HEGEL’S CONCEPT OF SPIRIT*

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The Concept of Spirit occupies the central place in Hegel’s philosophy. This is consequent upon, and compatible with, his pervasive concern to discover the way to overcome alienation and thus secure the achievement of reconciliation (Versöhnung).

This concern with alienation arose out of his own observation of society. He regarded his society as being characterised by a feeling of isolated separation in its members, an absence of autonomy, a sense of dependence on something ‘other’ with which the self does not feel identified; and in social terms, it is the experience of the society as ‘other’ — a society in which the individual does not feel ‘at home’.

I

Although Hegel observed these characteristics — division and separation, and hence alienation — as being the dominant ones of his society, his analysis was that these characteristics arose out of a particular way of viewing the world. This is the way of the reflective intellect — the usual manner of thinking — which regards everything as limited and as being in a subject-object relation with every other finite thing. It is an understanding of things which perceives reality as being divided into individual parts, separated from and opposed to each other. If this alienation is to be overcome, Hegel believed, it is necessary to rise above the finite through speculative thought: only a total world-view can provide the means for rising above the one-sidedness of the finite, and so heal the sense of separation and alienation.

This total world-view is attained, Hegel said, only by grasping the concept of ‘the absolute Spirit’ (der absolute Geist) or, to use the language of religious imagery (Vorstellungen), as Hegel frequently did, the concept of ‘God’ (Gott). Thus, when one speaks of Hegel’s concept of Spirit, it is clearly apparent that there is a definite religious dimension that pervades his thinking. To appreciate this fully one must begin by noting the way in which Hegel came to his concept of Spirit.

Hegel’s early writings reveal a very significant development of his thought — one that saw the sequential emergence of three closely similar concepts: Love, Life and Spirit. In these concepts Hegel proposed the means by which the sundered world of the reflective intellect may be

* This paper draws upon sections of the author’s Introduction to Hegel’s Philosophy of Religion, (Albany, New York 1984).
transcended, the divisions and oppositions of that world resolved, and all alienation healed.

In writing on love (Die Liebe) in 1797 Hegel gave a specific examination of the nature of separation (Trennung) or alienation, and of love as the principle of union (Vereinigung). Separation is a mark of positivity: the self is perceived by itself to stand over against the world; a disjunction between subject (the self) and object (the world) is presupposed and is manifested, for example, in feelings of dominion over other people and things. In a situation of this kind 'there is no living union between the individual and his world', and there can be no genuine love. The inadequacy of this way of perceiving the world and relationships was compounded for Hegel by the corresponding idea of God: although God is spoken of as infinite, the idea of God as separated from the world of particulars reduces God to just another finite object standing in an external relationship with a world that is a mere multiplicity of finite particulars.

The level of consciousness, at which the characteristic awareness is of separation, perceives relationships in terms of distinctions, restrictions, and oppositions, and gives rise to a feeling of fear, since fear is the product of being limited and being opposed by something seen as an object standing against oneself as subject. Hegel's response to this situation was that in order to correct it one must rise above this consciousness of separation and realize that neither subject nor object are absolutes themselves. This realization is achieved through genuine love which 'neither restricts nor is restricted; it is not finite at all'. Love is the principle of union that enables one to rise above the consciousness of distinctions and separations: 'only in love alone is one at one with the object, it does not command and is not commanded'.

This sense of love and the complete unity that it produces is the result of a process of development from a state of immaturity to one of maturity. The immature state is obviously one of oppositions and cleavages between oneself and the world; the process of development from this to the mature state, according to Hegel, proceeds by means of reflection whereby the overcoming of one instance of separation gives rise to an awareness of others and so on until a union of love has been realized. Thus, finally, love completely destroys objectivity and thereby annuls and transcends reflection (Reflexion), deprives man's opposite of all foreign

3. One can recognize here an early anticipation of Hegel's concept of the dialectic.
character, and discovers life itself without any further defect. In love the separate does still remain, but as something united and no longer as something separate; life [in the subject] senses life [in the object].

In the relationship of love all distinctions between subjects and objects in the finite world — between human beings and nature, one human being and another — are dissolved. Further, Hegel understood love as enabling the self to come to the realisation that the relation between God and the world is not one between subject and object, but that it is a relationship that can only be truly conceived of as a union of love.

Thus, in terms of the development of Hegel’s thought, it seems that by 1798 love is considered as the ‘one and only possible union’ and the ‘one and only possible being’ in which sundered beings can be united. Within two years, however, he had expanded love as the principle of union into the concept of life.

From the point of view of the reflective intellect, Hegel said, ‘the multiplicity of life has to be thought of as being divided against itself’. On the one hand, there is the conscious individual, ‘an organization’ of ‘an infinite multiplicity’ of elements. On the other hand, there is the world of which the individual is conscious, and that is also an infinite multiplicity composed of things from which the individual feels to be ‘separate’, for these ‘other’ things appear to be outside his own restricted sphere; and the life of this world is regarded as ‘an infinite life with an infinite variety, infinite oppositions, infinite relations’. How, then, is the unity of the whole and the parts, the universe and the endless diverse multiplicity of which it is composed, to be understood? The concept of unity, at the level of reflection, is that of a unity between finite things which is not restricted by the finite and transitory character that belongs to particular individuals. But Hegel perceived a more genuine unity, stating that each particular is truly an individual life only to the extent that it is at one with all other elements of infinite life.

A human being is an individual life in so far as he is to be distinguished from all the elements and from the infinity of individual beings outside himself. But, he is only an individual life in so far as he is at one with all the elements, with the infinity of lives outside himself. He exists only inasmuch as the totality of life is divided into parts, he himself being one part and all the rest the other part; and again he exists only inasmuch as he is no part at all and inasmuch as nothing is separated from him.

4. *ETW*, p.305
5. Ibid., p.309
6. Ibid., p.310
7. Ibid.
Each individual life is dependent upon the whole. The living individual ‘is aware, therefore, both that he is a ‘part’ set against the whole of which he is conscious, and that he is ‘no part’, that everything of which he is conscious is essential to him and not really sundered from him’.8

Hegel’s concept of life, while being in no way in conflict with love, does represent a greater depth of his understanding of reconciliation. Reconciliation was now being presented by Hegel, with more precision, as the realizing of a unity of opposites in which differences are not annihilated.9 It is surely not that love does not admit such a unity — indeed, it could be said, that it is only such a unity that truly expresses genuine love10 — but that Hegel saw all that was suggested by love being taken up, expanded, and deepened in the concept of life, a concept that would more adequately express his deeper notion of unity as the reconciling, without the annihilating, of opposites. It is a unity that is grounded in the process of life itself: as the life of each finite individual has an internal unity, so all finite things, which are themselves life, are united from within by infinite life that is the living unity of the whole.11 That this infinite life, which is called God, is no mere conceptual abstraction is indicated by Hegel’s stating that it must also be defined as spirit (Geist):

We may call infinite life a spirit in contrast with the abstract multiplicity, for spirit is the living unity of the manifold if it is contrasted with the manifold as spirit’s configuration and not as a mere dead multiplicity; contrasted with the latter, spirit would be nothing but a bare unity which is called law and is something purely conceptual and not a living being. The spirit is an animating law in union with the manifold which is then itself animated.12

The next few years witnessed the emergence of this concept of Geist at the apex of his philosophy; they saw too the development of his idea of necessity coupled with a more fully fledged historical approach; they also saw the unfolding of a more explicit concept of contradiction, a concept that was important in the development of his view of dialectic, for it involv-

9. ‘But life cannot be regarded as union or relation alone but must be regarded as opposition as well. If I say that life is the union of opposition and relation, this union may be isolated again, and it may be argued that union is opposed to non-union. Consequently, I would have to say: Life is the union of union and non-union’ (ETW, p.312).
10. Hegel himself had said as much in an earlier fragment, die Liebe: ‘In love the separate does still remain, but as something united and no longer as something separate’ (ibid., p.305).
11. ‘Finite life rises to infinite life. It is only because the finite is itself life that it carries in itself the possibility of raising itself to infinite life’ (ibid., p.313)
12. Ibid., p.311
ed a discernment that in each finite thing and in each historical situation are present contradictions that inevitably bring about the emergence of change. Contradiction — the most profound principle of all things and their movement — is the principle of the dialectic. Any two things stand in contrast to each other, as subject and object or as two different objects, and through the contrast there is an awareness of opposition between them; even the reflective intellect perceives the relation between things in this way. But that is the only way in which the reflective intellect can perceive it, so that the division and opposition become absolute and rigid. On the other hand, Hegel saw it to be necessary to transcend the reflective attitude, to suspend the rigidity of opposition, and to perceive the relation between things not as separated objects but from the standpoint of the totality of life by which the unity of all things is grasped, thereby locating the apparent opposition of the other within the self. Consequently contradiction is found in all experience, for ‘opposition has become internal to each term (each term contains its opposite within itself). Contradiction is thus contradictio in subiecto, and that is why the subjects develop’.13 This is Hegel’s understanding of contradiction.

The speculative attitude, which sees opposition internalized in each thing, thus perceives the continuity as well as difference. Thus, if one factor in life is ‘opposition’ or ‘contradiction’, life itself is ‘unity’ or ‘identity’. Continuous life allows for relative oppositions (relative because they are only products of reflection), but it also overcomes them; opposition and unity are thus interdependent. To grasp the concept of unity or identity is to perceive that ‘separated’ things are not really separate, just as instants of time or points of space are not really separate, and if treated so, break out of their separation and ‘seek reconciliation’. This seeking reconciliation is the causal element of the development of each thing toward a greater realization of its nature.

What is true of all things is true, for Hegel, most profoundly of the totality of life. ‘Life is itself this dialectic’, Life is Reality, and ‘Reality is Development’.14 So, Hegel’s concept of life intrinsically involved the concepts of identity, dialectical development, and infinity. Life is infinite; but it is not an infinity that is over against the finite — that would mean each is as finite as the other. True infinity, for Hegel, is that in which the absolute opposition between the infinite and finite is abandoned and is replaced by the notion of continuity. Infinity thus consists in the continuity and inseparability of the multiplicity and the totality of Life; and, because of continuity, each part contains its opposite in itself — that is, possesses con-

tradition — and that is why there is development that proceeds dialectically. Further, if this is true of each part, then because of the inseparability of the whole and its parts, it is also more profoundly true of the totality of Life: Life is characterized by dialectical development in which contradictions that exist in individuals, in relationships, and in society, give rise to the emergence of a greater degree of harmony that is marked by a greater awareness of the identity or unity that exists between each individual and within the totality.

Hence, in a very illuminating formulation, Hegel declared that ‘the Absolute itself is the identity of identity and non-identity; being opposed and being one are both together in it’. This was a definitive statement of his understanding of the Absolute as it came to be expressed in his concept of Geist. For Hegel, Geist was a richer concept, embracing all that was involved in the concepts of love and life. As with the concept of life, Geist is not to be thought of as an infinite Absolute that is beyond the finite particulars and beyond the divisions and oppositions that exist in the finite; nor is it an Absolute that pre-exists the finite world and from which the latter comes into existence. What Hegel found to be the richer implications of the concept of Geist, in comparison with the concept of life, was that discovering unity with the totality of life is not just uniting ‘with a larger current of life’, but being united ‘with a cosmic spirit’.

Spirit (Geist) is the term in Hegel’s speculative thought for the Absolute, infinite Life; and the unity of infinite Life and finite life is to be understood as consisting in the fact that finite life is the self-externalization of infinite Life, Spirit. In Hegel’s philosophy the Absolute does not ‘remain above’ as a mere abstraction, but instead ‘opens itself out for an Other’ — though without going out of itself, for indeed it is the Other: ‘it breaks itself up within itself, and makes itself an object for itself. Its content is therefore a content which is identical with itself, because it is the infinitely substantial subjectivity which makes itself both object and content’. Furthermore, this is not just a momentary or contingent truth of absolute Being, but is its eternal, essential characteristic: ‘this differentiation of the infinite form, the act of self-determination, the being for an Other, and this self-manifestation, is of the very essence of Spirit. Spirit which is not revealed is

16. As Hyppolite (Op. cit., p.19, n.16) says, ‘Hegel resists the notion of a subject that pre-exists its predicates. It is the life of the predicates that creates the subject. An Absolute posited apart from its development cannot be anything but an empty intuition’.
not Spirit'. It is the life of Spirit to appear to itself or manifest itself: 'this is the only act, and it is itself only its act. What does God reveal, in fact, but just that He is this revelation of Himself'.

However, Hegel admitted that this self-manifestation as 'an actual self-consciousness', may appear to imply that, in so manifesting itself, absolute Being has 'come down from its eternal simplicity'; yet, Hegel argued that the opposite is the case, for 'by thus coming down it has in fact attained for the first time its own highest essence'. It is not only a remote absolute existing in abstraction, but it is there in its immediacy as an existent self-consciousness. However, this is not all: there is too, the element of reconciliation. It does not belong to the essence of Spirit only to externalize, manifest, itself in its 'other', the finite; it also returns to itself, taking up the finite within itself. This is Hegel's fundamental idea about Spirit — as the Absolute that externalizes itself in alienation and becomes itself out of its alienation: it is this dialectic of absolute Geist that provides the unity or identity of all things.

This is not to suggest, however, that there is any intended undermining of the reality of the individual in Hegel's philosophy; for, indeed, he placed considerable stress on the distinct and definitely existing individual. Yet the distinctiveness is not absolute and the finitude of the individual is not unqualified. Hegel's whole approach is marked by his determination to avoid setting premature limits of any kind, because he asserted that there are no limits, that no individual is sufficient to itself or can exist for itself alone, and that the individual is not confined to the finite dimension. Each individual consciousness is capable of becoming aware of this, and it is only through such awareness that consciousness is fulfilled. This capability of consciousness is an inherent capacity to transcend all apparent separating barriers and to reach beyond supposedly limiting conditions, and so to 'pass over' to its 'other', with which it thereby 'becomes identical'. Thus, consciousness becomes aware that nothing remains a single isolated individual, and that all reality is not just an aggregate of individuals, but is an infinite oneness that consequently can be known as absolute Spirit. The process whereby this awareness is realized is the dialectical process in which 'consciousness becomes ... Spirit, and experiences the joy of finding itself therein and becomes aware of the reconciliation of its individuality with the universal'.

However, the dialectical process is not just the coming to this recognition.

19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., p.335
22. Ibid., p.128.
by individual consciousness, for the life and movement — the total process — of all reality is also the self-manifestation or unfolding of, and the coming to fulfilment of, absolute Spirit. It is only because this is so, in Hegel’s view, that the individual has any reality: the finite individual has reality only as a ‘moment’ of the infinite universal; but conversely, the Universal or absolute Spirit has reality only in and through finite particulars that are the concretization and self-manifestation of the Universal, and that are therefore stages or moments in the coming to self-knowledge and self-realization of the Absolute. Thus, the individual plays an essential and creative role in this process of self-realization — a dialectical process that results in the dialectical identification of the finite and the infinite.

The *Phenomenology of Spirit* is an account of Hegel’s understanding of this process. In this account Hegel began where human beings are, with the forms of awareness or consciousness, and particularly with the most elementary form of awareness, ‘our ordinary consciousness of things [desiring] to take us from there to the true perspective of *Geist*. That is the perspective that transcends all distinctions, for it recognizes the individual consciousness as a vehicle of *Geist* that is conceived of as the all-embracing unity. The structure of *Phenomenology of Spirit* can be seen to reflect the double-sided nature of Hegel’s subject of thought. On one side, *Phenomenology of Spirit* is about the evolution of Spirit in the finite, disclosing the finite as the externalisation of *Geist*. From this view, Hegel presents his penetrating perception of both the evolution of individual consciousness and the evolution of humanity in society and history. On this side, *Phenomenology of Spirit* is about the evolution of the human spirit in individual consciousness and in social consciousness — an evolution of the human spirit that is the increasing of its awareness (however vague) of what it is to be spirit; and this is a development that is also the self-discovery of *Geist*.

On the other side, *Phenomenology of Spirit* discloses a parallel development — the dialectical movement of the journey toward the comprehension of *Geist*, the emergence of the consciousness of absolute *Geist* that Hegel presented through the progressive stages of religion and philosophy and without which all that spirit is could not be realized. It is Hegel’s claim that the whole dialectical process of *Phenomenology of Spirit* culminates in the point at which there is the complete grasping of the absolute, Spirit. Such a complete grasp, Hegel claims, is achieved in philosophy, Absolute Knowledge; but this knowledge would remain quite unattainable if the dialectical process were confined to the development of human society and history, for ‘a history as thus far understood . . ., itself finite, could only produce . . . spiritual standpoints themselves confined to finitude; and

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philosophy, if possible at all, would share this finitude; 24 It is in religious consciousness that the dimension of the infinite is perceived; in it the human consciousness progresses beyond the finite dimension to an awareness of the dimension of the infinite: ‘religion is the perfection of Spirit’. Without it, Hegel clearly said, the grasping of Spirit would be unattainable. Thus in the whole dialectical process, which is the self-discovery of Spirit, religion has an essential role: for in it the truth of the absolute, Spirit, is perceived.

A question that naturally emerges at this point is that of the exact relationship between Hegel’s notion of Geist and the idea of God.

In short, it can be said that for Hegel ‘God’ is the absolute as perceived by religious thought, and ‘Spirit’ is the absolute as perceived in his speculative, philosophical, thought. But Hegel did not regard every religious concept of God to be the true concept of the absolute, Geist. There are many religious representations of the concept of God that are completely inadequate: for Hegel, only one is adequate. This is best illustrated by a brief reference to Hegel’s presentation of a very distinct dialectic of religious consciousness. That kind of dialectic begins with the same kind of primordial attitude that is the hallmark of the initial stage of individual consciousness, namely, an attitude in which there is the immediate awareness of reality as object. As expressed in religious consciousness, this attitude displays itself in the understanding of absolute Being as an external and alien object, and in the concept of a fundamental distinction and separation between life and religion. As it progresses towards its culmination, religious consciousness passes through a variety of stages in which are reflected the same kinds of attitudes and insights found in the dialectic of individual consciousness, and in the dialectic of human society and history; and this is naturally so, for religious consciousness is not merely a new stage of the dialectic that emerges only at the completion of these other stages; but rather, the dialectic of religion, as a progressive revelation of spirit to itself, is evolving throughout the entire progression of the human spirit. This point is most aptly expressed in Hegel’s own words:

The idea which man has of God corresponds with that which he has of himself, of his freedom . . . when a man knows truly about God, he knows truly about himself too: the two sides correspond with each other. At first God is something quite undetermined; but in the course of the development of the human mind, the consciousness of that which God is, gradually forms and matures itself, losing more and more of its initial indefiniteness, and with this the development of true self-consciousness advances also. 25

So it is that, in each moment of this dialectical development, the human spirit assumes a particular form that reflects the stage of development reached in its comprehension of Geist; and therefore in the dialectical development of religious consciousness there are successive explicit forms of religion that are appropriate to each particular stage of its evolution, and that have an affinity with the form taken by the corresponding moment in the dialect of individual and social consciousness. While the whole dialectic of religion adds the awareness of the infinite to the development of human consciousness, it is only in its culminating stage — that of Manifest Religion — that religious consciousness achieves the discernment of the oneness of reality that, for Hegel, is the most fundamental truth.

This Absolute, Manifest, Religion, which Hegel took to be Christianity, is a religion in which the truth of God, in its fullness, has been revealed:

Absolute religion is this knowledge that God is the depth of the spirit which is certain of itself. Thereby is he [God] the self of all. He is the being [Wesen], pure thinking, but if externalized from this abstraction, he is an actual self. He is a man, who has common spatial and temporal existence. And this individual is all individuals. The divine nature is not any other than the human. All other religions are imperfect... The absolute religion is the depth which has come to the light of day.26

In absolute religion the depth of the concept of God has come to the light of day because it is the religion of incarnation,27 by which the opposition between God and the finite is overcome, and indeed, declared to be null; and the world of actuality, which is thought to be evil and separated from God, who is good, has been shown to be not so by God’s becoming man. This principle of incarnation, ‘the sacrifice of Divinity’,28 is the fundamental, universal truth of the nature of God. The incarnate God expresses the union of God and man, for absolute Spirit has assumed the shape of self-consciousness, alienating or giving-up (‘kenosis’ or emptying [Entäußerung]) itself to take on the form of a definite self-consciousness — a real human being — who is the object of the immediate experience of seeing, hearing and feeling. It is not the product of imagination or thought, nor is it the product of human labour: ‘on the contrary, this God is sensuously and directly beheld as a Self, as an actual individual man; only so is

27. ‘The thought, the principle, the idea of absolute religion is... that God, that absolute Being from outside [das jenseitige absolute Wesen] has become man’ (ibid., p.268).
28. Ibid., p.269: ‘The sacrifice of Divinity, i.e., of the abstract, transcendent Being [des abstrakten, jenseitigen Wesens] has already happened in its becoming actual [Wirklichwerden]’.
that historical moment — the life of that actual individual man, and more particularly, the sacrificial death of that man — manifested the universal truth of God so that what is true in the case of this one individual could be seen to be true of all. Thereby the opposition between God and man, God and nature, is declared to be negated.

The truth manifested in absolute religion — this understanding of God — is most adequately portrayed for Hegel by the notion of Geist: 'That God is Geist, this is the content of this religion and the object of this consciousness'. However, it was the case, in Hegel's view, that the notion of God had become bound up with many misconceptions of the Absolute, and needed to be freed from them. This could be achieved by rising above the language of religious consciousness to the language of speculative thought and the notion of Geist, which declares the truth of the Absolute in depth. Geist expresses that truth to be that the Absolute is Spirit that is, that becomes, a self-externalizing (self-alienating), dialectical, self-becoming Spirit, which comes to know itself out of alienation — a process in which that which was alienated loses its appearance of alienation, and Spirit 'knows itself as universal essence and universal reality'.

Thus Hegel spoke of alienation and reconciliation as part of the dialectic of the Absolute, whether the Absolute is referred to religiously as 'God' or speculatively as 'Geist'. This is clear from the language he used in a vast number of instances. An example from his Faith and Knowledge will serve to illustrate the point: the death of Christ must not be understood merely in the sense of a historical person, but in the philosophical sense of this externalization and alienation — the harshness of the God-forsakenness — of the divine Absolute; and the resurrection of Christ must also be understood in the philosophical sense of the Absolute's rising to itself in unity and totality to achieve the realization of its nature, which is its complete freedom.

Again in the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion he said that God is self-conscious Spirit. 'He is for an Other', that he 'posits or lays down (setzt) the Other, and takes it up again (hebt es auf) into His eternal movement'. Thus, there is the concept of 'reconciliation' in absolute religion, which Hegel therefore called 'the religion of Truth and Freedom'. For Hegel, truth is attained when 'the mind does not take up an attitude to the

31. Ibid., p.267. This, too, Hegel found to be manifest in the actual divine man, of whom he said, 'this actuality has sublated itself, has become a past one' (ibid., p.268).
33. LPR vol.2, p.335.
objective as would imply that this is something foreign to it’; and freedom, while requiring this essential characteristic of truth, is attained through the realization that this truth is not something static, ‘which simply is, [but that], on the contrary, it is activity’. This is the process of Reconciliation, which means that different forms of existence that appear to stand in opposition to each other — God and the estranged world — recognize themselves, find themselves and their essential nature, in the other.34

All that we mean by reconciliation, truth, freedom, represents a universal process, and cannot therefore be expressed in a single proposition without becoming one-sided. The main idea which in a popular form expresses the truth, is that of the unity of the divine and human natures; God has become Man. This unity is at first potential only, but being such it has to be eternally produced or brought into actual existence; and this act of production is the freeing process, the reconciliation which in fact is possible only by means of the potentiality.35

This is the truth attained by absolute religion, and it is also the absolute truth that is the result of the whole of philosophy.

II

The consequences of this dialectic — of alienation and the overcoming of alienation — belonging to the divine Absolute (Geist) continue to be significant and applicable. Contemporary feelings of alienation are no less apparent. For example, individuals frequently have a sense of being swamped by global problems which seem therefore to stand over against the individual as some insuperable ‘other’.

The antithesis to this sense of alienation provided by the thought of Hegel is that of the continuity and underlying unity of all things. Such unity resides in the fact that all existence is the unfolding, self-manifestation of Spirit, so that individuals, properly perceived, do not exist as separated, competing subjects and objects, but each truly finds itself in the other, which, like the self, is a part of the self-expressive activity of Spirit.

A second point is that the unfolding, self-manifestation of Spirit is an emptying (kenosis): it is pain and risk; that is the expression of love. Only so can the reconciliation, the unitary activity of Spirit, be achieved. Hegel found this truth exemplified uniquely in the Crucified Man. If such self-emptying belongs to the nature of absolute Spirit, the source (ground, essence) of all our existence, it is a self-emptying that stands in antithesis to alienation and it is the way to the overcoming of alienation.

34. Ibid., pp.346–47.
35. Ibid., p.347.
Thirdly, such points and implications are derived from Hegel’s concept of the Absolute. For those who are able to speak religiously of the Absolute as ‘God’ — especially in the Christian tradition — Hegel has sought to recall us to the truth about the nature of God: a truth contained in the Christian revelation, but which he believed to have been lost, or at least obscured by dogma. For others who are not able to speak of ‘God’, Hegel also allowed the same truths of reality to be grasped, as a source of reconciliation, through his method of rising above the religious level of truth to his level of speculative thought and the concept of Spirit.

It may well be that the same truths have been expounded by others in different ways, but for those who have the fortitude to explore the writings of Hegel, they will be found there expressed with profound insight and breadth of vision.