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HEGEL, BARTH, AND THE RATIONALITY OF THE TRINITY

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I The problem of Objectivity in Theology

It would seem nothing short of suicidal for a theology, especially that theology which is part and parcel of a revealed religion, to entertain serious doubts about whether the object of its science can be known at all. The very least a revealed religion could say for itself is that in it God has given Himself to be known objectively. For it to assert the opposite would be to say that it is the religion in which God is *not* revealed. Yet the belief in, and even the desire for, the objectivity of God-as-God in His revelation has not always been as axiomatic as it might sound. It is a contention more honoured in the breach than in the observance; and never was it more studiously betrayed than in the theological generations immediately preceding Hegel and Barth, against which they both rebelled. The single, perhaps greatest, cause of their discontent was the loss of the notion of the objectivity of God, the knowability of God. Of course, the ways in which Hegel and Barth try to reclaim that knowability are incommensurable: Barth places it in the context in which God speaks about Himself through act, event, and statement: Hegel grounds it in the relatedness of human and divine through the Trinitarian dialectic, and posits man's consciousness of God as a moment in the Notion of God Himself. But their common reaction against this immediate inheritance in theology, on surprisingly similar grounds, is as good a place as any to begin a comparison of Hegel and Barth.

We know a fair amount about the orthodoxy taught at the Tübingen Seminary during the time of Hegel, Hölderlin, and Schelling. It was a combination of Kantian rationalism with the face-saving "Vernunfttheologie" of G.B. Storr. Biblical interpretation and exegesis, when not merely philological, were made to conform to the "universal laws of reason", and morality, specifically bourgeois-German morality. Following Kant, Storr denied the possibility of knowing God objectively, as Being or Person. God affects our life only because He is posited as the ground and justification of moral activity. Hence, God can only be known indirectly, because any possi-

bility of a transcendental apprehension of a non-phenomenal object is discounted. God can be asserted as no more than the ground for our implicit faith in man, for our pious expectation of the coincidence of happiness and virtue, for all that is promised by the rather banal doctrine of eudaemonism. It is the moral law within, not the glory of God without, that properly excites our awe. But we, unlike Napoleon's astronomer, need the hypothesis of God. Without the "ideas" of God and immortality, the moral law would hold no force or promise. This, roughly speaking, was the accommodation of Christianity in Kant's *Religion within the limits of Reason Alone*.

Storr was the head of the Tübingen "Stift" (seminary), and, as such, a public official, responsible both for the conservative politics of the prince and the conservative Lutheranism of the state. He was not satisfied with the few watered-down principles that Kant could permit Christianity. Storr wanted to save the over-riding authority of revelation, as a principle against which even the self-determining human reason could not legislate. In Storr's orthodoxy, stigmatised by his students Hegel and Schelling as that old "Sauerteig" (leaven), the authority of revelation, and with it the infallibility of tradition, had to be accepted as the determining ground of man's moral judgments. To reconcile those truths knowable only on the basis of authority with those intuitively accepted from within, Storr had to pay a price. The Biblical books and doctrines which could not be assimilated to reason had to be discarded as uncanonical. Incompatible with the principles of reason were the doctrines of satisfaction and the very Trinity itself, as well as such Biblical texts as the Book of Revelation (a notorious stumbling block to rationalist Christians, which, as we might recall, Whitehead suggested replacing with Pericles' Funeral Oration!). Storr's orthodoxy was form without emotion; the skeleton of Enlightenment without the energy, without the indomitable faith in freedom. His kowtowing to the repressive prince, and his compromising of the principles of Kant's autonomy, drew upon Storr the contempt of his brilliant pupils, a

contempt that ensures him an immortality he would otherwise have no hope of earning.

The second, and more powerful, threat to the objectivity of possible knowledge of God, was a religious sensibility always deeply rooted in Swabia. The influence of Pietism continued unabated till the end of the nineteenth century, engendering on its way the strange spectacle of the Christ of Nietzsche. Nor had it diminished one iota of its attraction at the time of Heidegger and Barth. Indeed, a wildly disproportionate number of German geniuses have sprung from Pietist backgrounds. Besides the obvious examples of Hoelderlin, Schleiermacher, and the backlash of Herder, even a realist like Goethe flirted with Pietism as a young man. Yet the Romantic and introspective asceticism of the Pietist communities held no appeal for Hegel, who caricatured them in his early descriptions of the reality-shy "Liebesgemeinde" (Love-brotherhood), and further deflated their ambivalent spirituality in his polemic *Glauben und Wissen* (Faith and Knowledge), and in the Unhappy Consciousness section of the *Phenomenology*. Part and parcel with Pietism, at least in Hegel's opinion, was the religious subjectivism of Jacobi, and the "Gefühlstheologie" of Schleiermacher. What Pietism has in common with these various genres of religious subjectivism is a belief in the Being and Knowing of God as pre-eminently negative, indirect, mystical, and emotional. God is wholly non-objective, wholly ineffable. An interior experience of passivity, surrender, and non-conceptuality is the mind's only road to God. Schelling appropriated these Pietist doctrines to his own notion of the transcendental intuition—a medium of awareness peculiar to nature and art—and, partly through his influence, Kierkegaard redefined faith as inwardness.

For Kierkegaard, as for the more radical of the religious subjectivists, it is an offence to the mystery and paradoxicality to conceive Him as having an objective, particular presence. For this would imply, first, that God is as accessible to the common consciousness of ordinary humanity as He is to the contemplative, or aesthetic, or suffering, individual. Secondly, an objectively present and apprehensible God implies to the anti-Hegelian Kierkegaard a yet-unreconciled opposition, an "Entgegenstehung", of God and the individual. This opposition is the definition

of sin, of the finite's resistance to the infinite. Kierkegaard grants that this moment of realization, recognising that one is in a state of sin and opposition, is necessary for the individual to come to consciousness of his dependence on God's saving grace. In this "alienated" state, God can appear as objective, as a specific presence of an Other, over-against the individual.

The trouble with Kierkegaard's allowance for the objectivity of God is that it is limited to this appearance to the sinful individual prior to faith. The objectively present God designates and exposes an unreconciled religious relationship. Such a God is not the Christian God of love and forgiveness. He is the Judge, who is to be feared rather than loved, who discovers and testifies to the guilty. Kierkegaard's objective Judge is intended as a slur on Hegel's call for "objectivity" in religious knowledge. But, on the other hand, this objective God has forgotten that Law has become Gospel, and that Christ is already present as Mediator, as the incarnate guarantor of God's Election of man and his mercy. The objectively present God, for Kierkegaard, cannot represent the promise of Christ. In Kierkegaard's philosophy, the divine and human natures cannot appear in the objective manifestation of God as a trinitarian unity of act and being. Their unity is reserved, as is the unity of the human individual in faith, for a state of inwardness, in which the contemplative individual is detached from the world of activity. In a state of "objectivity", and in the objective appearance of God, the juxtaposition of the two natures can only be, as it were, external to each other. The "God-man" is an unreconciled and grotesque paradox, towards which our intellect should not make any attempt to mitigate the incompatibility.

The telling flaw in Kierkegaard's doctrine of subjectivity, (which we consider an ultimately non-Trinitarian resolution of the "Problem" of Christianity, or, as Kierkegaard expressed it, the problem of "being a christian"), is that he must deny the appearance of God in, to, and with the community. From this light we can understand why Barth had to reject Kierkegaard as a mentor. When Barth freed his early concept of eternity from the "Babylonian captivity of timelessness", he also recognized that for Christian theology to make sense, it must be *Church Dogmatics*. For Kierkegaard Christianity can never produce a *Church Dogmatics* just as it can never produce

the dreaded "system", because it is, before and above all, subjectivity. Any allowance to the "objectivity" of God will always threaten to become the objectification of a "god", and therefore the property of a culture. Kierkegaard wrongly distinguishes the difference between Christendom and Christianity as the difference between an objectifiable God and a non-objective one.

Yet there is a certain justice to Kierkegaard's fear, at least insofar as it is a response to Hegel. For Hegel's complicated triumph over the distinction between the objective and the subjective depends as much on his equation of Christianity with the social community as it does on his reconciliation of the infinite and economic Trinities. If Christianity is to be a sophisticated and universally triumphant religion of the people, of statesmen and philosophers as well as lonely knights of faith, then the unholy notion of the "bourgeois-Christian world", (that is, early 19th century Protestant Europe) is not far behind, and, as Kierkegaard complains, it requires no more than possession of a passport and a daily reading of the papers to make one a Christian. (The source for this jibe, though I am not sure whether the anecdote was still circulating at the university in Kierkegaard's time, was an epigram from Hegel's unpublished Berlin notes where he writes that prayer has been replaced by reading the papers as our morning benediction.)

II Barth and the Dogmatic response to Subjectivism

But if Hegel's identification of Christianity and society must firmly be rejected, if on no other grounds than that it may waver towards an apology for "German Christianity", Kierkegaard's subjectivism, and with it the non-dogmatic, non-positive theology of Schleiermacher, must be rejected with equal firmness. Undoubtedly Barth did learn from Kierkegaard, as he believed all theologians must. He saw Kierkegaard as an antidote both to liberalism and the threat of anthropological inversion in theology, as a bulwark against complacency; and as a reminder that the theologian is never wholly at home in the world, even if he *must* be, a bit more than Kierkegaard, at home in the Church. Yet if the task of theology is to continue, indeed

to exist at all, it must discard Kierkegaard's stubborn paradoxicality. Barth realized this when he laid aside the dialectics of the divine meteor, the "existentialist" dialectics of *Romans*. For these left only one possibility for theology, that of silence, or, as Jenson suspected, that of agnosticism. As Hegel also realized, for God to be known as Spirit, "He must do more than thunder". The *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. II, part 1, explains the repudiation of subjectivity, and the conviction of God's dialectical incomprehensibility, by the doctrine of God's freedom to make Himself objectively knowable. This noetic and positive freedom is referred to its foundation, its terminus a quo, in God's self-objectification in the Trinity.

What is wrong, above all, with the theology of Kierkegaard, Schleiermacher, and the entire 19th century tradition that Barth inherited, is that it lost by the wayside the doctrine of God. Wilfully detached from all positively-given dogma, and isolated, at least in Kierkegaard's case, from the life and collective legislation of the community, the 19th century's definition of God collapsed into a self-analysis of the pious individual. Feuerbach only exposed what the theologians had long been sure of: that God was the hypostatisation of the consciousness of the religious individual, and the divine attributes were the estranged possessions of a self-impooverished humanity.

The recognition of the dangers of anthropological inversion and subjectivism in religious knowledge (e.g., if man creates God, seeing in the depths only his own idealised face, why can he not create a more utilisable "man-God"?) left only one option for dogmatic theology: the return of God to the centre. For Barth, the restoration of objectivity to the knowledge of God is Christological, like everything else. The double structure of the transcendent and revealed Trinities is unified by its common pivot, the Incarnate Christ. Christ has been present from eternity in the innertrinitarian life, so that there never was a point when the Election of the Son of God, and in him, mankind, was rejected or doubtful. This is the point Kierkegaard seems to have neglected in his dialectic of despair and the leap of faith. As Barth says, there never is anything like a leap to be spoken of between Adam and Christ, between man-in-sin and man-with-God, or, if there is anything like a

leap, it is entirely taken from God's side, never ours. There are no acrobatics of faith.

Yet the seeming effortless, the self-evidence of faith, is inconceivable, even in Barth's terms, without the objectivity of the revelation of Christ. At the same time as he is revealed to us as man, as finite creature, Christ is the eternal Alter-Ego of God. He is the other-side of the Father; God's partner in His incomprehensible and hidden discourse with Himself. Because *Christ* reveals God to us, what *we* know and apprehend as God is God, not a mere shell or disguise of Himself. This is the security, the veracity, that God's bond with us guarantees. God promises not to deceive us, to the everlasting discomfiture of Anselm's Fool, and Doctor Johnson's foot—(which, together with a stone, thought to prove the existence of the material world; proving in the process only the indisputable reality of pain.) Barth's apparently unobjectionable formulation of God's truthful self-disclosure contains a radical reorientation of what is traditionally pointed to as God's freedom, God's transcendence. For what God's freedom implies is not his ability to seal Himself off from the comprehension and curiosity of man, to remain unmoved and unmoving in the face of man's concerns. God's freedom is the power to make Himself apprehended by man, to overcome man's lack of comprehension—for there are no barriers to God's effectual freedom, not even the stupidity of man. His freedom is the ability to enter into fellowship with man; His freedom is to turn the absolutely unlike to absolutely alike, and to appear to us as a creature. His freedom is never passive, never separable from its potentiation and realisation.

Hence, what God's freedom *means* is *said* in the Incarnation, and what the Incarnation testifies to and promises is God's love, which is equivalent to His freedom. God's transcendence does not imply His impassibility, His repose, as it were, in some spatial-nonspatial realm beyond the finite. Nor does it imply His aloofness from any and all determinations of activity, becoming, and change. It implies precisely the opposite. His transcendence means that He is able to remain Himself and with Himself while taking on any and all of an infinite variety of determinations, while becoming immanent in these determinations, and determined in any and all of these forms of immanence, without departing from

Himself, from His infinity, His mystery, or His divinity.

“The Biblical witness to God sees His transcendence of all that is distinct from Himself, not only in the distinction as such, which is supremely and decisively characterised as His freedom from all conditioning by that which is distinct from Himself, but furthermore and supremely in the fact that without sacrificing His distinction and freedom, but in the exercise of them, He enters into and faithfully maintains communion with this reality other than Himself as Creator, Reconciler, and Redeemer. . . The thought of the divine transcendence, if intruded as a substitute (i.e. for *aseitas*) can denote the being of God only when it is remembered that it cannot be exhaustively defined as God's opposition to the reality distinct from Himself, that it can also signify God's positive fellowship with this reality and therefore His immanence within it, that in this connexion, because it has in fact pleased God to establish and maintain this fellowship, it can have “immanence” as its primary connotation, and only within this framework and as an explanation of its method denote what the the idea immediately and intrinsically suggests, so that it truly describes the being of God only when it describes Him in His own characteristic freedom which He enjoys beyond and above His opposition to the reality distinct from Himself.” (CD, II/1, p.303)

III The Objective History of the Trinity

The Biblical narrative of the events and experiences constituting God's history with man is, therefore, a “historical” account of this Transcendence-in-Immanence, culminating, of course, in the focus of all these determinations of the divine immanence: the Biblical witness to Christ resurrected. The formula “transcendence-in-immanence” is only an analysis, an interpretation or conceptual account of these divine occurrences. Like all theological explanations, it can be employed as long as it is useful or illuminating, and as easily discarded. The content and veracity of God's freedom is not explained by any formula, but by the activity of Christ. In Christ God shows that He can be eternal and

unlimited not only in infinitude, but within our own finitude. This is His freedom in immanence, the positive aspect of His freedom which at the same time includes and is safeguarded by the negative aspect of that same freedom. His negative freedom is His hiddenness from His creation. He is not at the world's disposal, nor conceivable within its categories.

This, the purely transcendent aspect of His freedom, is expressed in His innertrinitarian life before and apart from Creation. Yet even here, the divine and inaccessible freedom that is forever closed to us as the mystery of God's knowledge of Himself yet includes the possibility and the precondition for our knowledge of God. Even in pure, vertical transcendence, so to speak, the structure of immanence already exists in the form of God's immanence to Himself. The pre-worldly Trinity establishes God's self-identification, His declaration as Subject. God's primary subjectivity is already relational: it exists in three distinct modes of self-reference and self-reflection. The actuality of His worldly and historical determination, His worldly, historical, and creaturely fellowship, is pre-positing in the Trinity, thus from all eternity. The possibility and precondition of His relationship to the other, the creature distinct from Himself, is posited in the Trinity in His relationship to the Other who is *not* distinct from Himself, from His own activity and being.

God is He who establishes the primary analogy from which all further relations, including those of knowledge, generation, and discourse, are derived. The "truths" or "self-definitions" of Creation, if such things can be spoken of at all, are thus always analogous and derivative. Creation itself can never provide the basis for any over-arching analogies, nor for the interpretation of analogies and signs, but must always allow itself to be interpreted through something else. Otherwise, the "truth" evoked, the truth we refer to by "the wisdom of the world", is simply tautological—sufficient for the experiential and experimental definitions of art and science, but unable to provide a primary rationale of being and history.

The truth of the objectivity of God's Revelation in His work for us and in His Word given to us has its foundation in the a priori revealing of God to Himself. Barth calls the "secondary objectivity" that in which God elects

some determinate medium of "sacramental reality" through which He reveals Himself. This secondary objectivity is made possible because God has first been objective in a primary way to Himself. And these two objective forms of God's Being correspond to each other. Furthermore, any other supposed knowledge of God, or route to the knowledge of God, is excluded as well as rendered unnecessary. The Being and self-knowing, or self-interpreting, of God in His own object (the Son) is the precedent for His making Himself an object of our knowing. Because revelation is first the self-interpretation of God, it can be our true knowledge of God. Revelation is objective in two fashions, two directions: it is God as objective to Himself, and it is God as objective to us. Indeed, the originality of the dogmatic theology that reasons *from* revelation, rather than *around* it, or making vaguely hopeful gestures *towards* it, is this confident subscription to the given object, i.e. the content of revelation. And it is the belief in God's making Himself objective and knowing Himself objectively that licenses this trusting submission. It allows us to assume that what we see in the *Gestalt* of Revelation is not our projection, nor a further definition of our subjectivity, but part of the statement and declaration of God.

Not only has God in His Word given us a knowledge of Himself that is truthful, real, and unapproximate, He has precluded even the seeking for any further clues in the approximations represented by the reasoning from analogy. Barth must stand by the assertion of the objective knowability of God, if for no other reason, as a limit on the agnosticism to which his own early dialectic theology could lead. The dissociating paradoxes of dialectic theology had undermined any human possibility of knowledge. In the face of God, that intolerable abyss, nothing could be stated directly. Every human No was a Yes and every human Yes a No. But... placing the origin of God's objectivity in the pre-creation Trinity converts the *human* impossibility, still unacknowledged, into an *actuality* already posited into being by a prevenient God. Barth's dogmatic doctrine of the Trinity can be seen as a successful replacement for the suspended dialectics of *Romans*. No less than their thundering prohibitions, it is a defence against any metaphysical or mythological speculation about God. The trinitarian locus of

the objectivity of God is a wedge against all analogia entis, past and future.

In the prohibition of all ideas of God reached by analogy from the world and from human consciousness must be included the Kierkegaardian and Schleiermacherian locating of God in inwardness. For this identification involves an analogy between the subjective experience of religious consciousness and the mind of God. The unbridgeable dialectic or *diastasis*, common both to Kierkegaard and *Romans*, between our ignorance and God's aloofness from all human categories, has been resolved by Barth in the answer of the Doctrine of the Trinity. The Trinity is the truth, the manifestation of God's knowledge of Himself and self-relation, and therefore the standard, the norm, and the limitation against which every created determination and all theological language must be measured. The divine Trinity, that we do not experience or perceive directly, that does not "appear" to our experience or inhere in the form of a moral imperative, is still the guarantor that the objectivity we do encounter (in the figures and signs of revelation) is the statement and description of the true subject. In other words, the Trinity is the reality, never detectable in philosophy, that underlines and forms the truth of the propositions of experience, the propositions of discourse and approximation. Equally, the Trinity is the universal logical or structural form, the "eidos", that permits the propositions "God shows Himself", "Deus dixit", to make sense. It is the objective referent and the formal ground of possibility, the primordial axiom.

The Trinity is the grammar of revelation as well as its meaning, while its content is the revelation itself, that is, Christ. The Trinity is the absolute unity in which the propositional identity of the subject and the predicate is grounded. It is also the history, the descriptive movement, which echoes in the modalities of becoming, dynamism, and change, that which happens in the proposition. The ontology of the Trinity, long sought in metaphysical formulae, is for Barth an event: a complex, or community, of happening and act. The unity of its "modes" and appropriations resembles the unity composed of the acting subject, the specific action, and the final complex event. The Trinity is an interdependent totality which is nonetheless a single and objective "act", a "happening".

The Trinity stands for the absolute identity and the mutual recognition, beyond all possibility of severance, of the Subject and the Object in action. In other words, the doctrine of the Trinity is the analysis, grammatical, contextual, and programmatic, of the proposition, "God reveals Himself." And what He reveals is Himself.

IV Hegel vs. Kant: The self-objectifying Absolute?

The two sides of Barth's impressive and closely reasoned defence of objectivity in theology are what we have described as the definition of "transcendence in immanence", and the self-analytic formulation of the Trinity. Whether Hegel as successfully defends his contention for the necessity of objectivity through his trinitarian doctrine, and whether he can go on doing so without tottering on the edge of what Barth calls the "vulgar belief" in panentheism, remains to be seen. But the pressing nature of some such defence seems equally apparent to both. To return to the historical context for a moment, what Barth reacted against was the subjectivism of the old Pietist and Quietist tradition, combined with the liberal Protestantism engendered by Hegel and his heirs. But the same sort of subjectivism was already challenged by Hegel in 1803: in the essay "Faith and Knowledge", he launched a full-fledged assault on the subjectivist camp in epistemology and religion, in which he included Kant, Fichte, Jacobi, and Schleiermacher. Nor had Hegel forgotten the issue in 1830, when he took time out in his brief and highly compressed Encyclopedia paragraphs to satirise his old foes:

"The old conception of Nemesis, which made the divinity and its action in the world only a levelling power, dashing to pieces everything high and great, was confronted by Plato and Aristotle with the doctrine that God is not *envious*. These assertions (and more than assertions they are not) are the more illogical, because made within a religion which is expressly called the revealed; for according to them it would rather be the religion in which nothing of God was revealed, in which he had not revealed himself, and those belonging to it would be the heathen 'who know not God.' If the word 'God' is taken in earnest in religion at all, it is from Him, the theme and centre of religion, that the method of divine knowledge

(i.e. theology) may and must begin: and if self-revelation is refused Him, then the only thing left to constitute His nature would be to ascribe envy to Him. But clearly if the word 'Mind' or Spirit is to have a meaning, it implies the revelation of Him. . . It may almost cause surprise that so many, and especially theologians whose vocation it is to deal with these Ideas (of the divine Mind), have tried to get off their task by gladly accepting anything offered them for this behoof. And nothing serves better to shirk it than to adopt the conclusion that man knows nothing of God." (*Philosophy of Mind*, para. 564)

The two philosophic fictions Hegel sets himself to expose with his doctrine of objectivity were, (1) The fiction of an unknowable and abstract substratum underlying all appearances. This was a fiction Spinoza—and the materialists—inherited from the Greeks, and (2) The Kantian fiction of the "ghostly thing-in-itself".

The existence of an unknowable thing-in-itself is impossible and self-contradictory, as Hegel proves by reference to the Platonic-Aristotelian dictum that knowledge implies existence. Existence means being a possible object for consciousness. If we know only that something exists, we have at least one concept that applies to it, i.e. existence. It is incorrect, thinks Hegel, to say that there can be any object that is unknowable as such. It may be, and may remain unknown, like the actual nature of the units of light, but it cannot be as such unknowable. The hypothesis of the unknowable object is self-contradictory because it assumes that existence is possible independently of mind and consciousness. The consequence of this rejection of the "thing-in-itself" is a complex rejection of the Platonic opposition of reality versus appearances. Plato's theory was that the appearances which constitute the world of consciousness are in themselves illusory and inessential. They must be referred always to a "true" ground or invisible, non-appearing Essence which is not identical with these appearances. The categorical rejection of the unknowable, whether it be of the thing-in-itself, the noumenal realm, or the essence hidden behind the appearance (a rejection which in an Anselm and a Barth leads to the self-producing argument for God's necessary existence), leads in Hegel to the doctrine of the dual action of Essence and Reflection. The doctrine of Essence

and Reflection is the centre and core of Hegel's Logic, and the heading under which his doctrine of the Trinity must be considered.

Hegel's Trinity starts with what he calls the moment of universality. This is the moment of God the Father before the activity of creation. God is here alone with Himself in an indeterminate realm of abstraction. He is pure thought that cannot even think itself, because it is not able to conceive itself as an object. To think itself as an object, "being" in its state of pure and empty universality must become determined and objectified, if only to itself and in itself. It must become an other to itself. Hegel's description of the inherent instability and negativity of such a moment of pure abstraction, a moment which is in fact the Platonic "pure being" or the scholastic *impassibilitas*, discovers in this moment the fatal flaw of indeterminism. For Hegel it is the nature of being to become determined. Being that remains removed from the world of phenomenal determinations and the phenomenal flux is inert, unreal abstraction. It is the first principle of Hegel's Trinity, and the first impulse of its life and movement, that God does not remain aloof and alone with Himself. That God is trinitarian means and necessitates that He is a historical God, a God who becomes. He must determine Himself and become knowable to Himself (and incidentally, knowable by human consciousness). The characteristic of God as Spirit is self-manifestation. He manifests and thus knows Himself in the Other, in His Other, who is His Son and is the same as Himself. But this movement of self-manifestation remains so far subjective. The relation between self or subject (God) and other or object (God's alter ego) remains incomplete and undeveloped. The relation and thus the knowledge is inadequate, as it is not a true relation of an I to a Thou. The other at this stage is only a determination or emanation of the original subject's identity, and does not possess real "otherness", independence, opposition.

The desire of God to know Himself is thwarted because the relation of Father to Son in the transcendent or divine Trinity is really mere identity without otherness, a playing of love with itself. It has not gone the whole way of distinction. It fails to include the labour of knowledge, the work and the negativity of love. It is not a complete determination of God. The first person of the Trinity is only able to move

beyond His abstract universality, beyond what the Scholastics call His "ipseity", by a further act of generosity, self-giving and extension. Through His love for the Other that He has posited, in the desire that Love demands to grant independence to the Other, moved by Love's pure and voluntary necessity, God the Father gives the Son a history in which He creates a Time and Space, a context for the reality external to Himself.

Abstract universality annuls its own abstractness. It creates a dialectical or relational identity for itself, in which it sees, knows, and is reconciled with itself in an other, in a determined and limited being. God the unconditioned, and hence unapprehensible, creates His own conditions, grants them a claim to independent existence, and yet at the same time finds His own self-expression and attributes in them. Only this dialectically self-relating and complex Subjectivity has the right to be known and worshipped as a supreme being. Only a God for whom knowing and being-known are integral to His being and perfection can be, without self-contradiction, a revealed God. In the Hegelian language (mocked by Kierkegaard), "Only the Subject that relates itself to itself can be called Spirit." Accordingly, only a Trinitarian God can be called (and known) Spirit.

V The Necessity of Appearance: Hegel's Doctrine of Essence

Further, a God that remains pure universality cannot be known by man. The truth asserted by the universal category can only be recognised as such by human consciousness if it is first presented as an object, *an appearance*, to that consciousness. "Everything that exists must come to us in an external way", writes Hegel. In the second person of the Trinity, "pure thought" (indistinguishable from pure or inert "Sein", as Hegel has attacked it in the first book of the *Logic*), or God-in-Himself, the "moment" of the Trinity which corresponds to the abstract logic of Being, has determined itself in the form of a particular. This is the manifest Son, who is revealed as an object to consciousness. The "manifestation" or manifest moment corresponds to the Hegelian doctrine in the second book of the *Logic*, the logic of "Essence" or "Reflection".

In the trinitarian, or simply syllogistic, thinking of Hegel, it is necessary for pure science to go through a stage of determinate representation, called *Vorstellung*. This is the moment or mode of God as a revelation to ordinary human consciousness, the moment of the incarnate and apprehensible objectivity of God. This moment of necessary objectivity is grounded in Hegel's redefinition of Essence. Essence is not the simple and unknowable substratum underlying all appearances, stripped of all attributes. God is not "Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften". But Essence is that which must appear. Essence, or ground, is identical with what is grounded, in a mediate though not an immediate manner. In a mediated manner or relation, the noumenon is the phenomenon, because the phenomenon determines it, expresses its content, gives it actual form and quality. The essence of being is appearance. Hence the essence of God the Universal, God the Father, is to manifest Himself.

The duality of this relationship of appearance and essence corresponds to the duality or double activity of God Himself. God is hidden, secret, appearing to Himself and knowing Himself in Himself, in the pre-worldly Trinity. And God is revealed, appearing to the outside world. This is the duality of His *Ansichsein* and His *Sein-fur-Anderes* (his implicit selfhood and his social or participatory action as Creator and Saviour). In the purely formal world of logic, such self-doubling, such repetition in an other, is expressed by the ambivalence in the word "Schein" (appearance) or "Erscheinung". Hegel defines "scheinen" by an analogy from the physical theory of light-reflection. The thing that is the source of reflection, although its intent is to reflect on itself, inevitably is reflected externally, in an other. To this ambivalence or duality in physical reflection, Hegel adds a play on the word "Schein" in its common meaning as illusion, false appearance. The source of the reflection, the subject, "appears" in the guise of an other thing. This is to say, it illumines something other than itself. The other thing is at once the true object and the appearance of the true subject. The subject finds its own mirror in an other. The conceptual mistake was to consider "Schein" as "mere" Schein, to consider the theatre of Essence's own appearance a fraud.

In this rather convoluted way, the logical doctrine of Essence, or Reflection, ("Wiider-

spiegelung”), which states that “Das Wesen muss erscheinen”, (Essence must appear) explicates the polarity in the Trinitarian existence of God. God is He who remains with Himself even as He is determined or revealed in an other, even as He posits Himself as a moment partaking of the finite historical context external to Himself. God remains God even when He dies on the Cross. That God remains with Himself even when going out into the reality of the particular, means that God, at least in His Trinity, is the Notion. The Notion reconciles Being (pure Universality or Thought) with Essence (the phenomenal particular). As Barth puts it, even our finitude can be a determination of the infinitude that is His freedom, and we cannot deny it. God, for Hegel as well, is He who is both and in the same Being and Act in Himself (a se) and Revealed (pro nobis). The unification of these two moments of the one Being is performed by the Spirit. The Spirit is at the same time the presupposition of the origin, the beginning of the movement. For it is only because God is already unified in Himself, in a unity consisting of His determinate moments and His undetermined Being, that He can determine Himself in a sphere external to Himself. And it is this unity of inward Will and outward act, of manifestation, that the Trinity describes.

VI *The Twofold Trinity as the logic of “transcendence in immanence”*

This original synthesis of identity with its own self-differentiation is the presupposition of the positing of the difference, i.e. the movement outwards, into the external world. It is only because God is already Spirit, already the unification of Being and Essence, of Father and Son, that He can reflect Himself in this external creation and generation. The result, Spirit, is also the beginning, the presupposition. At the conclusion of the long travail of the *Phenomenology*, when the natural mind at last recognizes that it is Spirit, Hegel reveals that this result is what has been presupposed all along. Spirit, the result, is identical with Substance, the field that has been traversed. The Spirit is the end, the beginning, and the unity of the Trinity. The Spirit is the mean which shows the extremes to each other in a syllogistic copula. Spirit reveals the identity of the negation with that which

posited the negation. Spirit annuls the mediate moment, the moment of the particular, or determinate manifestation, at the same time as it preserves it.

Further, Spirit, as the Mediator between the negative external reality and the universal, is objectively present in and as the religious community. In the community, the individual is unified with the universal. His identity within the community is as a member of a universal category, as the expression of a universal will. That which grounds and performs this unification is Spirit. Man as Adam, the finite individual asserting himself as such, hence in sin, becomes, through the Mediator, man in Christ, the finite returned to the universal. Christianly expressed in the doctrine of the Atonement, this “return” is accomplished only through the mediation of the crucified Christ. It is represented in the religious iconography as Christ the head of the body, the Church, of which we are the members. Christ, as long as He remains alive, a finite creature among His friends, does not create this community. Only His death and resurrection return Him to the universal: and with and in Him—the fellowship. (For a more poignant version of this fateful necessity, and one that sees its pathos unadulterated by Hegel’s metaphysical optimism, it is interesting to compare the Ode by Hegel’s friend Hoelderlin, *Patmos*, lines 108ff.)

The identity of God’s “Ansichsein” (His implicit, or latent Being in Himself) and His “Sein-fur-Anderes” (His Being for others) is further clarified by the doctrine of the two Trinities: “the pre-worldly play eternally complete apart from the world, and the real trinitarian incursion into the world.” (E.L. Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel’s Thought*, p.153). The Trinity, that is both the definition and the Absolute Notion of God, splits into two poles. The first corresponds to the Trinitarian syllogism of the *Logic*. This is the relationship of Universal, Singular, and Particular, that exists in the mind of God, as the mind of God, before the creation of the finite Spirit. It is the universal form of all logical comparisons and identifications, expressed in the syllogism: p (the particular instance or object) is a s (s is the species). If s is u (if this species falls under the universal or general category u), then p is a u (this particular instance is a member of this universal category, and

related to all other members of that category.) The logic of the Syllogism, as Hegel uses it, is what enables us to organise all data and reflections according to one universal, rational development. When all objective presentations and reflections are organised in this pattern of the syllogism, then reason can be said to dominate and be expressed in the real, the actual world.

The second pole is that of the revealed Trinity. This Trinity, often called the "economic Trinity" in other contexts, includes the Son of God in His worldly manifestation. The Son of God exists under two determinations, the divine and the human, the finite and the infinite. With the positing of the finite as one of the possible modes of God's existence, the option is raised for this finite mode to split itself off from its relation to the infinite, and to assert itself as mere finitude, as world. Hegel wants to make the point clear that the world is not being substituted for the Son in the second place of the Trinity (as it is for the Process theologians). This would be a false understanding, as he says. But the ontological possibility of the world pre-exists in the Son of God. What we recognise as mere finitude, divorced from the universal, is the consequence of a tension within the twofold nature of the Son. This tension remains balanced as long as both natures are recognised as posited by God. But when the finite forgets its origin (or when a false, undialectical idealism tries to coerce its loss of memory), this tension erupts into outright rebellion and alienation. The result of such an eruption is the world as we know it, and man, fallen, but potentially one with the divine Man.

The two poles of the Trinity remain two poles even while they are united. Barth would want to talk of the singleness of the Being and Act of God, and would describe the relationship between the second and the first poles as that of God corresponding to Himself. But Hegel is much quicker to talk of an identity. He relates them speculatively by the doctrine of the absolute or implicit Notion, which receives its explicit self-explication in its worldly incursion. In the worldly Trinity, the original relatedness of divine and human is posited and carried through. But religiously, they are related by divine love. Here we can see how for Hegel the deduction of the true religion as the revealed

religion is necessitated by the very Notion of God. That God reveals Himself to man and in man's sphere is part of the definition of God. But the distinction between the poles is what guarantees that this *revealed* religion is about *God*. God does and must exist separately, complete in His eternal content, complete as the implicit Notion. This is the God whose meditations constitute the *Science of Logic*. Yet for a completion of Love, or, as Barth would say, for an actualisation of the determination of His freedom, which are also the determinations of His love, God over-reaches himself and becomes also immanent.

VII Conclusion. A Conversation between Hegel and Barth -Is the Trinity rational? Is rationality rational?

In order to have an argument between two people, however disparate, we must at least assume that some common language is possible. For this reason, I have tried to concentrate on the very few issues over which the dogmatic theology of Barth and the mature speculative philosophy of Hegel may be said to make some brief gestures of recognition at each other. Obviously there are many more important places in which their thinking is irreconcilably at odds. On basic suppositions, values, objectives, and expectations, their projects are only comparable on the grounds of sheer Titanism. Indeed, our task of showing where and why their paths diverge so radically has been made easy enough to justify our hasty superficialities by the fact that the best statement of their necessary incompatibility has already been made—by Barth, in his *Protestant Theology in the 19th Century*. Thus, we have neglected such more significant questions as history, faith, Christology; even the rift over the place of Creation and culture which separates Barth from Hegel as sharply as it earlier separated him from liberal Protestantism, German Christianity, and Schleiermacher. Instead, we have focussed on the minor motif of objectivity, and the perhaps more Barthian issue of the redefinition of "infinity" and transcendence.

In their own ways, Hegel and Barth have both severed the definition of transcendence from any association with ineffability, that is to say,

non-objectivity. They have reclaimed immanence, history, and time as the predicates of transcendence, and banished forever the connotations of *Jenseits* that hung about it. But has Hegel really made a convincing case for objectivity, even on his own terms? Has he suggested any epistemological guidelines, any criteria for determining the validity of interpretations and apprehensions, any cut-off points where the domain of the subject can be recognised as being at its limits, where the grasp and priority of the object itself begins? The answer, I believe, must be No. What Hegel *has* done is to *allow* for the objectivity of God and the objectifications of God as part of the definition of God. The Trinity—and the Hegelian category of the Notion—present a definition of God as at once tautological and discursive. God is both the thought of Himself, *and* the conversation about Himself which He has with an Other. This conversation becomes what we know as history. It is a conversation which man may, so to speak, overhear. Therefore, when Hegel says that the human consciousness of God is a moment in God's consciousness of God, he is referring to precisely this activity, this conversation, whereby God empowers man to share in His consciousness of Himself. This is as far as Hegel goes in accounting for the objectivity of religious knowledge. He does not make revelation the prerequisite of objectivity. We might say that he fails to draw the conclusion necessary to sustain his interest in the manifest objectivity of God. Thus he fails by leaving the door open to the recapturing of this domain of the proper object by those interested in the sovereignty of human subjectivity and the unchecked Ego of self-consciousness: the Bauers, Stirners, and Feuerbachs. Furthermore, omitting to clarify a doctrine of language and a set of guidelines for attribution, he has left his followers no way of judging and determining the validity of linguistic expressions, no way of governing the appropriation of language to its object.

On the other hand, Barth has both an implicit and an explicit epistemology. He has accounted for the veracity, objectivity, and centrality of revelation. He posits that God's self-knowing in Christ is also a self-interpretation, a presentation of the same "content" in different words. Thus even in his account of the Trinity, which stands as *Prolegomena* to his Dogmatics, Barth provides

an ontic and noetic precedent for the interpretative language of theology. Although the "language orders" of God and man are incommensurable, God has graciously and from eternity condescended to interpret Himself, and so to present Himself in the language of the world. Central to Barth's *Prolegomena to all future dogmatics* is a necessity to account for a correspondence between the interpretative possibilities of human language and the self-interpretative Act of God in the Trinity. The recognition of such a necessity can be traced to Barth's "scepticism" towards language and language's ability to conform to the truth, a scepticism alien to Hegel. The one thing we can unabashedly assert about the historical period of which Hegel is a product is that it was a time of supreme selfconfidence in rational and cultural forms, of which language is one. Let us ask ourselves: Is there in the poetry, not to speak of the life, of Goethe, any of the modern tentativeness? Is there ever any question of language's adequacy to express the true voice of feeling¹, that suspicion we have heard poignantly in Hoffmannsthal's *Chandosbrief* and *Das Schwierige*, perhaps mockingly in Joyce's "silence, exile, and cunning", and obliquely in Mallarmé's uncrackable codes? Is there any intimation in Hegel that Reason, language, social and ethical institutions, might in themselves be inadequate to the task he has set out for them, that is, to realise Absolute Truth?

In the generation of the utopian young Kantians, we find, part and parcel with the belief in the autonomy of reason, a faith that culture, as the product of reason, is wholly reconcilable with human interests. The Real will not resist the power of the ideal. (This of course was put to the test in the French Revolution.) Reality was already the birthplace of the ideal, the field in which the ideal could act. Such a faith in reason and the irresistibility of human knowledge could not admit of scepticism. Scepticism would be obviously irrational. It was assumed—in a way nowadays almost unimaginable—that what we call "rationality" can be

¹Even in Hoelderlin's ambivalence, the possibility of there being a twin to Nature and the eternal divine Hellas in "deutscher Gesang" is not yet denied: indeed, for Herder, language is to be the magic key that will unlock the mind of the past to us.

independent of determinism and conditions. The triumphant language of the ascent of the Absolute in Hegel, if translated into more malleable terms, means that rational self-consciousness is absolute, not comparative or relative.

It was arguably not until Nietzsche that the comparative and culturally determined character of knowledge and values was recognised as a feature of philosophy. And philosophy rapidly came to terms with its new topography, replacing an absolute context by a relative one. It would seem to be a foregone conclusion of twentieth century philosophy that truth and understanding are subject to a context. The proposition replaces substance, cause, or Being as the irreducible unit of rational discourse (except in such obvious exceptions as Heidegger). Truth can only be measured in terms of what can be asserted in a proposition. The relative, factitious nature of language as a conventional set of signs means that language is no longer simply sanctioned by reason. If Hegel's background is the zenith of cultural confidence for the intellectual, then Barth's is certainly this age of recession. With the loss of the absolute context, which had tried to *embrace* human and divine, attention shifted to questions nearer home, questions of language, logic, and interpretation. Linguistic and cultural scepticism, the relativisation of rational forms, the locating of truth within the analytic proposition—all these elements can be indirectly identified in Barth's thought, even if they are not essential to his theology as such. To say that he responds to, and even foresees, the direction of the modern re-examination of language and thinking is not to make his innovations any the less novel or significant. Indeed, Barth's use of the modern categories and limitations gives theological discourse a new dignity and independence which its previous liaison with idealist metaphysics prevented.

The doctrine of the Trinity in Christian theology does not need to be referred to a structure of all mental and physical reality. Surely one can hear in Hegel's offer of such support the suspicion that theology was truly in need of charity, that it lacked any authentic and respectable discourse of its own. But isn't such an authentic discourse already present, regardless of any doctrinal debates, in the narrative language of the Bible? Barth's turn to the narrative

language of the Bible as the irreducible content of theology is certainly not fundamentalism. It is a reprivileging of narrative that, I believe, would have been inconceivable before the twentieth century. Certainly the statement of the priority and ultimacy of the Biblical language is not new: almost every form of revolutionary Protestantism asserted as much. But such phenomena as Methodism and even Puritanism in the style of Bunyan could not hide a hostility to speculative doctrine.

Barth's method is unique, and I believe, singularly twentieth century, because it establishes a necessary relation between theology's content and theology's language. From this point on it can no longer be denied that there is a necessary relation of the form as well as the content to the interpretation: of narrative to narrative analysis. The definition of God as a relational Being and event, that is as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as Creator and Mediator, this definition is an analysis of the narrative. It is not prior to it. The linear movement of the story, the Biblical history, is re-expressed in the analysis. The analysis tells us that God is event. The two orders, the linear-historical and the simultaneous-eternal, correspond in the relation between narrative (time and experience) and interpretation (the virtual or fictive time "in which all times and perspectives are present").

The doctrine of the Trinity is an interpretation. And it is also the canon for all further interpretation. Its field of activity is severed irretrievably from that of metaphysics. In Hegel, the metaphysical formulation of the Trinity was hypostatic: the moments of the Trinity were deduced from the definition of the Notion, and were necessitated by the subject-object structure of knowledge. As for Hegel God is a priori Mind, and the activity of Mind is knowing, God must posit a possible object of knowledge for Himself. Because the knowing of God is pre-eminently self-knowing, the object he posits is identical with Himself. The Subject posits itself as an Other, knows itself in that Other, and then negates the otherness of that Other, in a return to itself. The existence of the world and man is derived from this a priori relational being and knowing. The Hegelian doctrines of the Trinity and Creation are both a priori (and synthetic?).

But the originality of Barth's doctrine of the Trinity is that it is analytic. The relational Being

and knowability of God are not a priori. They are the predicates produced by the analysis of God's Subjectivity, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The unqualified success of Barth's doctrine of the Trinity is that it turns what Hegel considered the weakness and dispensability of the Biblical narrative language into strength. As an interpretation, the doctrine of the Trinity can not be divorced from the narrative content it analyses, from the history and events which it summarises.² Therefore, it protects the narrative core and narrative language from possible dissolution into abstract speculation. And it preserves the necessity, the objectivity, of the historical, "happening"; context in which man encounters God's Word. Furthermore, the doctrine of the Trinity is defined as an analysis of the proposition "God reveals Himself", *Deus dixit*, a proposition whose truth can be referred to the empirical world of experience or, at least, to the preservation of the form and content of experience in the *mimesis* that is story. The

Trinity does not have the status of a conjecture about the possible nature of God. Rather, in true nominalist fashion it is an answer to the question "Who is God?" "How does God name Himself?" The answer to that question is the sum and circumference of all theological content: "God reveals Himself in history as Father, Son, and Spirit." In the revealed Trinity, God corresponds to Himself. This is the preclusion of all creaturely analogy, and the verification of our religious knowledge.

It is not only the concept of eternity that Barth has freed from the Babylonian captivity of timelessness. It is also the work of theology that has been freed from the ivory tower of subjectivism and metaphysics. And, after every last obituary had been read, it has received a new lease on life.

²"Indeed, it is as though Barth took scripture to be one vast, loosely structured non-fictional novel—at least Barth takes it to be non-fiction." (David Kelsey, *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology*, p.48)

(Please note that the following pages are incorrectly numbered.
For 86,87 and 88, please read 82,83 and 84.)