

## Foreword: A *Con-figured* Narrative

Down to the 13<sup>th</sup> C., Platonism's Sun Simile (*Republic* 507b -509c) and Line Simile (*Republic* 509c-511e)<sup>1</sup> dominated particularly the *Logos* tradition of Christian theology's understanding of *reality*,<sup>2</sup> not as knowledge of the 'cause' but as knowledge of unchanging 'Being.'

At the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> C., a Latin translation of Aristotle's extant works of the day, accompanied with the Andalusian, Islamic scholar Averroes' Latin commentary, resulted in upending the card table with a new 'materialism.' With this materialism, the perceptible world was no longer taken to be 'copies and shadows' of eternal, divine Ideas (the *Logos* or divine Word) as suggested by Plato's similes combined with the account of the creation of the world in *Timaeus* (27d ff; 69b-70a). With this new 'Aristotelianism' in the Latin world, 'ideas' as *a posteriori* creations of finite abstraction

---

1. The Sun and Line Similes *describe what it means 'to know reality'* (eternal Being and above) according to Plato's Idealism. For drawings and detailed discussion of the *a priori* synthetic elements necessary to understand Plato's Similes of the Sun and Line, see McGaughey, *Strangers and Pilgrims: On the Role of Aporiai in Theology* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1997): 219–240. and McGaughey, *Religion Before Dogma: Groundwork in Practical Theology* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2006): 119–124. Permission has been granted by Walter de Gruyter as well as by T & T Clark International for these pages to be posted on the home page at <https://criticalidealism.org>. For a descriptive account without drawings of the Similes, see in Chapter 8: "Hegel's Reclined Plato and Kant as a 'Subjectivist':" 811.

In contrast, Plato's Cave Allegory of Book VII (*Republic* 514 ff.), which immediately follows the Similes of the Sun and Line in Book VI, *describes 'how the soul learns to free itself'* from the senses (the realm of transient, unreal Becoming), to grasp knowledge, true Being (and above). Plato provides an 'introduction' to the Cave Allegory in the *Phaedo* (that begins with the last line of *Phaedo* 82d and goes to the first line of 83c).

However, unlike Aristotle for whom 'wisdom' is knowledge of the cause of the perceptible, for Plato 'wisdom' is grasping the imperceptible, 'unchangeable'. Furthermore, for Plato wisdom 'sets the soul free' from the 'confinement' of its 'own desires'. The 'eyes and ears are deceptive' because everything in the senses is 'subject to variation'. Unlike what one perceives in the senses, what the 'soul sees' is 'intelligible and invisible'. The soul's imprisonment is the result of its not experiencing 'reality' directly, but only indirectly through appearances. What is 'natural' is sensuous desire, but the soul *can learn* 'to trust only itself' by grasping what is always and already concealed, yet present, in the imperceptible mind.

2. In *Religion Before Dogma*: 120–121, I give my response to C.D.C. Reeve's revised 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of G.M.A. Grube's 1<sup>st</sup> ed. of the *Republic* (Indianapolis: Hacker Publishing Company, 1974) in which Reeve's turns 'upside down' (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Hacker: 1992: 183, n 26) the original drawing of the line of Grube 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (see Hacker: 1974: 164, n. 16). Without any accounting for why, Reeve's drawing of the line has the shorter sections at the bottom and switches the labels for the top two segments of the mind in the realm of 'Being'. Reeve is implying that the Cave Allegory is to be superimposed on the Line Simile as if *learning to know* eternal Being (and above) involved the same, proportional structure of quantities as the *possession of knowledge* of eternal Being (and above).

(*Nominalist Occasionalism/Voluntarism*) based on *perceptible*, empirical particulars, combined with grasping the *cause* of events, threatened to shatter the *a priori* status of the *imperceptible*, divine, eternal Ideas of Platonic *Intellectualism*.<sup>3</sup>

---

3. Nominalism itself is a form of material subreption. (On ‘subreption,’ see the “Preface:” 64, n. 84) Nominalism is a form of subreption because it consists in the *a posteriori* claim that the natural ‘order’ is the ontological basis for the abstraction of concepts. It avoids Platonic Realism’s *a priori* Idealist archetypes, but its Empiricist, ectypal constructions are no less metaphysical than Platonism. Nominalism’s subreption is claiming to be a causal account of the origin of abstractions as ectypal on the basis of Materialism just as Platonism’s subreption is claiming to be a causal account of ideas/concepts as archetypal on the basis of Idealism. In contrast to both *a posteriori* Nominalism and *a priori* Idealism, Kant’s notion of an ‘*a priori*’ concept employed by reflecting judgment is neither archetypal nor ectypal because it is *not a causal explanation* of the origin of ideas/concepts. Rather, it is an account of *assumption in the deductive, heuristic activity* of ‘making sense’ of given phenomena (not a causal account of ideas/concepts based on an imperceptible order of things-in-themselves either Idealist or Empiricist). Kant’s concepts are thought ‘relationalities’ that must be *added to* appearances in reflecting judgment in order for there to be conscious experience, understanding, and responsible agency in the world.

### Wit

In the *Menschenkunde*, Kant accounts for the deduction of universals by means of inspiration (*Witz*/wit; imagination) and acumen (*Uteilkraft*/capacity of judgment to subsume a set of phenomena under a universal concept) through the symbiotic relationship between the positive (*Witz*) and the negative (*Urteilkraft*) capacities of the mind. Wit is ‘*positive*’ in the sense that it constantly drives the mind to see similarities in perception whereas the capacity of judgment is ‘*negative*’ in the sense that it reins in wit to focus on the ‘proper’ application of a universal. See Kant, *Menschenkunde* AA XXV,2: 959–960; Olms ed.: 122–123. Kant says that the capacity to novelty in understanding (‘genius’) is nature itself ‘giving the rule to art’ in the *Critique of the Capacity of Judgment* AA V: 307 and in the *Anweisung zur Menschen- und Weltkenntniß* (1790/1791) as appended to *Menschenkunde*, Olms ed.: 31. Kant explicitly states that ‘wit’ doesn’t know from whence its ‘cleverness’ and ‘inspirations’ come (see *Critique of the Capacity of Judgment* AA V: 309 and Kant, *Menschenkunde* AA XXV,2: 945–946, 962, and 990–991; Olms ed.: 108, 126, and 158,) and that everyone possesses the capacity of judgment ‘because it is indispensable and a necessary talent’ (see Kant, *Ibid.* AA XXV,2: 964; Olms ed.: 128) Kant applauds (attributes his indebtedness to?) Alexander Gerard for the insight that without imagination there is no novel judgment but without judgment imagination would be without guardrails. For Kant’s reference to Gerard, see Kant, *Menschenkunde* AA XXV,2: 1055; Olms ed.: 233 and Kant’s observation that genius is the master, not the slave of laws, which must be learned AA XXV,2: 1056; Olms ed.: 234 and Alexander Gerard, *An Essay on Genius* (London: W. Strahan, 1774): 38. Clearly this is not an embracing of Platonic/Hegelian Idealism! See the discussion of the role of ‘association’ in the deduction of concepts: 62, n. 2. [Reason ‘deduces the concept’ ...]

### On ‘Reflecting’ (*Reflektierend*) and ‘Re-Producing’ (*Bestimmend*) Judgment’

Reflecting judgment is located between the ‘wide’ inspiration of wit/*Witz* and ‘narrow’, objective, reproductive judgment. Knowledge, Kant points out, requires not only the ‘narrow’, appropriate concept (*Zweckmäßigkeit*) for an object but also an *aesthetic quality* that precedes the discernment of the concept in the form of ‘wide’ pleasure (or displeasure) in the imagination. See *Critique of the Capacity of Judgment* AA V: 188–191. The ‘gap’ (no ontological, but epistemological ‘gap’) between ‘wide’ imagination’s *aesthetic quality* and ‘narrow’, objective, re-productive judgment is ‘bridged’ by *reflecting*

Scholasticism's alternative *explanations* of the ultimate origin and ground of the human condition staggered like a drunken sailor between Intellectualism and Occasionalism. Either reality was governed by *divine Reason* (Intellectualism), which consisted of the imperceptible, eternal ideas (*Logos*) of God to which even God Himself (!) was accountable or reality was governed by *divine Will* (Occasionalism), which preceded the establishment even of divine Reason. Because creation required the exercising of God's will (even to create His ideas/*Logos*), His actions could even violate the necessary order of God's unchanging ideas because God, by definition, is Good. Whatever He does, even if it involves the violation of what humanity experiences as a Rational, eternal order, is ultimately good.

Aquinas' Scholasticism sought to maintain the complementarity of Plato and Aristotle by *privileging divine 'eternal' Intellectualism*. With the introduction of Nominalism by Occasionalism, Duns Scotus opened the door for taking *ideas to be merely the finite, individual abstractions of reductionist materialism*.

This development contributed, significantly, to the emergence of the 'new' physical sciences in the West, which, although made possible by Aristotle's emphasis on the

---

*judgment* that must seek out the appropriate concept for the imagination's 'wide' insights into the 'order' of appearances by means of the 'law of association'. See *Critique of the Capacity of Judgment* AA V: 188–189. Knowledge arises out of pleasure in the imagination that deduces 'wide order' (physical and moral) in experience. To be noted: The pleasure (*Lust*) associated with the categorical imperative is analogous to the reflecting judgment's deducing of the concepts present in the imagination's 'wide' play with the 'law of association'. Just as the imagination consists in the pleasure/displeasure of *aesthetic quality* of sense perception by the 'law of association' that leads to objective, re-productive *knowledge of the order of appearances* by means of reflecting judgment, so too, the satisfaction of invoking a 'wide', categorical imperative to govern the 'narrow', hypothetical imperatives of teleological agency is ultimately grounded in a moral order that governs agency. However, unlike the *a priori* lawful order and concepts deduced (not created) by the 'law of association' out of phenomena, the *a priori* lawfulness of categorical imperatives are deduced (not created!) by reflecting judgment as the necessary, causal 'order' required by the finite, eminent causality that is autonomous freedom. A 'wide' categorical imperative is empty enthusiasm without the 'narrowing' of reflecting judgment that arises when one gives oneself permission to do something. The invocation of a 'wide' categorical imperative in a decision to do something, though, can only occur within the framework of any and all experience. Experience, generally, is a combination of imagination (wit), the 'wide' perceptible content of the imagination's 'law of association', which sees similarity in differences, along with the 'narrow' restricting to the 'appropriate concept' by means of reflecting judgment that results in the objective knowledge that is re-productive judgment.

Concepts reach the status of re-producing judgments (objective 'certainties') as a kind of 'mechanical' reproduction (see Kant, *Anweisung* Olms ed.: 12 and 33) only according to the degree in which they fit together in an ever-expanding, coherent, architectonic of relationalities. In short, concepts don't causally explain anything. They are a capacity (condition of possibility) for finite transcendental consciousness to experience, understand, and exercise responsible agency to the degree that it is able. See the discussion of Kant's 'middle option' in Chapter 5: "Traces of an Intellectual Crisis:" 575, n. 54. On Kant's distinction between selection of the law/maxim (obligation/duty) by humanity whereas God, as creator of the law/duty is without selection (obligation/duty) in Chapter 7: 765. On the discussion of the hermeneutical circle of Absolute Knowledge, see in Chapter 6: 683 and in Chapter 7: 709, n. 204..

priority of perceptible experience for all (finite) knowledge,<sup>4</sup> eventually resulted in the collapse of Aristotelian ‘science’. Rather than, as the case with Aristotle, view ‘science’ as discernment of *the causal relationships* among *perceptible*, material elements (earth, air, wind, and fire), the new ‘science’ took its task to be the discernment of the *imperceptible*, lawful order (ironically, a form of *Intellectualism*) that governed things and events. Nonetheless, the Aristotelian goal of human knowledge remained the same as defined by Aristotle in the opening lines of his *Metaphysics*: discernment of *the imperceptible, ultimate, causal order* of reality (truth). What became ambiguous with *Occasionalism* was the divine, ultimate purpose of that causal order, which only God could know and reveal.

Initially, the task of the ‘new’ science was viewed as ‘following the footsteps of God’ in His creation, whether or not He had created the material order according to a system of unchanging ideas to which even God was accountable (as the case of *Intellectualism*) or by divine, capricious choice (as the case of *Occasionalism*). To this day, scientists who seek to affirm God as a factor in experience continue to embrace or reject a religious ‘dimension’ to science to embrace Intellectualism (see the “Discovery Institute” in Seattle). However, one, conveniently, overlooks the implications of Occa-

---

4. There are two moments to Aristotelian science. First, All knowledge commences with sense perception (see *A posteriori Analytics* 99b15-100b15; especially 100a5: “[...] [W]e must get to know the primary premises by induction”). However, Aristotle insists that universals (primary Forms) are not reducible to sense perceptions (matter) and are indefinable (*Metaphysics* 1040a1-8) and indemonstrable (*A posteriori Analytics* 100b10-13), but necessary assumptions, independent of ‘matter’. Although ‘form’ has no being beyond particulars (*Metaphysics* 1033b20-1034a8), form is that actual that precedes potency as the ‘thing itself’ ((τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι, to ti ên einai, ‘quiddity’, ‘in itself’); (*Metaphysics* 1028b33 ff, espec. 1029b13-15), which ‘can’t be otherwise than what it is’ (*Posterior Analytics* 71b8-12, 74b5 f.; *On the Heavens* 279b22; and *Metaphysics* 1015a34). According to Heinz Happ (Hyle. *Studien zum Aristotelischen Materie Begriff* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971): 287: “[...] matter (ὕλη) is with respect to possibility (δυνάμει) what the ‘whatness’ (τόδε τι) is to actuality (ἐνεργεία).” Although form is the ‘actual’ that precedes ‘potentiality’, Aristotle says that in a sense form is also potency (*Metaphysics* 1049b5, 1071b12-25, 1072a8-10). This is because as Happ says: *ibid.*, 687: „All individual cases of ἐνεργεία are founded in the actus purus [Unmoved Mover] which stands opposite to the ‘primal opposition’ of dynamis/energy.” Today’s natural sciences share with Aristotle the claim that knowledge is derived from sense perception, and reductionist materialism takes ideas to be constructed abstractions (Nominalism) that are never independent of particulars (rejecting the Platonists). Today’s physicists at the Large Hadron Collider, who are searching for the Higgs boson (God) particle appear at least to entertain the notion of Aristotle’s actus purus when they suggest that the universe is “one kind of nothing [no-thing or potency/possibility] becoming another kind” of no-thing. See Andrew Crumey’s article “matter’: The Nothing at the Heart of Everything” in *Wall Street Journal* 17 January 2025.

Second, however, for Aristotle all wisdom involves ‘art’ and not merely ‘experience,’ and ‘art’ is knowledge of the causes (formal, material, efficient, and final [*Metaphysics* 983a24-32) of things. Whereas today’s natural sciences seek causes, they do so on the basis of imperceptible ‘lawfulness’ (physical laws, statistical significance, and algorithms). Aristotle, though, has no grasp of imperceptible physical laws so that he accounted for ‘scientific knowledge’ (causality) on the basis of the empirical, primary premises (or elements) of air, fire, earth, and water, which can change into one another (*On the Heavens* 305a14-35). This form of causal explanation is what today’s natural sciences unequivocally reject in Aristotle.

sionalism. The task of science is discernment of the *unchanging, imperceptible, causal* (!) order that governs nature. As soon as one allows for Occasionalism/Voluntarism, though, one undermines all human attempts to achieve understanding in the sciences.

Crucial proposals for understanding divine causality came from Spinoza (17<sup>th</sup> C) and Leibniz (18<sup>th</sup> C). In contrast to the top-down causal order of Platonic Intellectualism (original ideas and perceptible copies), Spinoza suggested a bottom-up causal order that viewed God as the *universal, eternal substance* out of which all things/differences emerge.

Unaccounted for by Spinoza is the radical dualism between the physical and the intellectual. Leibniz proposed a divine, 'Pre-established Harmony' that eternally correlated the two dimension of the immaterial intellect and material world. In short, Leibniz remained squarely in the *Intellectualist* camp in defense of the ultimately, divine causal order.

Perpetuating that Intellectualist tradition, at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> C, Hegel presented a 'reclined Plato.' He turned Plato's Simile of the Line on its side and added to the Platonic 'bottom-up,' influx logic of dialectic a 'top-down,' emanation logic to suggest that Spinoza's 'eternal substance' was merely the perceptible, actual representations (*wirkliche Form – Reelle*) of what in 'truth' is an imperceptible, dialectical content (*Inhalt – Ideelle*) of Absolute Spirit. By a logic of negation, Absolute Spirit conforms to a meta-narrative of Double Negation that commences with a First Negation of Its Absolute Oneness and results in a dialectically driven logic of *diairesis* (identities and differences) that brought about both intellectual and physical multiplicity. This same dialectical process eventually brought about the emergence of finite consciousness in, and out of, the finite conditions of the material order. Finite consciousness has the privileged role in Hegel's system. It is the location for the Second Negation: the nullification (*Aufhebung*) of all multiplicity to attain Absolute Knowledge (a return to Absolute Oneness and Absolute Freedom) *above sensuousness*. In other words, Hegel embraced a 'reclined' Platonic Intellectualism driven by a causal, (!) *Dialectical Logic*, not Traditional Christianity's Personal Theism driven by Intellectualism or Occasionalism.

Hegel's proposal is that the 'fact' of finite, conscious experience of physical multiplicity can be *causally explained* only by dialectical logic as the condition of possibility of his meta-narrative of Double Negation.<sup>5</sup> Finite consciousness ('spirit') is capable of grasping that its experience of physical objects and events are *merely perceptual representations (Form)* of their 'true' content (*Inhalt*), which is their *imperceptible abstractions*. The 'true,' ultimate, content (*Inhalt*) of all abstractions, though, is Absolute Spirit. Its 'truth' is established by the very experience of finite consciousness. There can only be finite consciousness if there is Absolute Spirit, which is *the necessary cause* of finite consciousness.

---

5. On Kant's rejection of dialectic for grounding the ultimate, causal ground of 'what is,' see *Critique of Pure Reason* B 697 and Chapter 6: 670.].

Where Traditional Christian Platonism's Personal Theism placed humanity on the throne of God by means of an analogy based on finite, human creativity (thoughts precede agency as the 'shaping' of matter),<sup>6</sup> Hegel's 'Pantheism' made humanity's finite 'spirit' the lynch pin (the 'point of indifference') for God's awareness of Itself. *In both cases, humanity displaces God on His throne.*

Nonetheless, whether by contemplation<sup>7</sup> (*Intellectualism*) as the case of Christian Platonism or grace (*Occasionalism*) as the case of Supernaturalism or whether by Hegel's 'cunning of reason' (Intellectualism) of Double Negation, the core, 'true' content (*Inhalt*) of 'what is' results in the divinization (or spiritual perfection<sup>8</sup>) of

---

6. In agreement with Göschel, Hegel, too, "celebrates the Logos (Word of God) as the incarnate God who teaches us logic Hegel writes: "We have such confidence in God through Christ, not that we build on ourselves through ourselves ..., not that we are able to think something of ourselves as from ourselves, but that we are able to think and comprehend (*logisasthai*) something that is from God and from God and through Christ, who is the Logos [the Word of God] *who teaches us logic* and has humbled himself so that we may learn to recognize and comprehend him." (emphasis added) GW XI: 384–385

In contrast to Kant whom Hegel criticizes for not being 'logical' enough to appreciate the 'speculative' moment of the Concept. (GW 370–380), Kant's is only a philosophy of transient, sensuous, understanding (GW XI: 372), which grasps only the 'half' of speculative philosophy's reason. (GW XI: 376)

However, the similarity between Christian Platonism's Logos Theology and Hegel's Logos Theology involves a crucial difference. F.C. Baur points out the similarity between Christian Platonism's, 'purely postulated' two-step creation of the internal, thought Word of God (Logos endiathetos/λόγος ἐνδιάθετος) and the external, spoken Word of God (Logos prophorikos/λόγος προφορικός) and Hegel's proposed 'purely logical' development out of the Absolute One with its ideational system and external perceptual system whose goal is the creation of finite consciousness that is capable of logically negating its finitude to think the Infinite Concept/Spirit. Baur writes: "[...] gnostic systems are based on the assumption that God is only in this process a living God, Absolute Spirit or thinking reason, because life is not without movement, thinking not without mediating activity; [Hegelian] true knowledge is only the Concept itself, as far as It explicates Itself in the three moments as a Concept in itself, as a determined concept, and as the concept coming to itself from the determinateness and restoring itself from limitedness (*Phil. der Rel.* I: 32). Without the world, therefore, God is not God, either. At the same time, however, the great difference is already evident between the purely logically determined concept of the process [Hegel], and the purely posited, only postulated, Platonic-Gnostic idea of an apostasy from the Absolute, as it still has a very essential and profound meaning even in the earlier representations of Schelling's philosophy (cf. especially *Philos. u. Relig.* 1804. p. 34. F)."<sup>6</sup> F.C. Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis oder die christliche Religionsphilosophie in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (1835) (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967): 681–682.

7. Contemplation of the (amoral) Good is the ultimate aim of finite 'reason,' according to Plato's *Republic* 511c (θεωρία/θεωρούμενος). Christian mysticism from Origen, the Desert Fathers (*sic.*), to Pseudo-Dionysius and monasticism all owe their Intellectualist conception of reality to Plato's Similes of the Sun and Line in Book VI of the *Republic*.

8. Lest one be tempted to view Hegel's Absolute Spirit as a liberation from the pain and suffering of the world and the grounds for social solidarity, Hegel's Absolute Spirit is no consolation because it turns all historical particularities into 'meaninglessness', and it's 'peace' is an escape from history. As Absolute Unity/Oneness, Hegel's Absolute Spirit also is no champion of 'love' and social solidarity. 'Love' is an ambiguous term, and it is no more a source of peace and harmony (see the summary of Hegel's Göschel review in the next footnote) than it is of social solidarity. For example, as the (not only

the finite individual.<sup>9</sup> One is left to quarrel over the ultimate, spiritual status of that divinization (or perfection) of humanity that, additionally to Intellectualism, anchors

---

sexual) abuse of women of men as well as the child abuse scandals (by no means limited to religious institutions) across the globe ought to have made clear, Absolute Unity/Spirit has been invoked to 'justify' multiple forms of exploitation and oppression in the name of 'what is good for others' is their 'harmony' with 'me'. In short, I will point out in Hegel's writings that, not only does Hegel replace the 'grace' of a Personal Deity with the 'cunning of reason', which works out its own agenda as the Absolute Unity of history by reducing particularities to meaninglessness, but he also cripples 'moral culture' by dismissing it as an illusion.

9. In his review of Karl Friedrich Göschel's *Aphorismen über Nichtwissen und absolutes Wissen* (1829), Hegel rejects the notion of 'self-divinization,' humanity's 'bottom-up' elevation by itself to the status of divinity through knowledge. "From the judgment 'knowing God = being God', this [erroneous] mind goes briefly to the conclusion 'therefore knowing God = being God' and from there to the final result 'If I claim to know God, I must claim to be God himself.'" (Göschel review GW XI: 371–372) Nonetheless, Hegel/Göschel acknowledge that with death humanity is 'in' God: "Humanity can only be in God through God and, once he has ceased to be, can only be placed in God through God when God first places Himself in him and becomes man himself and reveals Himself to him. (GW XI: 370) However, Hegel leaves unexamined this 'top-down' divinization of humanity although he clearly acknowledges a difference between the attempt of finite consciousness to 'rise up' to God and God's 'coming down' to humanity: "[The question 'What is a human being?'] [...] is considered in the interest of the more definite question of how man arrives at God. It is at once remarked [by Göschel] that this [...] question belongs only to the mind of ignorance, which [...] proceeds from the [individual] subject as the first, and thereby at once cuts off and stultifies the answer; whereas in *absolute knowledge*, which proceeds from the absolute, from the substance as the objective Word of God, the question is how God comes to man." (GW VI: 373)

Hegel distinguishes between God's substance and knowledge. "God Himself is not merely eternal Being (substance) but also His self-knowledge (subject)." (GW XI: 368) However, in agreement with Göschel he states that "God is real only in so far as He knows Himself. His existence [*Dasein*] becomes and disappears with His consciousness [...]. Second, God, as Being in Himself, is knowledge of Himself in Himself as God's self-consciousness. However, as the Being [substance] of the Other, He knows Himself outside Himself in the world (outside God's consciousness), in individual beings as creatures of God, whereby this being *outside of Himself* is just as much canceled [*aufgehoben*] out again, dissolved, in that *individual beings are in God according to their being and knowledge as preserved, in that they are not God Himself, rather God is only Himself in Himself. If God is truly in and with His creatures, as Scripture teaches, then the knowledge of God is also in them – because He is only to the extent that He knows Himself, and this knowledge of God in an individual is precisely general reason* [not particular understanding of the 'imagination'], which is not my reason, nor a common or general faculty, but *Being Itself, the identity of Being and knowledge.*" (emphasis added) (GW XI: 368–369).

Referring to Jacobi's emphasis on unknowing when it comes to God, Göschel responds: "Instead of this ignorance [...] leading to the necessity and reality of the revelation of God hidden in Himself, it is limited to natural revelation given in conscience [*Gewissen*], however much it contradicts the naturalness of thought'. This so-called natural revelation in conscience [*Gewissen*] is direct knowledge, i.e. knowledge only of the abstract self-sameness of God. Natural revelation eludes thought and its realm, knowledge, which is rather driven towards the fullness of the divine essence and thus towards concrete knowledge." (GW XI: 360–361)

19<sup>th</sup> C authors in the Traditional Christian theology: Athanasian oneness with the 'Father' (Hegel and the Left-wing Hegelians) or Arian oneness with the created 'Son' (Schleiermacher, F.C. Baur and Strauß in 1835) and/or whether the whole material order is merely a docetic moment on the way, to establishing the ultimate priority of Absolute Spirit (Hegel) or Perfect God-consciousness (Schleiermacher).

However, the generation just prior to Hegel (and Schelling) had offered a radical alternative to the *ultimate, causal explanations* of the Intellectualist and Occasionalist, Scholastic options. In fact, this radical alternative contains a proleptic rejection of

---

"In the uttered Word, creation, God is the cause; He invented measure and form, law and finite being, space and time, days and years and places, language and languages, the Concept and humanity; He Himself is not the measure because He is above time and space, etc., He Himself does not speak. Among all these sayings, God's reality and independence dissolve only into infinite Being that underlies all actuality [Wirklichkeit], without being itself for itself, without being actual [wirklich]. 'Constantly repeated is the idea that it is in the interest of science to dissolve and destroy reality, ... in that the object must be abolished in order to be known.'" (GW XI: 361)

Hegel then discusses the 'the accusation' that knowledge of God means the self-divinization of humanity (GW XI: 369) that takes the form: "If I claim to know God, I must claim to be God Himself" (GW XI: 371–372) Hegel limits his examination of divinization to the '*negative moment of self-divinization*', which, in his judgment, is divine knowledge that does not reach the level of divine substance. Nonetheless, Hegel overlooks the '*positive moment of divine knowledge*' that is the Incarnation, which is not limited to an individual, which Hegel/Göschel call the error of Christian doctrine (GW XI: 362) : Given that God can only know Himself through finite consciousness (GW XI: 368–369), knowledge of God on the part of finite consciousness is itself divine knowledge. Therefore, it is not inappropriate to speak of the knowledge of God (the Second Negation) to be divinization.

Hegel approvingly quotes Göschel: "[...] [*D*]ependence on God is freedom in God, just as being apart from God is being apart from freedom; if you believe, you will know the truth, and *the truth will make you free* [Hegel/Göschel invoke here John 8:32]. In no other way can philosophy make you free; only in God is freedom." (emphasis added) (GW XI: 388) This knowledge is beyond history and makes all suffering in the world bearable because "I know on whom I believe" [Hegel/Göschel invoke here 2 Timothy 1:12 which reads: "For this reason I also suffer things; but I am not ashamed, *for I know whom I believe*, and I am convinced that He is able to protect what I have entrusted to Him until that day."] who sets us free with the 'sunrise of peace' (*Morgenrote des Friedens*) (GW XI: 388). Clearly, here Hegel is acknowledging that the 'suffering' that is life in all its historical particularity is a matter of indifference (insignificance) when viewed from the perspective of Absolute Spirit's indifference (the non-difference of Universal Oneness). Hegel approvingly observes in Göschel: "After the immanence of the Concept has been determined from the proposition that the absolute is as much subject as substance, it is (p. 62) it is stated that Scripture, by teaching that *humanity cannot reach God and the knowledge of God from himself, from his subjectivity separated from God*, proves itself to be the knowledge which says nothing other than that *humanity can only reach God as the general truth through God, as the general knowledge (the special knowledge is man's own, accidental knowledge separated from God)*." (emphasis added) (GW XI: 368)

Hegel repeats his praise of Göschel in the *Encyclopedia of Science* (1830) §564 (GW X: 372–374). See as well, Heinz Kimmerle, „Zu Hegels Religionsphilosophie: Dimensionen und Möglichkeiten ihrer Auslegung, Kritik und Aneignung“ in *Philosophische Rundschau*, Vol. 15 1/2 (1968): 111–135.

Hegel's raptures<sup>10</sup> (*Schwärmerei*) with respect to Absolute Spirit as well as Strauß' efforts at materialist reductionism in 1872. With Immanuel Kant, we are confronted with a dramatically different account of what it means to be human as well as a re-definition of humanity's goal. Both moments of humanity's experience of meaning and of its goal, according to Kant, are grounded in *finite creativity* (freedom as autonomy 'above' but never independent of nature).

The key and crucial distinction between Hegel's and Strauß' fantastic enthusiasms and Kant hinges on the meaning of *a priori* 'necessity' in experience. Kant talks about 'necessity' when it comes to *a priori* synthetic judgments. According to Hegel and Strauß, *a priori* synthetic judgment of dialectical synthesis is only required to establish the *ultimate* cause of all 'that is,' Absolute Spirit.

According to Kant, *a priori* synthetic judgment is no necessary, *a posteriori*, dialectical synthesis of Absolute Spirit as causal, *petitio principii* of finite consciousness. *A priori* 'necessity' (but not determining cause) for *finite*, transcendental consciousness is concerned with what is required, imperceptibly, for a finite consciousness to experience a world as it does. In short, consciousness *must add indirectly discernable, imperceptible* elements to its 'direct' perceptions in order to experience, understanding, and exercise responsible agency *in the world*. Hegel's and Strauß' *apodictic certainty consists in the a priori requirement of Absolute Knowledge of the causal origin of all 'that is.'* Kant's *apodictic certainty consists in the a priori requirements of finite, imperceptible, conditions and capacities demanded by finite experience in the world.*

*A priori* synthetic necessity, according to Kant, is not a causal category because causes are only indirectly experienced through their effects. Hence, they are always associated with a degree of conjecture. Kant's *a priori* synthetic judgments of finite, transcendental consciousness do not begin to claim to know their own cause much less the ultimate cause of all 'that is.' What we can know about finite *a priori* synthetic judgments are those 'pure metaphysical principles' not given in empirical perception directly in any fashion that make it possible for finite, transcendental consciousness to exercise its *a priori* synthetic judgment with *autonomous freedom*. Again, though, the *a priori* synthetic judgments of 'pure metaphysical principles' do not cause *autonomous, creative freedom*. They only *make it possible* for finite consciousness *intentionally* to cause events to happen that nature, on its own, can never cause.

---

10. Kant distinguishes between 'enthusiasm' (*Enthusiasmus*) and 'rapture' (*Schwärmerei*). An 'enthusiast' (*Enthusiast*) is a visionary (*Phantast*) according to principles (*Grundsätzen*) (*Menschenkunde oder philosophische Anthropologie* AA XXV,2: 1006 [Olms ed.: 175]) whereas a 'rapturist' (*Schwärmer*) is a visionary (*Phantast*) according to affections (*Neigungen*). An 'enthusiast' seeks the best for humanity, but s/he have not "[...] considered the difficulties that people would face in implementing their ideas" (*ibid.*, AA XXV,2: 1006–1007 [Olms ed.: 176]). Although related to 'enthusiasts,' 'rapturist' is one who 'wrongheadedly' confuses "[...] an object of faith to be an object of perception (*Anschaung*)" (*ibid.*, AA XXV,2: 1007 [Olms ed.: 177]). "The rapturist [e.g., Hegel and the early Strauß] comes very close to the delusional [...] Delusion is a perversity of reason, and in delusion the imagination deceives the senses; one believes to see what one can never see as an object of experience" (*ibid.*, AA XXV,2: 1007 [Olms ed.: 177]).

Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is concerned with the question 'how are *a priori* synthetic judgments that lead to apodicticity possible?' Kant's formulation of the question of his *Critique of Pure Reason* makes clear the *apparent conundrum* in need of investigation: *the 'necessity' a priori synthetic judgments concerned with their possibility leads to apodicticity but not to knowledge of their causal certainty! Necessity is bound up with possibility, not the certainties of Absolute Knowledge. How so?* Kant's investigation leads to the 'pure metaphysical principles' of 'God,' to autonomous freedom complementary to the natural order, and to the enduring identity of the individual (God, the 'soul,' and freedom). The *Critique of Pure Reason's* resolution of the question 'How so?' rests upon whether humanity is 'divine' or 'human.'

According to Kant, the goal of humanity is not (spiritual or physical) divinization or moral perfection<sup>11</sup> but understanding and responsible agency (however imperfect).

---

11. Although Kant speaks of moral perfection as a 'goal' of humanity, he explicitly points out that this is not the goal of an ideal, achievable status. In fact, he dismisses the notion that moral perfection is an attainable status.

Interestingly, he speaks not of the individual's attaining 'perfection' but of nature's having given humanity what Kant means by moral perfection as a capacity (*Anlage*). See *Menschenkunde* AA XXV,2: 877; Olms ed.: 29–30.

'Perfection,' according to Kant, is with respect to possessed capacities ('rawness') (*Menschenkunde* AA XXV,2: 877 [Olms ed.: 29–30]) and 'control over oneself' (*Menschenkunde* AA XXV,2: 940 [Olms ed.: 100]) *at any point in time, not a consequence of agency* (i.e., external moral success or, especially, *happiness*). Seeking perfection is the encouragement to apply one's 'perfect' moral capacity in each new circumstance; not a matter of achievement but of striving. See *Religion*: VI: 67–68.

Furthermore, Kant insists that the elimination of even the 'appearance' of good and evil would mean the elimination of morality. To be sure, the *appearance* of goodness in humanity is laudable because it acknowledges the standard of moral principles. However, evil characters and illusion are no justification for cynicism with respect to virtue because illusion presupposes the virtuous: "Nature placed in us the capacity to generate illusion by which we can thwart the unruly impulses of our passions. *The artificial (Kunst) of behavior creates much good, conceals the bad side of man, and brings at least an analog of virtue.* People act in public as in a play, everyone is concerned only with good appearances. Such illusion is very advantageous and encourages people to do something good because others cannot always distinguish between what is true from the illusion. In our life, the greatest desire is always to appear and to pretend to others, so *there is no need to recommend the cynical life, because examples of goodness would be lost.* (emphasis added) *Menschenkunde* AA XXV,2: 930–931; Olms ed.: 89; see *Anweisung zu Menschen- und Weltkenntnis* (Olms ed.: 50–52; and the significance of hope and disappointment for the exercising of humanity's transcendental capacities *Anweisung* Olms ed.: 100)

In short, Kant warns against moral 'purism.' Moral 'purism' either only counts the failures of humanity or, pessimistically, rejects virtue out of hand because it is externally incalculable and incapable of achievement. Moral purism is, then, a denial of virtue because it takes the appearances of immorality to be a denial of humanity's morality. "If one investigates the illusions of virtue too rigorously, s/he will lose all confidence as well as all encouragement to live virtuously." (*Menschenkunde* AA XXV,2: 932 [Olms ed.: 90]) However, Kant emphasizes in *On the Common Saying*: "That may be correct in theory, but it is of no use in practice" AA VIII: 285: to favor lack of moral effort "[...] under the pretext that human nature does not permit such purity (which he also cannot assert with certainty): is the death of all morality, and he proposes in *Menschenkunde* that "were we ever to reach the point where we believed that there was no such thing as virtue, it would be as if we no longer believed in God." *Menschenkunde* AA XXV,2: 931–932; Olms ed.: 90. Yet, Kant is even more explicit:

To be sure, both understanding (theoretical reason) and responsible agency (practical reason) are dependent upon non-literally anthropomorphic, non-dogmatic, and non-doctrinal religion as well as non-religious 'faith' in order to be(come) responsibly the extra-ordinary species individually and collectively that it is. This non-literally anthropomorphic, non-dogmatic, and non-doctrinal faith consists in the incontrovertible conviction that there are apodictic, 'pure metaphysical principles,' required by our own finite experience, that make our efforts at understanding and responsible agency worthwhile and not merely naïve illusions.

By their focus on *causal explanation*, Hegel and the later Strauß presuppose the dogmatic principle of sufficient reason (*Satz vom zureichenden Grund*) and the dog-

---

"Human nature appears so trained by nature to conceal its internal weaknesses and externally to project a good image." *Menschenkunde* AA XXV,2: 932; Olms ed.: 90

He adds, "[i]f in the next life one will dare to show her-/himself as s/he really is is not for us to know. Here [in this life], though, *we are not required to expose ourselves entirely as we really are*. One is not required to be transparent even when it comes to our best friend. (emphasis added) *Menschenkunde* AA XXV,2: 932; Olms ed.: 91

This leads to his dismissal of moral 'purists on the part of those who only see humanity's faults or reject the notion of virtue because of the universality of faults: "People who always investigate people's faults [as a general character of the human species] become misanthropes who shun people [...]. They believe that there is nothing lovable about humanity because they have taken off humanity's beautiful mask, where the discoveries are always very sad. *This is said in order that one may not become a moral purist*; for human virtue is not of such a kind that there are entirely pure virtues, just as gold of the 24th carat is only an idea; *one must, therefore, take human beings as they are*. (emphasis added) *Menschenkunde* AA XXV,2: 932; Olms ed.: 91 To be sure, this does not mean to embrace with 'enthusiasm' everything that humanity actually does but to commit, unequivocally, to the universal capacities for morality that everyone possesses.

Furthermore, as Kant consistently maintains across his corpus, he emphasizes that here *there is no status of perfect happiness not only because happiness is concerned with hypothetical, not categorical imperatives* (see *Groundwork* AA IV: 418–419) and is *subjective* (See *Critique of Pure Reason* B 834; *Groundwork* AA IV: 418; *Critique of Practical Reason* AA V: 25, 28) and *capricious, but also because pain is necessary as a motivation to exercise our 'perfect' capacities* (see *Menschenkunde* AA XXV,2: 1075; Olms ed.: 256; and, especially, in the *Metaphysics of Morals* AA VI: 378, Kant emphasizes: "[W]hen eudaimonia (the happiness principle) is established as precept rather than *eleutheronomy* (the principle of freedom and its internal legislation), the consequence is the *euthanasia* of all morality." (parentheses from Kant!)

On the other hand, when it comes to ourselves, we should seek the elimination [...] of all false appearance in order to treasure ourselves according to true value. *Menschenkunde* AA XXV,2: 933; Olms ed.: 92) "The highest perfection in humanity is when it has itself under its own control so that nothing brings it to distraction because when impressions wipe out everything else [that is, awareness of one's moral capacity], humanity loses the Spirit of life [*Geist des Lebens*]." *Menschenkunde* AA XX, 2: 940; Olms ed.: 100 The very task of the philosopher is the encouragement of this form of perfection: "All metaphysicians, moralists, must therefore contribute to the enlightenment (*Aufklärung*) of the unilluminated ideas [see "On unilluminated reflections of which one is unaware" *Menschenkunde* AA XX, 2: 867–875; Olms ed.: 18–26] in people, because it depends on the concepts that people have with them." *Menschenkunde* AA XX, 2: 871; Olms ed.: 23–24 See, especially, Kant's distinguishing of the philosopher from the mere 'artists of reason' (who train their reason in view of "[...] particular purposes of use [... in order to] produce products of reason." The logician, mathematician, and physicist. *Menschenkunde* AA XX, 2: 1042–1043; Olms ed.: 217.

matic denial of infinite regress. The principle of sufficient reason claims that every effect must have a cause that has at least as much ‘reality’ as the effect. Otherwise, ‘something would come from nothing,’ which, were that to be the case, would mean there is no rational order, only ultimate chaos.

From Kant’s perspective, causes are only experienced through their effects.<sup>12</sup> *The claim to know* them ‘absolutely’ results only in dogmatic conclusions. The claim to know the ultimate cause of all ‘that is’ does not lead one to absolute certainty but only conjectures and to the determinism and or ultimate meaninglessness of all finitude – as devastating to nature and humanity as the religious predestination in traditional Christian Personal Theism.

According to Kant, autonomy is the exclusive condition required for anything like the assumption of moral responsibility for agency. Kant’s account of finite (that is, limited) theoretical reason, practical reason, and the creativity of aesthetic judgment did an end run around the absolute, causal explanations that are Intellectualism and Occasionalism.<sup>13</sup>

Yet the 19<sup>th</sup> C commences with a powerful anti-Kantian and anti-Enlightenment movement reflected in Hegel and the Hegelians, Schelling, Schleiermacher, and F.C. Baur; all of whom profoundly shaped Strauß’ understanding of Kant. They did their best to force Kant into the old wine skins – a strategy for *dealing with* Kant down to today. It is neither inappropriate nor a triviality to mention already here that none of these anti-Kantians directly address, much less provide reasons for, their dismissal of Kant’s notion of freedom as *autonomy*.<sup>14</sup> They simply assume that Kant means spontaneous, willful choice without any acknowledgement that, as a causal order,

---

12. Kant writes of efficient causality: “In all investigations of nature, reason rightly calls first for theory and only later for purpose. No teleology or practical expediency can make up for the lack of the former. We always remain ignorant of the causes at work, however plausible we may make the appropriateness of our presupposition to final causes, whether of nature or of our will. *On the Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy* AA VIII: 159. He adds explicitly that *a priori* synthetic judgments of causality are nothing that we invent, only deduce: “We can only trace the connection of certain present constitutions of natural things with their causes in earlier times according to laws of action, which we do not invent, but deduce from the forces of nature as it now presents itself to us, only as far back as analogy permits [...]” *On the Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy* AA VIII: 161–162. Thanks to Georg Geismann’s “Why Kant was not ‘Racist’ for calling these passages to my attention!

13. My ‘deep’ reading of Strauß’ *pre-figured* sources with respect to Kant demonstrates that Kant involves no collapse into ‘empty ideas,’ ‘subjectivism,’ and all-consuming self-interest, much less a call to escape sensualism, as claimed, for example by Hegel, Schelling, Carl Daub, and Schleiermacher.

14. They don’t address, again to my knowledge, even what one might want to take as Kant’s Achilles Heel: How does one reconcile God’s (the Noumenon’s) creative freedom as ultimate, eminent, causal origin of all that is with freedom as autonomy’s notion of finite, eminent, causality? Kant anticipated the issue: “[I] can still require the existence of another being [the Noumenon] in order to be able to be myself. This being can be the originator of my existence and continuation without at the same time becoming and being the originator of my actions. Therefore, one must carefully distinguish substance and accidents from cause and effect.” Kant *Vorlesungen über die philosophische Religionslehre* (Pöhlitz) AA PR: 198.

freedom as autonomy is as much governed by an imperceptible, ‘lawfulness’ (moral laws<sup>15</sup>) as nature is governed by an imperceptible, ‘lawfulness’ (physical laws), as Kant’s philosophy establishes. In short, they read Kant anachronistically. He *had to mean* by freedom what these anti-Kantians meant by freedom.

As important as I propose that his gospel criticism and grasp of the sweep of Christian doctrinal history has yet to be adequately appreciated, then, David Friedrich Strauß can be viewed as the neck of an hour glass through which the tangled threads that are theology and philosophy in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> C. eventually lead to reductionist materialism. Furthermore, Strauß’ gospel criticism as well as theological and metaphysical odyssey provide a rich framework for evaluating subsequent gospel criticism, theology, and metaphysics that includes 20<sup>th</sup> C post-metaphysics, Postmodernism, Deconstructionism, and unbridled pluralism.

Strauß’ 1872, *The Old and the New Faith* is a prescient description of this ‘new land’ of reductionist materialism. Nonetheless, even Strauß did not enter the promised land. His accounting for the emergence of the organic out of the inorganic on the basis of his insistence on an is/ought fallacy (in this case, on an *objective, causal* explanation of what can only be a *subjective, causal description of effects*, which is the ‘fact’ that the organic is inseparable from the inorganic) involves a dogmatic dictum (*Machtspruch*) analogous to Christian Personal Theism.

Having never actually engaged Kant’s radical alternative, which commences with, and always returns to the finite conditions of human, transcendental consciousness *in the world*, the Kantian alternative to Intellectualism (Platonism) and Occasionalism (both Supernaturalist Theism and Nominalism) remains only a possibility. An engagement of Strauß, then, provides an opportunity to retrieve the transformational power of Kant’s alternative to Personal Theism (*Occasionalism*), Absolute Idealism (Platonic *Intellectualism*), and mere Materialism (*Nominalism*) that is anchored in ‘pure’ (but not perfect) religion.

---

15. Kant distinguishes a ‘maxim’ from a ‘practical(moral) law’: “The principle (*Grundsatz*) that makes certain actions obligatory is a practical law. The rule of the agent, which s/he makes into a principle for subjective reasons, is called her/his maxim. Consequently, with the same laws, the maxims of the agent can be very different.” Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals* AA VI: 225 (CUP [6:225]).

