. In Aristotle, the process of thinking finds its crowning glory in the unmoved, apathetic God thinking himself in the act of the thinking human subject (Met. 1072b 18-30). The

reason for this "escape" into an unmoved deity was to overcome the pathological mobility and instability of the thinking subject. In itself it remains mere potentiality, considered a mortal threat. (Jüngel, 1969). Potentiality gains significance only if grounded in actuality. In this ascent into the apathetic deity, thought thinks itself, achieving pure actuality, life, *apathès kai analloiōton*, apathetic and unalterable (Met. 1073a 11). "God" can provide salvation for a pathetic human subject, because he is the *prōton kinoūn akīneton ōn*, the prime mover which is immobile (Met. 1074a 38). Descartes later repeated in terms of the philosophical problems of his time a similar movement in his late work on the *Principles of Philosophy* (Henrich, 1960: 10ff), thereby providing a reasonable and an immobile ground to the modern, scientifically reflecting subject.

Nietzsche rejected that ideal because he understood that it was mere auto-suggestion, to use contemporary psychological jargon. And he opted — being anticipated by Hegel, as we shall see immediately —, for passion as a different model of sense-making. The fact that in the late Nietzsche passion affirms the solipsistic will-metaphysic of the *Übermensch* should not deter us from garnering from his insight the cardinal theological point that the traditional metaphysical notion of God as immobile, apathetic and indifferent inevitably led to his demise and "death", that is, the "death" died when an issue is disclosed for what it is: in this case a theologically most significant form of human self-deception. Insofar as the traditional theistic image of God was necessary to preserve a strong, self-deceiving human self-image, this God was not free.⁽¹⁾ Nietzsche so passionately talked, again together with Hegel, about the "death of God" as a recent event of the greatest significance within the history of philosophy (Nietzsche, 1882/127). He did not talk about this death in the theological sense. It is a metaphysical, philosophical event, an event relating to self-deceptive slavery and human freedom. Nevertheless, or rather therefore, his and also Hegel's observation has theological significance. For theology had appropriated since about the third century the metaphysical understanding of God and hence tended to emphasize the death of the Son but not the death of God the Father himself.

1. See Jüngel, 1977:16ff,249 but also subtitle of the book: "On the foundation of the theology of the crucified in the struggle between theism and atheism" Sections A and B of the book, (1-137) point to an interrelation between the demise of the theistic understanding of God and the possibility to think God, i.e. to think God biblically. Therefore, although the "theistic understanding of God" is considered problematic, it nevertheless has theological significance, and not only because of its "demise" and "death". No theological position will claim ultimate and absolute legitimacy for itself. But that implies that even the traditional theistic conception of God certainly has provided guidance and comfort throughout the ages. See Ratzinger, 103-109. Circumspect honoring and critique of the traditional unmoved deity are therefore called for. See Jüngel, 1977:9, O'Donovan, 1981:253.

Of course Hegel had before Nietzsche talked of the "death of God" in the sense of the "speculative Good Friday" (1802-414). If we take both Hegel's and Nietzsche's reflection on the death of God seriously we arrive at these suggestions: (1) The God of metaphysics is unsuffering and immobile. Therefore (2) he cannot justify; he is too weak to be able to love, for he is a form of human autosuggestion, arising out of weakness. For "God has turned out to be our longest lie." (Nietzsche, 1882:208). This knowledge causes (3) humanity to appear to be infinite, unhistorical, without measure, reason and defining limits. Nietzsche's solipsistic irrationalism, his assertion of the *Urbemensch* as well as his affirmation of suicide are good testimony for this anthropological conclusion. But these thoughts suggest a theological interrelation between (1) a suffering God and (2) his ability to justify which (3) identifies man in his historicity and finitude as a foundation of a theologically reflected anthropology. A God who is not apathetic and not indifferent, choosing rather to identify himself with his other, his son, and communicating with him, can then also be understood as a source of critique. A communicative theology is a critical theology. It is critical of indifference and unalterable identity, of apathy and ubiquitous sameness. It is critical of any human endeavor to mediate finite thought into infinite being and to deify that which is worldly. It is critical of any tendency to seek the immortal and to shun finiteness and death.

What are the contemporary, post-metaphysical forms in which such an uncritical "metaphysic of wholeness" manifests itself? We can say that theologically of interest here are all those attempts of our time which aim to achieve doubtless certainty. (Ebeling, 1969:138-183). Where could such attempts be located? We could find them for example in the various attempts of meaning-production. They all suffer under the theologically suspect program of a *Social Production of the Sacred* (Ferrarotti, 1977). The positive social sciences are characteristic of this attempt just as are various social programs to establish a flawless society without want. In the first instance, scientific history-recounting (Hegel, 1807:523f) no longer understands that the positivistic constitution of history arises out of the tragedy of the "European unhappy consciousness" which it attempts to salvage in such external calculations. We have a soteriological motive moving here the positive social sciences. It is, to speak with Manfred Riedel, a repetition of the Aristotelian "poietic world-construction" (1975:67,173-176) which does not recognize that only because the subject stands outside of world, salvation and history, does it need to soteriologically reconstruct them. This does not vary so much from the second form which the modern mind takes: The quasi-religious mandate to "bestow meaning" thorough various attempts at "nomization". "Meaning-bestowal" by means of social science (Peter Berger, 1969 :19-23), or by means of actual social programs necessitated by the prevalence of want, evil, poverty and imperfection, are certainly not suspect in themselves but become so at a time at which an autono-

mous human subject has forgotten or repressed the knowledge of its tragic origin and has therefore also forgotten the fact that it engages in such theoretical or practical "bestowal of meaning" in order to justify a subject which is inherently unjustifiable. The theodicy of former times has soured into an anthropodicy in the modern age of human autonomy and has consequently "poisoned" the atmosphere to such an extent that guilt now "knavs on life" (Nietzsche, 1887:899), on that very life which set out to be guiltless and free from any heteronomizing authority. As Hegel had understood in the *Encyclopedia* (1830:74-77) these various attempts at world- and meaning- production suffer theologically from the weakness of the variations of the ontological proof: Ultimately the reflecting human subject attempts through their means to mediate itself into being. For this reason Hegel was critical of the ontological proof (Theunissen, 1980:39). If they are philosophically not only acceptable but in fact necessary, they are still suspect theologically. Hegel knew rather, that particularly in the 19th and 20th century it was imperative to refrain from such mediation into life and to "hold onto death" (Hegel:1798-1800:349f). For he knew that the problematic behind the various proofs as well as behind the traditional metaphysical understanding of God was that he was conceived as undying, indifferent, apathetic and ubiquitous. Hegel formulated this insight early, while still at Frankfurt.

3. Hegel's Theological Realization of Truth

Hegel's comments on the death of God must be understood differently than those of Nietzsche, as must consequently also his comments on the "elevation" and "termination" of metaphysics. The reason for this judgment must be seen in his appropriation of the Württembergian Pietism in the formative period of his philosophical development (Rohrmoser, 1961, Cornehl, 1971:93-119). Hegel found it possible to "terminate" and hence criticize western metaphysics only because of the infusion of this theological element into his metaphysic. Hegel at Frankfurt attempted to overcome the "absolute ought", "being driven on without any point of rest" (1800:422; Harris, 1972:389), clear references to Kant and especially Fichte. He hoped to do philosophical justice to contingency, the unique historical event and finitude by asking theologically about the significance of the historical Jesus (1798:304f; 1800:424,427; Cornehl, 1971:126f.) The famous passage of 1802 about the "death of God" in the "speculative Good Friday" (414) also has its origin in this context of asking theologically for the significance of death. (1798:305; 1799:342f, 354,348; 1800:425). Hegel criticized this "pure ought" primarily because it lacked historicity, grounding all historical contingency in a transcendental "beyond". Hegel criticized this "beyond" because the transcendentalism which it "in faith" supported could not fulfil its promised critical potential. For this reason

also the metaphysic-critique of Kant and Fichte appeared problematic to Hegel. He knew that that transcendentalism was still an unaccounted-for metaphysical presupposition of all critique. As such it prevented not only significant critique, but rather an insight into the very motivation and purpose of western tradition of metaphysics itself. Hegel found that that motive was to repress the knowledge of death and finitude and to reflect in terms of the greater dignity of the generalizing concept, of a deathless God and of infinite being.

For this reason already the young Hegel argued that "pain" and "death" must not be forgotten, but rather "held on to": Only in this way does it become the "power of life". (1799:343f, 345f; 1807:29,286; Cornehl, 1971:122f; Rohrmoser, 1961:47,55,58,60,69,109). Theologically speaking, such knowledge of the significance of pain and death implies nothing less than that man and the world are finite, created *ex nihilo*, and not divine in their own right. That means also: They are not perfect nor are they perfectable. Knowing this means having a realistic perspective on life. Stated in philosophical terms: Knowledge is "abstract" as long as it does not manifest itself in the concrete and the finite. (Ahlers, 1975). The general concept does not love to hover above and removed from concrete phenomena.

Traditional metaphysics reflected, however, all concrete reality in terms of the greater ontological dignity of universal concepts. In that way traditional metaphysics is repressive and forgetful of reality. Heidegger and his student Marcuse stressed this (Ahlers, 1971). Moltmann (1976:269;105ff) and Metz (1968:92-95) emphasize that only through remembrance of the reality-denying forgetfulness of human life will a sane and mature future be found. Michael Theunissen's most recent work on the *Logic of Hegel* suggests that (1980:10, passim) the critical function of this work of 1812 lies in holding the nature and purpose of metaphysics up to the critical light of reason. Representation and critique are identical in the function of the *Logic vis-à-vis* the tradition of western speculation (1980:61-91). It is furthermore the contention of Theunissen that Hegel can arrive at this critical function of the *Logic* only on the basis of a communicatively conceived Absolute (Ahlers, 1976), an Absolute which has placed "difference" and "death" into itself, (thereby overcoming indifference) rather than reflecting on them only from the outside. Already in 1800 Hegel wrote that "death" is "complete lack of relation" (1800:425); consequently, life is absolute communication. Theunissen finds this death-and difference-affirming Absolute, that is, the movement of the concept from the identity to difference to greater fullness, to be a logical version of the Christian conception of God. It is an argument which Theunissen presented ten years earlier (1970) in his commentary on the *Encyclopedia*. It is also an argument which has met just as hearty approval as critique both within his own philosophical as also the theological circles to whom he addresses him-

self: Can the Christian God be reduced to a philosophical principle? Is it not a mockery of the reality meant with the terms "pain" and "death" to employ them as portions of a speculative movement? On the other hand: What does it mean philosophically to speak of "finitude", "death" and "pain"?)

These questions must be asked. However, it cannot be our task here to pursue them. We must limit ourselves here to the one side of the argument. The progress of the objective logic of the concept progressing from general indeterminacy to complete specification is a movement of "love" (1812,II:242ff; Theunissen, 1980:42f). It is one of "communicative freedom" (Theunissen, 1980:46) which must be understood specifically as a critical movement that is, as a movement critical of indifference, repression and dominance. Hegel means this immediately in the sense of a mental process in which the mind is incapable of perceiving the different "other" as identical to self; only secondarily does Hegel mean this disposition in a social and political sense (although Hegel did, according to an anecdote, celebrate Bastille day throughout his life by opening up his best bottle of wine). Hegel's *Logic* is therefore fulfilling a critical function: It sublates the repressing forgetfulness of the theory of western metaphysics which had been incapable of realizing a practical communication of freedom in which "the being-in-the-other-as self is freedom and the being-in-self in the other is love". (Theunissen, 1980:40). The "Christian-theological, indeed christological traits" of this "universal theory of communication" are "undeniable" (Theunissen, 1980:42,46).

It is with specific reference to social-philosophical considerations a "criterion of critique both of (apathetic) indifference as well as of (repressive) domination" (46). Theunissen recognizes that since Hegel expressed his thought in terms of that metaphysic which he himself identifies as "that groundless structure of useless concepts", his concept of the concept lies at certain points in danger of losing the originally christological character (44). Nevertheless, the relationship between his philosophy and the theological thought is clear. For Hegel's logic is based on the truth of the Absolute which is not at all condescending, shunning rather the abstraction of the general and setting free chance and individuality. Therefore the relation between philosophy and theology "lies necessarily in the basic concept of the Hegelian logic" (44).

This critical theo-logic has then specific christological, political, cultural and science-theoretical implications. In science-theoretical concerns, it is the "program of a representing critique". (Theunissen, 1980:19,23-19) or the "unity of theory and praxis" (Theunissen, 1970:387-419) or the identity of description and prescription or "knowledge and interest" (1970:420-438) or reflection and ethics.

Psychologically, remembrance of the causes of forgotten and repressed phobias of solipsistic loneliness and abandonment leads to health

and maturity. Culturally, remembrance and not the forgetting of suffering, persecution, deceit and exploitation can have societally healing effects. Politically, the one-dimensional theory of western metaphysics, being the theory of practical political repression, can lead to a universally communicative freedom by being sublated, i.e. elevated into representing remembrance of the repressed, i.e. forgotten causes of this practical repressiveness. And finally, this theo-logic narrative of forgetfulness and remembrance is accomplished by means of christological reflection, which, employing the scientific tools of objectifying description and determination, represents the truth or point of the theological narrative and does so in constant dialogue with the current philosophical and science-theoretical debate.

Thus the central theological concern: the eschatological Christ, gains objective, i.e. scientifically describeable, historical reality, whereas the historical Jesus has as the "ground of faith" (Wilhelm Herrmann, 1908:46f,49,53) eschatological significance. As the approaching God is identical with the one who has come, so the resurrected Jesus is identical with Jesus of Nazareth. This dialectical theo-logic of remembrance and forgetfulness is the very center of Hegel's logic, which interprets itself through the other mentioned perspectives and by so doing interprets the "point" of the world.

We had observed that the Hegelian dialectic focuses in the *Logic* around the concept "love". Hegel uses here once more a term which was also central to his Frankfurt period (1797-1800). Under the influence of Hölderlin he borrows here from him the concept "love" which "reconciles" (Hegel, 1797/98:239ff; Henrich, 1971:27,63ff, Küng, 1970:151f, Cornehl, 1971:107ff). "Love" "reconciles" the alienated existence and so transcends "separation" (1797/98:243;1800:420), alienation "pain" "death" and "negation" (1797/98:239ff). But contrary to the Platonic syncretism of Hölderlin, the reconciliation is accomplished for Hegel — under the influence of Aristotle — not by eliminating death, pain, and separation, but to the contrary by "holding on to" them, sublating them and maintaining "difference" as part of the new "identity" of "life". Hegel knew that the identity of life could not remain indifferent. So Hegel picked Hölderlin's love-metaphysic by simultaneously pushing himself off from it. (Henrich, 1971:9-40; Ahlers, 1978).

Already in the early writings the concept of "love" was displaced (1799:374,421 Henrich, 1971:26f) by the richer concept "life" (1800:421) which particularly in the *Phenomenology* appears as "spirit" (13,16,24). "Life is the unification of unity and non-unity" (1800:422), but since life finds its reconciled form only through death and negation, "death" becomes the *Lücke*, the "chasm, breach, deficiency" and therefore the "power of life" (1799:343ff,347). Later on, in 1801, Hegel can also express the same thought this way: "The Absolute itself is for this reason the identity of the identity and the non-identity; opposition and unity

are simultaneously in it." (1801:64:13-15). And for this same reason life, love and spirit lead to the "negation of the negation" and are thus the absolute form of critique. (1807:68,418).

4. Theo-logical Narrative as Source of Critique

Specification accomplished by "love", "life" and "spirit" through their critical capacity to negate the negation completes the theological movement of the narrative unfolding of the logic. It is theological in the sense that this specifying movement from the abstract and general to the specific takes place within God himself. It is imperative to note that this self-specification, which theology represents, is the objective criterion of the other forms of remembrance mentioned before. In this sense it fulfils a transcendental function.

Contemporary theology has developed a theology of narration along analogous lines, although the following thinkers' relation to Hegel remains cool. Hans Georg Geyer, following Eberhard Jüngel (1965-53) speaks of the necessity for theological reflection "to learn to think with a completely new intensity... (and) to think in relations which do not remain within, the schema of the traditional onto-logic as attributes of basic substances, but which rather need to be understood as basically eventful relations. (1966:32). Karl Barth is the guide for both Jüngel and Geyer. Theology is to be narrative and that means objective, in "representing nothing but the self-representation of God". "This revelation is the 'self-interpretation of God'. In it God makes himself understandable for us as he is also for himself. Revelation is, as self-interpretation of God, the root of the doctrine of the trinity. This doctrine of the trinity is then consequently the interpretation of revelation which is made possible by the revelation as self-interpretation of God, ie. the self-interpretation of the being of God". (1966:32).

God relates. His *nature* is self-revelation in the sense of address. That means that he relates by relating himself. And he does so by means of the word or rather, being word in his very nature, he relates by relating himself. God is therefore narrative. Any ontologizing substance-metaphysic is here not only out of place but specifically criticized. God can relate himself only if he is relating in his very person. Therefore, to speak with Hegel, if he is "substance", that is, if he is, he is "just as much subject" (1807:19). God finds his highest "*intensity*" and his greatest "*richness*" in the "*most concrete and most subjective*". The point of God's relating narrative is his subjectivity: "The highest and sharpest point is *pure personality*." God, in relating, makes himself "most free" (1812,II:502) by providing relating freedom to all reality; therein he simultaneously creates the basis for the social realization of the general in love. (Theunissen, 1980:43). As such he criticizes non-relating, i.e. non-communicative substantiality represented by onto-

gizing metaphysics, a disposition not interested in individuality, uniqueness, difference and plurality.

This objective theological interpretation of God's relating self has its criterion in the self-interpretation of God in Jesus Christ, the communicating word, and is therefore in its very nature narrative theology. It has its "highest and sharpest point", the criterion of self-identity, in identifying with that which is different. God gains his identity, i.e. his fullness, by identifying with difference, with an Other, with Jesus. The criterion of God's self-identity (and therefore also of theological narrative) is critique. The very heart of theo-logic judgments is critique. If God identifies himself critically in difference, in Jesus, the kenosis doctrine is "elevated" into a trinitarian theology, i.e. a doctrine of God (Moltmann). God does not so much "empty" himself, that is, lose his identity on the cross. He certainly does so; Paul makes this point in Phil. 2. But this is only one side of the Pauline understanding. For God does not only lose and empty himself on the cross. He also finds himself there and gains his fullness. The path to a *theologia gloriae* is via a *theologia crucis*. To seek out alienated humanity is God's purpose. And he does so out of love, and in the process he critically negates man's God-negation. So God presents himself as "most rich" by "maintaining himself in his other", or in his "specificity". He realizes his identity there "more richly and concretely". (1812,II:502). God gains his greatest richness by "elevating" his generality and abstractness into the most concrete, specific, unique and historical. He does not lose his freedom in this differentiating identification, but rather gains it by "setting free" uniqueness and specificity. By descending into the "most simple depths" of the concrete, of finitude, God does not condescend at all into the finite realm. Rather, he knows it, he elevates it and he accepts it in love.

Both Hegel and the bible leave here behind the metaphysical understanding of God because both reflect by orienting themselves by the sharpest point of God's relation. The death of God on the cross is God's self-critical, i.e. theo-logic means of gaining his identity, but this implies a "dialectical" conception of God. (Moltmann, 1976:186ff,193ff.) If theology reflects this divine self-reflection, if it theo-logically judges critically this self-critique on the cross, a critical self-reflection which John characterizes as the movement which takes place in the relating word addressing the reflecting and critically judging theologian, then this is the very heart of theological narration. It is most of all God's self-narration. As such it criticizes a simple objective understanding of God who is non-communicative, i.e. an objective "it". It criticizes the metaphysical notion of a permanent ontological substratum of all reality. And it criticizes the unengaged, untouched theoretical endeavor. Both the subjective constructeur and its objective, nomized construct are "deceitful" attempts to camouflage human finitude, openness to God, vulnerability to his theo-logic critique and mortality — constructs

necessitated by the mistaken thought that that finiteness loses its identity in a communicating context and gains it in metaphysically permanent and certain dimensions. They are for that reason defenses against God. They aim at forgetting God. Theological narrative, reflecting God's self-reflection and relating his self-relation in Jesus Christ, a narrative corresponding to God's self-correspondence in the man Jesus (Jüngel, 1977:409ff) criticizes this critique of God. It negates the negation. Hegel's objective logic is metaphysics-critical. For it is a "critical representation of metaphysics". (Theunissen, 1980:21ff).

As the John-prologue uses the traditional metaphysical notion of an unchanging deity in order to transform it relatively, so also Hegel's *Logic* represents traditional metaphysics by criticizing it: traditional metaphysics dealt only with "substrata", it dealt "merely with *being*, i.e. with *being in itself*." (1812,I:109). Presenting this traditional metaphysics which attempted merely to find ontological re-presentations of substantive being and essence means also criticizing it. For in presenting it, Hegel finds the history of metaphysics to suffer under a basic deficiency: It attempted to reduce all reality to unchangeable essences. He therewith, however, also turned against theism. His "objective logic turns critically against the ontologization of theology" (Theunissen, 1980:39; see 1970:106,126). "For the conceptual logic reveals that which Hegel — altogether justified — considers the substance of the Christian understanding of God, world and man". In this understanding all reality "would have to be *relatio* and *relatio* would have to be everything in such a way that the *relata* keep nothing back for themselves. The true reality expressed in this understanding is characterized by the specifically New Testament coincidence of love and freedom. Hegel defines freedom as 'the way in which the concept relates' " (Theunissen, 1980:45, quoting Hegel, 1812,II:214).

Nietzsche had also, so we had seen, criticized traditional metaphysics: Its attempt to find adequate intellectual images conforming to reality by definition eliminated the question of the truthfulness of reality, for that ideal of correspondence served, ultimately, merely utilitarian ends: It needed God - and truth-defensively to find means of self-legitimation. Precisely the critique of that truthless dimension of traditional metaphysics is the point of Hegel's objective logic. However, his critique retains its critical edge, whereas Nietzsche's decays into the dogmatic irrationality of the *Übermensch*. The reason for this must be sought in Hegel's freedom-promoting concept of the Absolute, rejected by Nietzsche as heteronomizing human autonomy.

As the New Testament negates the metaphysical denial of the living God, so Hegel's critique of metaphysics negates the ideological function of ontologizing philosophy. Both serve truth decidedly, a truth conceived as communicative praxis.

Wolf Dieter Marsch, promoting the concept of a critical theology,

reflects both out of the context of the New Testament as also of the Hegelian *Logic* and he says: Hegel arrives in view of modern man's necessity to find his identity through alienating reflection and labor "at social-philosophical insights" which are "not independent of his Christian presuppositions. The 'alienation' of the enlightened and autonomous *homo faber* who produces his own world (i.e. his non-identity, his not-being at home, his constant enslavement to the means of his subsistence) is not, as Marx thought, capable of being overcome by means of revolution. Rather, it must be made conscious as such (i.e. as alienation, non-identity, etc.) And this is a spiritual process, a process of self-externalization, of self-reification, of suffering surrender to external conditions — a process analogous to God's self-externalization in Jesus Christ." (1968:74).

With Theunissen we can now say, in agreement with Marsch, that Hegel's logic represents the Christian theological narrative in the context of the contemporary realities of societal and intellectual estrangement. At the same time this representation represents the self-alienation, that is, self-deception accomplished by traditional metaphysics. For this reason it appears presently no longer deniable that the reasons why Barth had some problems finding the "traces of the trinitarian God of creation in being as such" (Barth, 1960,I,1:353; Jüngel, 1965:16ff;1977/470ff, O'Donovan,1981:263f.) must be sought in his irritation with idealism generally and with Hegel specifically. Objectively his understanding of God's revelation of freedom is closely related to that of Hegel. "Barth's reading of Hegel is one-sided and superficial" (G.S.Hendry, 1978:239). Kyuun-Tschin Kim has admirably shown (1978) that Hegel's Absolute setting free a reasonable history *different* from that Absolute is not, contrary to Barth, so different from Barth's emphatic insistence that God's freedom creates freely the conditions of revelation in history and the human subject. Hegel's free self-revelation as a logical process is in fact very similar to Barth's understanding of God's freedom determining itself in revelation, that is, in creation (through the Word), and in recreation (Hendry, 1978:240f).

Since increasingly excellent studies are appearing on the close affinity between Barth and Hegel, it becomes now easier to trace those *vestigia trinitatis*, specifically with the help of Hegel. For is not God's theo-logic reasonableness, in which he freely identifies himself by losing his identity, first in creation and then in the historical Jesus who suffers, and dies, traceable in the only possible identity of human world-history: in the apparent but constantly denied goodness of the natural world, in human suffering, alienation, persecution and death? Is not God's self-identification in Jesus with suffering and dying humanity the identification of human suffering and repression as such, so that remembering Jesus Christ, it becomes now no longer possible for us to forget past and present suffering? That forgetting precisely has been the point

of ontologizing metaphysics with its starting premises of unmoved and indifferent being as well as non-specific wholeness. To prevent that forgetting is the singular point of the critique of a relating theology of communication.

A relating, communicating theology which avoids the fatal identification of thought with unchangeable being needs to think theologically, i.e. objectively from the position of God's self-revelation. That means: God relates to his son even before he relates economically to creation. This "before" is the transcendental condition of economic relation. (Jüngel, 1977:474f; 1965:37). God cor-responds with himself, and for that reason man and the world can cor-respond to him (Jüngel, 1980:202-251). Surely that double cor-correspondence implies (1) that a doctrine of God cannot be considered Christian without the cross. But it also implies (2) that that doctrine does not become identical to and is not subsumed by a theology of the cross. The strength, in fact the necessity of the Extra-Calvinisticum is accentuated while its pitfalls are avoided (Muller, 1981:33f, 41f; see Lochmann/Dembowski, 1979:32-36). God is in himself, altogether apart from human finitude (incapacity to view God naturally) and sin, not unrelenting, unchanging and indifferent; rather, he has a history with himself as a transcendental condition of having a history with creation and recreation. What point would there be in speaking of God's freedom if he were forced by human frailty or sin to communicate with man? Calvin surely had legitimate grounds of reservation over against Osiander on this point (Muller:41-43). Similarly, Hegel could "elevate" the history of theistic metaphysics only on the basis of an Absolute conceived freely to have a history with himself as the transcendental condition of communicating and having a history also with man and the world (Ahlers:1976).

The ideology-critiques of Hegel and Nietzsche have shown any reason based on the ontologic identity of thought with permanent being to "decompose" into that irrationality, absurdity and pain which it was called to redress. Reason based on that identity of thought and essence (*Wesen*) inevitably "decays" (*verwesen*) into suffering irrationality. For "there is no 'essence in itself' (only *relations* constitute essence)" (Nietzsche, 1880ff:752), but because we have constantly attempted to conceive "God" in terms of unrelating "essence" in order to find the essential *humanum*, not only his but also our essence ultimately had to decay. "*Riechen wir noch nichts von der göttlichen Verwesung?*" ("Don't we yet smell the divine decay?") (Nietzsche, 1882:127). The purpose, however, of that identification of thought with essential being had been to make rationality possible. And insofar as traditional metaphysics as well as theistic theology identified that essence with God, not only his body, but rather also thought itself find themselves in a state of decomposure. Therefore: "In the beginning was nonsense, and nonsense was, with God!, and God (divine) was nonsense," (Nietzsche,

1879-750). To overcome the threatening "renunciation of thought" itself (Geyer, 1970:272) ideology-critique must be identified with theology just as the "decaying corpse" of the metaphysical and theistic God must be associated with the living God of the bible. The disclosure of traditional theology as atheistic and hence the "end of theology" (Raschke:1978) has itself theological significance.

These circumstances lead of necessity to theo-logic reflecting the trinitarian God whose finiteness and whose life manifests itself in his death. God specifies his life by showing himself as capable of suffering and dying out of love. God is both for Hegel and trinitarian theologians such as Athanasius not unchangeably unified: the specification and modification is part of the Absolute himself. The beginning of the Logic knows the identity of being as "undetermined immediacy", which means that its identity is apart from any differentiating specification and determination "pure nothing" (Hegel,1818,I:67). Only in the "transition" from being to nothing, that is, in differentiating "becoming", does the Absolute determine itself as the "unmasking of appearance of truth" (Theunissen,1980:118).

5. Trinitarian Theo-Logic and Ideology-Critique

In the same way as the early Church found it necessary to conceive God in trinitarian form apart from or prior to any creation or recreation, Moltmann stresses (1976:301ff) that this necessity originated in the theologically important unwillingness to identify the creator with the creature, God with nature or history and to observe any divinity in the political establishment. The *creatio ex nihilo* must be held on to. For divinity implied meaningfulness, wholeness, and perfection. Therefore the one God should not be claimed to legitimate the world, for it is not one or harmonious or meaningful in itself. Assuming it to be so would surrender or at least slight the reality of pain, death, suffering and evil (Mostert, 1980). One can therefore appraise realistically i.e. not repress or forget — the world's evil, pain and death only from the perspective of trinitarian theology. For its logic, the "power of life" and "reconciliation" consists in "holding on to death", "pain" and "suffering", in "feeling" them and being moved by them. (Hegel,1799: 344f; 1807:29; Rohrmoser, 1961:99; Theunissen, 1970:17, Küng, 1970:156f, Moltmann, 1976:239ff). The monotheistic God does not hold on to death, for he cannot suffer and he is unchangeable and eternal (Küng, 1970: 622ff, 637ff). He delegates suffering to his son. In distinction to the older christological reflections, we must speak, as Karl Barth has done, not of God's "persons", but rather of his relational *being* (Jüngel, 1965: 36ff). God is correlational in his very being, he is in his nature — if one dares to use such a substantizing term — communicative *becoming*. (Thielicke, 1973:198). Therefore one cannot speak of God's being without speaking of it in trinitarian terms. God is the living God precisely because he establishes his and also man's identity by placing "differ-

ence" and "death" into himself (Hegel) that is, because God's being is not substantive, unmoved being per se. God's "being" "is" only by causing his self to be touched by the world's depravity, suffering and death. But knowing him thus as he is for us, we also know him to be freely communicating with himself. God is capable of suffering because he is loving. If we attempted to establish God's identity apart from the cross, this would imply either understanding God as incapable of suffering, but that means understanding God also as incapable of loving. Or it would imply that Jesus' suffering is merely faked and unreal. Both of these alternatives are unacceptable for a proper theological reflecting of God. For theo-logic thought knows pure, unmoved being to be "abstract" and "pure appearance"² The disclosure of a truthful meaning of God's being is identical with trinitarian, theological thought itself, which re-tells with theo-logic stringency the story of God's self-relation in the history of Jesus Christ.

It should be noted that probably the center of Jüngel's book *Gott als Geheimnis der Welt* (1977) passionately affirms the possibility to think theo-logically God's nature and relational love. And it should also not pass our notice that Theunissen's theological Hegel-interpretation similarly links the objective revelation of God's truth in history with the stringently theo-logically reflecting logic. The appearance of truth denounces the falsehood of the world by disclosing it. There is a subjective and an objective component of this disclosure of truth and denunciation of falsehood. These subjective and objective components dialectically relate the economic and immanent trinity: "If the doctrine of the economic trinity speaks of God's history with man (in Jesus Christ), the doctrine of the immanent trinity has to speak of God's historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*). God's history is his coming to man. God's historicity is God's being-in-coming". (Jüngel, 1977:475; see 1965-38). The Hegelian Logic unfolds with identical subjective and objective components of the truth-revealing and falsehood-criticizing Absolute (Theunissen, 1970:126,366-386; See Kim:31-37).

Over against this trinitarian God, the monotheistic understanding of God has been too obviously the legitimating "nomization" of the "one logos, one nomos, one emperor, one church, one empire". (Moltmann, 1976:302). Simultaneously it became blind to the real lack of meaning and presence of evil. But the self-disclosing trinitarian God discloses also the deceit of this ideological legitimation of the depravity of the world. In revealing himself, he reveals what the bible calls sin. Sin and evil are most particularly as a defense against God what Hegel calls "desire" (*Begierde*), "the unity of self-consciousness with itself".

2. Theunissen has indicated that this trinitarian relational theo-logic is the center of Hegel's central work *Die Logik*: 1980:95ff, 116ff. See also 1970:42ff. See also Henrich, 1971:36f, 88f.

It is "self-consciousness which is altogether *for itself* and which assigns to its object immediately the character of the negative." (1807:135; 139, 146 and *passim*).

In conclusion, we have argued that Hegel's *Logic* both represents and criticizes the "project" of western metaphysics on the basis of a communicatively conceived Absolute. In the light of that critique that project appears as an attempt on the part of man to justify his existence and to legitimate his world. The God-defensive, negative aspect of that project, incorporating the monotheistic God-hypothesis, inevitably had to be revealed in its atheistic implications in the doctrine of the "death of God". Theology after this event can fruitfully tie into this post-metaphysical philosophical landscape by reflecting whether the bible and also early Christianity do not in fact present a trinitarian conception of God as self-revealing, revealing in the process also the nature of humanity and world. We had argued that Hegel's Absolute is conceived in this manner and we had attempted to show how Barth's theology is, despite his vehement critique of Hegel, at least in part rather close to Hegel's theo-logic. The reasons for this proximity we found in Hegel's critical representation of the point of western metaphysics, the critical element of which Barth had undercut in his Hegel-interpretation, but in fact shared through his appropriation, via Franz Overbeck, of Nietzsche's thought.

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