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Hegel's *Phenomenology*: *Philosophia Quaerens Theologiam*

Centennials have a way of enriching the present by providing current philosophical and theological reflection with historical perspective. The year 1970, which marks the two-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, is such an event. Parenthetically, let it be noted that it was preceded by the two-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768–1834) in 1968. Hegel, the originator of 'philosophy of religion' under that name,[1] was one of the chief protagonists of evolutionary 'modernism' and 'liberalism' in Christian thought. He was foremost in developing Vico's and Herder's proposals to understand history as the organic evolution of all nations, and in viewing the history of philosophy as a logical development in which each stage is necessary to the entire process. His philosophy of religion recognized the value of every stage of development in all religions, and thus prepared the way for modern historical biblical criticism, for the comparative study of religions and the history of religions.

Born in 1770 at Stuttgart, Württemberg, Hegel studied at the University of Tübingen from 1788 to 1793, where he was associated with Schelling and the poet Hölderlin. Beginning in 1801 Hegel taught philosophy at the University of Jena and worked in close association with Schelling. There he wrote his first book, the *Phenomenology of Mind* (*Phänomenologie des Geistes*), which he completed on the eve of the Battle of Jena in which Napoleon's armies defeated those of Prussia (13 October 1806).[2] At that time Hegel was still an unknown lecturer while his younger colleague already had six books to his credit and was well known.

The immediate consequence of the battle was the closing of the University of Jena. Hegel became editor of a newspaper in Bamberg, Hesse, from 1807 to 1808. Subsequently he served as principal of a high school (*Gymnasium*) in Nuremberg. During these years he wrote his *Science of Logic* (*Wissenschaft der Logik*, 1812, 1816) which explicitly rejected Aristotelian logic. That logic was based on the assumption of permanent substances and fixed types to which substances conform. Hegel's logic sought to unfold the pattern of changing things and developing events, the logic of events, and the dynamic processes of the universe.

1. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion, Werke: Vollständige Ausgabe durch einen Verein von Freunden des Verewigten* (22nd ed.; Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1840–7), XI–XII.

2. G. W. F. Hegel, *Briefe*, ed. Hoffmeister and Flechsig (Hamburg: Meiner, 1956–60), I, p. 102.

[CJT, XVI, 1 & 2 (1970), printed in Canada]

In 1816 he returned to the teaching of philosophy at the University of Heidelberg (1816–18). During this time he completed his system in outline, the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (*Encyclopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, 1817). The newly founded University of Berlin offered him the chair of philosophy, which he accepted in 1818. His popularity and fame as the great light of German philosophy was envied by his colleague, Schopenhauer, whose pessimistic vision of life contrasted sharply with the idealistic optimism of Hegel.

While professor of philosophy at the University of Berlin, Hegel published his *Philosophy of Right* (*Grundlinien der Rechts-Philosophie*, 1821). In 1830 he became rector of the University. He died the following year, at the height of his activity and fame, during a cholera epidemic. Published posthumously were his *History of Philosophy* (*Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*), *Philosophy of Religion* (*Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*), *Philosophy of History* (*Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*), and *Aesthetics* (*Vorlesungen über die Aesthetik*). More recently have appeared four volumes of *Hegel's Letters* (*Briefe von und an Hegel*, edited by Johannes Hoffmeister and Rolf Flechsig, 1956–60), which provide important insights into the development of Hegel's thought.

Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* is the most colourful and profound of his writings. In this work we find all the great themes of his mature thought, without that systematic rigidity which rob his later works of the living flow of the ecstatic depth of reason. Naturally, to those who seek in philosophy a disciplined system of clear and distinct ideas arranged in coherent, logical order the *Phenomenology* will appear as 'undisciplined, arbitrary, full of digressions, not a monument to the austerity of the intellectual conscience and to carefulness and precision, but a wild, bold, unprecedented book that invites comparison with some great literary masterpieces.[3]

Hegel sees the aim of philosophy in the pursuit and acquisition of true knowledge. It therefore must examine the claims to knowledge of the sciences and religion. Since both of these exist in the phenomenal world, they are themselves appearances. Their apparent claims to genuine knowledge must be investigated critically by philosophy. Phenomenology is thus a presentation of knowledge as it appears from the point of view of a science of consciousness. The development of scientific and religious knowledge is the history of the gradual manifestation of the experience of consciousness. For Hegel

> the experiences which consciousness has concerning itself can, by its essential principle, embrace nothing less than the entire system of consciousness, the whole realm of the truth of mind, and in such wise that the moments of truth are set forth in the specific and peculiar character they here possess – i.e. not as abstract pure moments, but as they are for consciousness, or as consciousness itself appears in its relation to them, and in virtue of which they are moments of the whole, are embodiments or modes of consciousness. In pressing forward to its true form of

3. Walter Kaufmann, *Hegel* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965), p. 171.

existence, consciousness will come to a point at which it lays aside its semblance of being hampered with what is foreign to it, with what is only for it and exists as an other; it will reach a position where, in consequence, its exposition coincides with just this very point, this very stage of the science proper of mind. And, finally, when it grasps this its own essence, it will connote the nature of absolute knowledge itself.[4]

In Hegel's *Phenomenology* the concreteness of truth emerges from the wholeness of the conceptual framework. 'The truth is the whole,' he maintained.

The whole, however, is merely the essential nature reaching its completeness through the process of its own development. Of the Absolute it must be said that it is essentially a result, that only at the end is it what it is in very truth; and just in that consists its own nature, which is to be actual, subject, or self-becoming, self-development.[5]

In science and religion the mind begins with the 'this' and the 'here' of the immediately given, and moves dialectically through the power of negation to an understanding of all the concepts in volved in its being what it is until there finally appears the whole notion (*Begriff*) of the thing in question. Scientific and religious experiences are those aspects of the life of mind (*Geist*)[6] in which mind becomes self-conscious (*selbstbewusst*).[7] The process by which this happens is elucidated in the *Phenomenology of Mind.*

The content of religion, and *mutatis mutandis* also of theology, is the Absolute Spirit. Religion is spoken of in the *Phenomenology* as 'the consciousness of Absolute Being in general,'[8] and Absolute Being 'in its own distinctive nature' is 'the self-consciousness of Spirit.'[9] There are three primary types of religion, which Hegel calls 'natural religion,' 'religion as art,' and 'revealed religion.' Revealed religion is the highest form of mind disclosing itself through religious experience. In this form, of which Christianity is the main historical manifestation, 'Absolute Spirit has taken on the shape of self-consciousness inherently, and therefore also consciously to itself,' and

this appears now as the belief of the world, the belief that spirit exists *in fact* as a definite self-consciousness, i.e. as an actual human being; that spirit is an object for immediate experience; that the believing mind *sees*, *feels*, and *hears* this divinity. Taken thus it is not imagination, not a fancy; it is actual in the believer.

4. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, Trans. J. B. Baillie (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 144–5.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 81–2.

6. The German word *Geist* is only partially translatable by the English 'mind,' for *Geist* has a personal, active, creative, objective meaning, whereas 'mind' carries a subjectivistic connotation contrary to the meaning of Hegel's phenomenology.

7. The German '*selbstbewusst*' has the connotation of 'confident,' 'high-minded,' in contrast with the English 'self-conscious' which connotes 'timid,' or 'worried.'

8. Hegel, *Phenomenology*, p. 685.

9. *Ibid.*

Consciousness in that case does not set out from its own inner life, does not start from thought, and in itself combine the thought of God with existence; rather it sets out from immediate present existence, and recognizes God in it.[10]

Moreover, not only consciousness but also feeling are forces in the historical self-manifestation of religion in the form of Christianity. Hegel stresses that just as the historical Jesus Christ

has an implied (essential, *an sich*) father and only an actual mother, in like manner the universal divine man, the spiritual communion, has as its father its own proper action and knowledge, while its mother is eternal Love, which it merely *feels*, but does not behold in its consciousness as an actual immediate object. Its reconciliation, therefore, is in its heart, but still with its conscious life sundered in twain and its actual reality shattered. What falls within its consciousness as the immanent essential element, the aspect of pure mediation, is the reconciliation that lies beyond: while what appears as actually present, as the aspect of immediacy and of existence, is the world which has yet to await transfiguration. The world is no doubt implicitly reconciled with the essential Being; and that Being no doubt knows that it no longer regards the object as alienated from itself, but as one with itself in its Love. But for self-consciousness this immediate presence has not yet the form and shape of spiritual reality. Thus the spirit of the communion is, in its immediate consciousness, separated from its religious consciousness, which declares indeed that these two modes of consciousness inherently are *not* separated; but this is an implicitness which is not realized, or has not yet become an equally absolute explicit self-existence.[11]

The sum and substance of revealed religion is, for Hegel, Jesus Christ and the Christian agapeic community. Philosophical reason traces the logical development of what religion feels and practices by means of 'figurative thinking.' Theology is the as yet not fully developed philosophy of religious feeling and practice. The philosopher's critical and universal reason asks the theologian concerning the content of his figurative thought expressed in sign and symbol, parable and sacrament. By means of this inquiry the philosophic mind attempts to bring out into the clear light of the understanding the truth concealed in the *Gestalt* of the religious consciousness. According to Hegel

the Spirit manifested in revealed religion has not as yet surmounted its attitude of consciousness as such; or, what is the same thing, its actual self-consciousness is not at this stage the object it is aware of. Spirit as a whole and the moments distinguished in it fall within the sphere of figurative thinking, and within the form of objectivity (*Gegenständlichkeit*). The *content* of this figurative thought is Absolute Spirit. All that remains to be done now is to cancel (*aufheben*) and transcend this bare form; or better, because the form appertains to consciousness as such, its true meaning (*Wahrheit*) must have already come out in the shapes (*Gestaltungen*) or modes consciousness has assumed.[12]

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 757–8.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 784–5.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 789.

'The surmounting (*Ueberwindung*) of the object of consciousness in this way is not to be taken one-sidedly as meaning that the object showed itself returning into the self,' Hegel warns.

It has a more definite meaning: it means that the object as such presented itself to the self as a vanishing factor; and, furthermore, that the emptying (*Entäusserung*) of self-consciousness itself establishes thinghood (*Dingheit*), and that this externalization (*Entäusserung*) of self-consciousness has not merely negative, but positive significance, a significance not merely *for us* or *per se*, but for self-consciousness itself. The negative of the object, its cancelling its own existence, gets, for self-consciousness a positive significance; or, self-consciousness knows this nothingness of the object because on the one hand self-consciousness itself externalizes itself; for in doing so it establishes itself as object, or, by reason of the indivisible unity characterizing its self-existence, sets up the object as its self. On the other hand, there is also this other moment in the process, that self-consciousness has just as really cancelled and superseded this self-relinquishment and objectification, and has resumed them into itself, and is thus at home with itself in its otherness as such. This is the movement of consciousness, and in this process consciousness is the totality of its moments.[13]

The philosophical critique of religious thought in Hegel's *Phenomenology* discloses the preliminary solution of the two chief problems which had occupied him since his days as a tutor at Berne, Switzerland (1791–6), and Frankfurt, Germany (1796–1800), 'namely, how to overcome his theological antecedents and how to transcend the heritage of Kant.'[14] For similar reasons, these were also important concerns for his contemporary, Schleiermacher. They have remained important issues for theology today, for the story of twentieth-century Christian thought is centrally concerned with creative answers to the questions put to religion by secular reason. Many a theologian today realizes that his old theological traditions do not provide him with creative and relevant answers to the questions of modern reason. He perceives a need to rethink and to reinterpret these traditions, and thus to build a new tradition, and to do this the theologian seeks to employ the philosophical questions of secular man as the conceptual framework within which empirically relevant theological answers can be given. Hegel is the father of modern process thought which, in its Whiteheadian and Teilhardian forms, has given a creative impulse to the theological reconstruction of Protestant and Roman Catholic thought. And, if Christian thought is to evolve an ecumenical theology for our age, it may well be that the categories of process, continuity, spirit, and phenomenological perception will give structure to this new theological edifice. Ours is 'a time to build,' as Michael Novak has suggested[15] – a time when the ravages of time have laid waste the traditional edifice of theo-

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 789–90.

14. Carl J. Friedrich, ed., *The Philosophy of Hegel* (New York: Modern Library, 1954), p. xx.

15. Michael Novak, *A Time to Build* (New York: Macmillan, 1968).

logy, a time when philosophical reason asks insistently: 'Where are your new institutional, ethical, and intellectual structures?'

Hegel's *Phenomenology* has had an influence which is by no means limited to the first third of the nineteenth century. It announces in philosophical form many of the enduring concerns of secular reason that have grown up on the soil of western Christendom. They are always discussed, questioned, and changed, but have not been destroyed. Rather, each generation, since the American and French revolutions ushered in the modern, secular world, has reinterpreted these inexhaustible questions which arose in the days of Hegel and Schleiermacher, and which these philosophers and theologians formulated one and one-half centuries ago with bold creativity.

Hegel's *Phenomenology* suggests that the task of rebuilding theology under the spiritual impact of the quest of secular reason must take into itself the truth and wisdom of the past and yet sublate it in the direction of a creative dialogue with contemporary secular reason. Many a theologian today feels challenged to respond critically and constructively to the insistence of modern rationality that he recognize those forms of our contemporary experience

> wherein the human spirit, progressively self-conscious, begins to be explicitly aware of more than Nature and its own mere human self; forms whose content is the divine activity. Such experience is possible only if human experience is transcended to become an element within the content of the divine experience; only if, as man comes to know himself better, his knowing is in some sense a knowing *with* God. Hegel marks the advent of these levels as the transition from finite to infinite spirit. He entitles them 'Art,' 'Revealed Religion,' and 'Philosophy.' He is thereby expanding the Aristotelian 'First Philosophy' (for which theology was a synonym) with what he conceived to be the essential content of Christian revelation, and supplementing it with aesthetic experience.[16]

The challenge of the philosophy of secularism to theological reflection is to disclose the presence of God's action in ordinary human experience. In this sense secular reason has been a moving principle in the *Honest-To-God* debate, the Bultmannian demythologization controversy, the God-Is-Dead movement, and the Moltmannian 'Theology of Hope.' Inevitably the construction of a theology in creative response to secular rationality will be paradoxical. This is because the principle of negation is at work in both secularism and religion as we encounter them in actual human experience. Since the aim of Hegelian phenomenology is to remain true to experience while disclosing impartially and freely the contradictory process of the development of the human spirit and the Absolute Spirit, 'even Hegel's most abstract and metaphysical concepts are saturated with experience – experience of a world in which the unreasonable becomes reasonable and, as such, determines the facts; in which unfreedom is the condition of freedom, and war the guarantor of peace. The world contradicts itself.'[17]

16. G. R. G. Mure, *An Introduction to Hegel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 77.
17. Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), p. vii.

For Hegel as well as for contemporary thought the 'larger, more pervasive spirit' of secularism shows itself 'always as a drive toward enlightenment amidst restrictive and zealous forces of society.'[18] But as a concrete phenomenon of history secular reason is not only a critical and creative protest 'against the excesses of extravagances of religious zeal and passion,' but, in the form of secularism, it may itself 'become a form of uncontrolled zeal,'[19] a demonic power of destruction in the religious and cultural life of man. *Mutatis mutandis*, the principle of negation also discloses the contradictory nature of experience in the realm of religion and theology, as Hegel observes in the *Phenomenology*.

> When, therefore, we meet Hegel talking about 'the portentous power of the negative,' we have to consider that for him negation is the very process of creation ... since all determinations are negations, it follows that the positive nature of a thing consists in its negations ... The genus only becomes the species by means of the differentia, and the differentia is precisely that which carves out a particular class from the general class by excluding, i.e., negating, the other species. And the species again only becomes individual in the same way, by negating other individuals. These thoughts are no casual reflections of Hegel. They underlie his entire system.[20]

The negations of the culturally conditioned and historically relative aspects of traditional Christian theology which have come into Protestantism and Judaism since the Enlightenment and the advent of historical criticism, and into Roman Catholicism since Vatican II, have not only been driving the wheels of theological progress but have also been a creative reaffirmation of the permanent Christian values of the Fatherhood of God, the redemptive suffering of the love of God in Jesus Christ, and the eternal value of the human soul with its almost limitless possibilities for progress toward ever higher forms of spiritual life, light, and communion with God, on the one hand, and (alas) for ugliness, evil, and sinful corruption, on the other.

In the fragmentation of theological perspectives under which Christianity today is suffering, and which the ecumenical movement is designed to counteract and negate in the interest of comprehensive unity within diversity, the Hegelian vision of spiritual wholeness is like 'the voice of one crying in the wilderness.'[21] Ours is 'the age of analysis,' of detailed and specialized studies, and our world is polarizing into warring factions because we have lost sight of the larger totality of which all these particular specialties are but fragmentary abstractions. The logic of the phenomena of science and religion points to process, system, and organismic unity at least as much as it tends toward ever

18. Bernard Eugene Meland, *The Secularization of Modern Cultures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 17.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
20. Walter T. Stace, *The Philosophy of Hegel* (New York: Dover, 1955), p. 33.
21. Mark 1:3a (RSV).

increasing diversification and specialization. In Hegel's thought we find a powerfully existential echo of the logic of this liberating process. It is a tragic misunderstanding on the part of both existentialists and Thomists[22] to dismiss, without genuine understanding, Hegel's phenomenological philosophy as 'essentialism.'

The contemporary Jewish philosopher and theologian, Professor Emil Fackenheim, has pointed out that 'Hegel flatly asserts that the Christian religion is *the* presupposition in life of his philosophic thought, and that it contains – in principle – in nonphilosophic form its essential content ...[23] Add to this the observation of Professor George Lichtheim (following Benedetto Croce) that 'as Aristotle had given systematic form to the legacy of Plato and of the ancient world in general, so Hegel had cast into the model of an all-inclusive system the heritage of all preceding metaphysical thought.'[24] Then there arises the unmistakeable impression that Hegel's phenomenological philosophy has been able to do something which many a contemporary theologian would like to achieve but thus far has not been successful in doing, and that is the problem of how to relate effectively the other-worldly and the this-worldly aspects of the Christian faith.

Recently the so-called 'theology of hope,' provocatively presented from various perspectives by Jürgen Moltmann, Johannes Metz, and Wolfhart Pannenberg, has again moved this problem explicitly into the centre of theological discussion. Perhaps the suggestions of Jewish philosophers and theologians like Buber and Fackenheim may help to indicate that a promising approach to a truly contemporary solution of this dilemma lies in the direction which affirms the encounter of God and man in the world where human meeting takes place, not in the separate 'religious' sphere cut off from the process of the world. Buber found this philosophical and theological insight embodied in the tradition of Hassidism, and Professor Fackenheim in turn has discovered it in Buber. Fundamentally Hegel, too, saw the phenomenology of the divine-human encounter in the creative, dialectical interchange of life and experience, and his *Phenomenology* is a highly original and suggestive elaboration of this basically Hebraic-Biblical stance.

Karl Barth said 'Nein!' to the idea of a word of man on behalf of the Word of God. Hegel said, 'Yes!' Barth's concern was to stress the incommensurability of man's word and God's Word. Hegel's point was that despite such 'nonunion' between the Divine and the human there is a creative relatedness between them which takes place in the living processes of the world. In the *Early Theological Writings*, which were never intended for publication, Hegel

22. An example is Étienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1949), ch. 4.

23. Emil Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), p. 7.

24. George Lichtheim, 'Introduction,' G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomonology of Mind* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. xv.

already in 1800 expressed his philosophical conviction that 'life is the union of union and nonunion,'[25] a fundamental viewpoint which informed his thought throughout his lifetime, reaching its mature formulation in the principle that 'the Absolute is ... the Identity of Identity and Non-Identity.'[26]

The Barthian 'Nein!' cannot remain a sheer negation without reducing the Word of God, once present in the Biblical world, to a mere memory. The minds of many thinkers in philosophy and theology today are turning away from the *Offenbarungspositivismus* (Bonhoeffer) of Barthian neo-orthodoxy toward a phenomenology of the meeting of the Divine and the human 'in the world in which men meet each other.'[27]

This does not mean that we are returning to Hegelian philosophy with the nostalgia for a lost paradise. The affirmation of the divine and the human dimensions of experience in our secular world cannot take this form for we do not expect, nor do we even seek, more than a partial and incomplete satisfaction of the philosophical longing for wholeness and comprehensiveness which transcends the piecemeal analyses of many philosophers and the fragmented existential commitments of innumerable theologians. Yet this metaphysical need of philosophical reason, which in Hegel's phenomenology achieved one of its profoundest and most powerful modern satisfactions, cannot be denied for long, even though it is fashionable in some philosophical circles to mock and deny the drive of the spirit toward ever more inclusive modes of thought and being. The flight of theological positivism, and of scientific and logical positivism, into piecemeal theologizing and philosophizing can obscure but cannot do away with the persistent importance of the problem of the relation between this-worldly secularism and other-worldly Christian religion, and the significance of Hegel's attempt to cope with it. The theological positivist ignores the challenge of the modern secular mind which renders the ancient sources of sacred authority completely questionable. The scientific and logical positivist simply by-passes the challenge of eschatological faith and on the authoritative basis of science or logical empiricism claims to have surpassed the problematic of the hermeneutical question.

Finally, current linguistic philosophy, which declares its incompetence to bring the modern religio-secular problem to a substantial solution by professing its neutrality on all metaphysical issues actually also ignores the this-worldly/other-worldly dilemma of religion. The mere analysis of religious language cannot distinguish living and authentic religion from obsolete and spurious religion. This neutralist programme is a capitulation before substantial issues which have been the lifeblood of philosophy from pre-Aristotelian to post-Hegelian times.

This does not mean that we ought to go back to a Hegelian style of philo-

25. G. W. F. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox and Richard Kroner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 312.

26. G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. W. H. Johnston and L. C. Struthers (2nd ed.; London: Allen & Unwin, 1951), I, p. 86.

27. Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought*, p. 241.

sophizing. His philosophy embodies the spirit of his time, the modern era with its, to us, naïve belief in the unbroken continuity of progress (in Hegel's case, 'dialectical' progress) toward ever greater improvement, spiritualization, and comprehensive unity. In that era a Søren Kierkegaard had to remain unknown, misunderstood, and eccentrically irrelevant. Two world wars have shattered the modern spirit and ushered in the post-modern age in which we no longer dare to philosophize with the presumptuous optimism of a Hegel. The post-Christian era, which began with the abolition of Christianity during the French Revolution, is a process which runs concurrently with the post-modern era. Together, the confluence of post-modern and post-Christian orientations have created our *Zeitgeist* in which the secular-religious problem has assumed a new urgency. Hegel's phenomenological philosophy is in this context a challenge, the handing-on of unfinished business, a persistent question rather than a solution. However, the perception of the right question is a first step in the right direction.

For our concluding remarks let us refer back to the problem indicated in the title of this essay: *philosophiam quaerens theologiam. Theologia*, the systematically and critically expounded content of the Christian faith, is a phenomenon manifesting the truth of Christian religious faith and practice. But it lacks the appropriate secular form. *Philosophia* offers to it the adequate form it needs under the guise of the phenomenology of absolute knowledge, the highest possible achievement of the phenomenology of mind (*Geist*). The reason why 'revealed religion' is the phase immediately preceding 'absolute knowledge' in Hegelian phenomenology is apparently given through the insight that philosophy requires religion and its conceptual expression in theology in order to have a basis in the process of experience. The question of philosophy to religion and theology not only transmutes them by giving the revealed, true religio-theological content its proper, authentic form of thought, but also produces genuine philosophy.

The failure to recognize this religio-theological foundation of Hegelian speculative thought has made his phenomenology unintelligible to many contemporary students of philosophy and theology. Moreover, Hegel is to blame for not having explicitly stated this conception of the religious/theological *Sitz im Leben* of philosophy. His neglect also probably accounts for the fact that while he deals at considerable length with the question of how philosophy forms itself by transfiguring its religio-theological basis – this is one of the main themes of *The Phenomenology of Mind* (1807) and *The Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1st ed., 1817; 2nd ed., 1828; 3rd ed., 1830) – he does not give a phenomenology of truth manifested in philosophically uncomprehended form in the experience of religion and its theological clarification and critique. But such a description of the religious and theological foundations of philosophy is required before Hegel can assume the stance of absolute knowledge, as he does in his phenomenology of mind. The absence of a serious immersion in the faith and practice of traditional Christianity in its Catholic and Protestant manifestations is a serious omission in Hegel's

Phenomenology of Mind. It exposes his phenomenological philosophy to the (probably justified) charge of theological superficiality and incomprehension of the real inner dynamics of the faith of the Christian church. By thus bypassing the challenge of traditional theology to modern philosophical modes of thought, Hegel is untrue to his own phenomenological programme, which he thus robs of the power it could have displayed for the advancement of the hermeneutical task of the church's faith and practice in the modern secular world. As it stands, Hegel's phenomenology of 'revealed religion' is an inadequate account of the self-understanding of Christian faith and experience.

Similarly, the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, in every one of the three editions published during Hegel's lifetime, takes the standpoint of thought which is already philosophical and then proceeds to re-enact in this thought all of natural, religious, and spiritual experience. The absence in Hegelian phenomenology of a description of religious experience in its theological self-understanding – a description which would disclose the possibility and the necessity as well as the effect of its sublation in philosophical thought – is a serious omission. It produces the impression that phenomenology, instead of being a disclosure of the spirit-processes of natural and religious experience in their free, internal self-development, is a closed, wooden system of abstract thought dogmatically and externally imposed upon religious and theological experience, as well as upon natural and secular experience. Thus, it is the Hegelian failure to expound methodically in logical sequence the experiential basis required by the intentionality of his philosophy which not only leads to the failure of his speculative scheme but also to the prejudice of barren rationalism which so often stands in the way of a fruitful study of his phenomenology today.