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with Hegel's text.

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Notes

1. Cited hereafter as 'PG'.
2. Soloxon is right to dissent from Lauer's view that 'there is no guaranteeing ... that the goal will be attained, but if it is not, the quest for knowledge has been futile' (p. 28).
3. See David Sedley, 'The Motivation of Greek Skepticism', in The Sceptical Tradition, ed. M. Burnyeat (California, 1983).
4. Jenear Schriften, 1801 - 1807, eds. E. Moldenhauer and K.M. Michel (Frankfurt am Main, 1970), pp. 213ff.
5. See Geisela Striker, 'Sceptical Strategies', in Doubt and Dogmatism, eds. M. Schofield, M. Burnyeat, and J. Barnes (Oxford, 1980).
6. Sextus Empiricus, Outlines of Pyrrhonism, I. 94-99. On the tropes, see G. Striker, 'The Ten Tropes of Aenesidemus', in The Sceptical Tradition.
7. See Edgar Wind, Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance (Oxford, 1980), pp. 192 ff.
8. In his Neues Organon (Leipzig, 1764).

Quentin Lauer, Hegel's Concept of God, Albany, SUNY Press, 1982, pp. 331, hardback £25.15, paperback £8.25.

Lauer belongs to the established, centrist tradition of Hegel interpretation, that is, he reads Hegel not through the eyes of Marx, Adorno or Habermas, nor through the eyes of older British Hegelians like McTaggart who emphasise Hegel's metaphysical monism, but rather he sees Hegel in the light of the onto-theological tradition of Western philosophy since Plato. Hegel's project is the attempt to make rational sense of being. It concludes with reason's recognition of the infinite God as the ultimate meaning of being, and reason's identification with infinite being as not other than itself.

Thus the title of Lauer's book is significant. It is not primarily a study of Hegel's philosophy of religion, that is, the varied manifestations of religious consciousness in world history - natural religion, the religion of beauty, absolute religion, and so on. Nor is it a historical study of Hegel's early theological writings. It is a study of Hegel's philosophy of God albeit that it may appear that Hegel's interpretation of the nature of this God differs from traditional Christian orthodoxy.

The book argues a specific thesis, already enunciated by Lauer in A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, that the whole of Hegel's philosophy is an extraordinarily unified and grandiose attempt to articulate this concept of God - a concept which, for Hegel, is the root of all intelligibility. There is of course nothing new here - Mure had already noted Hegel's 'Christian monotheism' in The Philosophy of Hegel (1965) and both Fackenheim in The Religious Dimension of Hegel's Thought (1967) and Reardon in Hegel's Philosophy of Religion (1977) insist on this principle of interpretation of Hegel's philosophy. The merit of Lauer's book is that it steadfastly follows the evolution and development of this understanding through the difficult terrain of Hegel's mature writings.

Contrary to Kaufmann, Findlay and Kojève, Lauer argues that Hegel should be read as he himself intended to be understood. Hegel's God is not some abstract impersonal spiritual force, or logicised infinite reason, but is the Christian God who enters into history, and who must be intelligible to human kind. Lauer situates Hegel in the context of the reaction to the Enlightenment critique of religion represented by Kant in his Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft (1793) and Fichte's Versuch einer Kritik aller Offenbarung (1792), which robs religion of its rational basis and reduces it to a system of morality expressed in the language of divine command. Hegel, however, is also in reaction against the Romantic rescue, attempted by Jacobi and Schleiermacher, of religious consciousness as a special feeling or non-rational capacity.

Hegel wants to reunite reason and religion, to see religious behaviour as not only meaningful but systematically justifiable in the context of the human search for ultimate self-understanding. Religion is human self-understanding, the recognition of human transcendence of finitude. That is not to say, as Feuerbach does, that religion is merely human self-interpretation, that is already to consider man in opposition to God. Lauer develops very skillfully both sides of the Hegelian dialectic: man's exercise of reason already places him on the side of the infinite, while God's inherent absolute meaningfulness already places him within the human domain. God and man come together in the exercise of self-understanding on the infinite absolute level. In a sense, though Lauer does not draw this conclusion, man and God are both only partial renderings of the work of free self-conscious self-knowing which, like the Heraclitian polemos, is the father and ruler of all things. 'God is the essence of the human', Hegel says.

Indeed Lauer takes issue with those interpreters of Hegel who see the Phenomenology of Spirit as implying that philosophy will supersede religion, or that religion may be neither ultimate nor essential to man's development. Lauer argues strongly, and I think convincingly, that Hegel believed the religious consciousness to be indispensable to human self-knowledge. It is essential to human self-consciousness that it be religious. He argues that Hegel is unhappy with the modern dissociated consciousness, which relegates religion to a defined segment in the development of human consciousness. Rather, revelation is essential to human reason, to set it on its way to recognising the divine. Without the impetus given by religious revelation, philosophy could not develop. I think this is putting the case too strongly, certainly it is at variance with the long tradition of Western rational theology which has allowed that

unaided reason can, albeit rarely and with great difficulty, come to know God. Lauer argues that Hegel privileges the moment of revelation, because revelation is God's self-knowing, his self-manifestation. It is essential to spirit that it manifest itself, reason therefore only comes to itself when it is revealed to itself.

Appealing though the symmetry of this position may be, especially in the manner in which the revealed (geoffenbarte) religion becomes manifest (offenbare), it makes precarious the radical contingency of the moment of revelation, making this accidental fact a necessary one. Of course theists who argue for the freely-given non-predetermined revelation may find they are in fact arguing the necessity of this contingency. And this is precisely Hegel's point. Thus Lauer quotes Hegel:

It belongs essentially to the concept of true religion, i.e. to that religion whose content is absolute Spirit, that the religion be revealed by God. For, because knowing, the principle whereby the substance is spirit, is an infinite form which is for itself the self-determining, the knowing is out and out manifestation. Spirit is spirit only in so far as it is for spirit, and in the absolute religion it is absolute Spirit who no longer manifests abstract moments of himself but manifests himself.

Thus Christianity poses the problem that God is self-revealing by nature and bound to exercise the necessity of his nature is his free act of self-expression. Two problems arise here for the committed believer: (1) the Creation, the Incarnation of God in man and his Revelation of God to man all become simply expressions of God's revelation of Himself to Himself, which seems to be pantheistic, and (2) God's self-knowledge seems to become tied to the necessity of His revealing Himself in the finite temporal order, which seems to be a limitation on his infinite substance.

On the question of pantheism Lauer argues, correctly in my view, that the concept is hardly intelligible and really means nothing as a critical term for assessing a philosophical position. Moreover, Lauer gives a very persuasive account of Hegel's view of the manner in which contingent things are necessary, which he sees involves the reconciling of contradiction in a manner which also lays the second problem, namely whether infinite being is necessarily limited to revealing itself in the finite order, to rest.

Lauer's long chapters on the concept (der Begriff) and the infinite (das Unendliche) detail the stages of the argument here. He concludes by examining Hegel's resuscitation of the proofs for the existence of God and the relationship between philosophy and theology in Hegel's conception.

Lauer departs from recent trends in Hegel scholarship in not paying any attention to the unpublished early theological writings, on

the grounds that Hegel himself did not want to publish them and should not therefore be held accountable for their content. Lauer doesn't believe they contradict his interpretation in any way - only that they tend to distract attention from the mature Hegel of the Berlin years.

Indeed Lauer announces that his reading of Hegel is largely influenced by Hegel's Lectures on the Philosophy of World History where the link between the formation of culture (Bildung) and the process of religious experience is explicitly and repeatedly stated. However, he also makes use of the Encyclopedia, the Science of Logic and the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. In particular Lauer likes to refer to the preface to the 3rd edition of the Encyclopedia (1830) where Hegel explicitly rejects the charges made against him by the more orthodox theologians of the day and states his belief that such posturing is impossible. Philosophy for Hegel never opposes or replaces religion, it is really a matter of thinking religion through to its rational essence. Religion is finally the thinking of absolute truth just as philosophy is.

Lauer's book is clearly written in an informal discussion style. This allows some questions to be raised which, although not followed up in the course of the analysis, do indicate the scope of Lauer's reflections on the problems. It is to be regretted, however, that Lauer stays so close to the language of Hegel which is seductive and yet often misleading. Moreover, the reader often gets the feeling that on the questions of Hegel's spirit meaning the Christian God, and of religion being essential to philosophy, Lauer doth protest too much. Alternative readings are possible on the basis of passages in Hegel which Lauer ignores or else re-interprets. For example in the Encyclopedia Logic Hegel warns that philosophy should not be overawed by religion, and many would read the stages of the Phenomenology as merely a blue-print of the stages on life's way rather than the inevitable steps all culture must take. However, Lauer's book is a very reliable and balanced guide through some of the more complex areas of Hegel's philosophy of God.

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Alan White, Absolute Knowledge: Hegel and the Problem of Metaphysics.  
Athens, Ohio / London, Ohio University Press, 1983, pp. xi, 188,  
hardback £18.40, paperback £9.60.

Absolute Knowledge - one of two studies in German Idealist philosophy that Alan White published in 1983<sup>1</sup> - is a vigorous defence of Hegel against the influential criticisms of his philosophy made by Schelling in the 1840s. White is not a Hegelian fundamentalist and he does not maintain that Hegel said everything of philosophical importance that can be said. But he does claim that philosophical, existential and political problems 'cannot be adequately approached by those not thoroughly experienced in Hegelian dialectical analysis'