A History of Philosophy
59 Hegel on Absolute Spirit
By Dr. Arthur Holmes of Wheaton College

We've come back to Hegel, and I'd like today to round out our discussion of Hegel and perhaps move to some of the things that immediately followed because of the way he was construed. But the conversation just now before class leads me to point to two different interpretations of Hegel, which I think have a bearing on how easy it is to understand him. There was, for a number of years, I think, in the English-speaking world, an interpretation which tried to see him virtually as an 18th-century Enlightenment rationalist trying to work out deductively a speculative metaphysics.

In other words, trying to do in his way what people like Descartes or Leibniz tried to do in their way. That is to say, he was a speculative metaphysician. However, with the growing influence in the 20th century of phenomenology in Europe, an alternative interpretation has developed, which I think is much more in keeping with Hegel himself, from whom phenomenology developed, and which I've been trying to suggest to you as we've been going along.

Namely, that we have to take the title of his major work, The Phenomenology of Mind, seriously. So that he's not trying to prove something or develop a well-argued rationalistic system. When he says that the real is rational and the rational is real, he's not using that as a lever for another speculative metaphysic.

But rather than taking the sense of phenomenology seriously as that has become understood in the 20th century, he's trying to describe, you see, the phenomenon, the consciousness of being. At the individual consciousness level, that is your, my consciousness of being. At perhaps the societal level, a nation's consciousness of its being.

And in the case of the absolute, the all-inclusive, the absolute's consciousness of its being. Now I think it's that latter phrase which may be difficult. Your own consciousness of being, that's not so difficult.

And of course, that's where the emphasis in 20th-century phenomenology has been. That's what Jean-Paul Sartre is about, the existentialists. But what Hegel is after is describing the universal phenomenon of the self's own self-consciousness, consciousness of being, as that unfolds.

As, for instance, in something like the master-servant relationship, in interpersonal relationships. And in that meandering through the situation of the stoic, the sceptic, the unhappy consciousness, and so forth. Movements of reflection like that in one's own conscious being.

And in talking of objective spirit, he's talking of the way in which national self-consciousness arises in the light of the concept of law and constitutional government. National identity begins to emerge, you see. Well, and when he gets to the absolute spirit, the section for today, then you get to the third phrase.

You see, the absolute's consciousness of being. Now, the closest you can get to that in the theological language of Judaism or Christianity would be to talk of God's own knowledge. And from Augustine and Thomas Aquinas onwards, theologians have indeed talked of the knowledge of God, not just in our sense of our knowing God, but in God's sense of God's knowing.

And God's knowing himself. God's self-knowledge. Now, inasmuch as Hegel is a process metaphysician, you see, he's thinking of God's self-knowledge, not of God as evolving, but of God's self-knowledge as being objectified in the world He's creating, you see, in the course of the unfolding history of the universe.

And he sees God's self-knowledge as unfolding in our self-knowledge, first of all, subjective spirit, you see. And in a moment, when we'll get to talking about his religion and his theology, we'll find him saying that our self-consciousness is really God's self-consciousness. God is conscious of himself through our self-consciousness, you see.

Because if God is the all-inclusive being, then my consciousness is a finite moment of God's consciousness. And my self-consciousness is a finite moment of God's self-consciousness. So God's own knowledge of himself is a knowledge of himself in and through our knowledge of ourselves, our self-consciousness, our conscious being.

You see. But then God's self-consciousness is objectified in, shall we say, his thinking of the world of nature, which he has created, you see. And certainly in the medieval tradition, if all of nature in some way was imaging the manifold perfection of the deity, if we contemplating nature are drawn to contemplate the perfection of God, then certainly God, in contemplating his handiwork, is contemplating himself.

You see. But the fullest expression, development, manifestation of God's self-knowledge, knowledge of his being, is when the form of thought, logic, is synthesized with the stuff of nature, you see. By virtue of the imaginative creativity of the subjective spirit, as one part of the consciousness of being of a national spirit, you get him talking of the art of different cultures, the religion of different cultures, and the philosophy of different nations, you see.

When the subjectivity, the creativity, imagination of the individual spirit, in the context of that national consciousness of its being, produces art, religion, and philosophy. These creative expressions are not only creative expressions of the

human spirit, since the human spirit is a moment of the divine. Creative expression of the divine spirit, you see.

So there's some phenomenology describing the consciousness of being, you see, a phenomenology, a phenomenology of the consciousness of being, gets to describing that as it comes out most fully of all in these manifestations of absolute spirit. If God's self-consciousness is in and through our self-consciousness, and God's creativity is exercised in and through our creativity, then the divine consciousness of its own being is, in the world of art, another creative expression of the human spirit. Now I think if you read Hegel with that sort of thing in mind, he's doing a phenomenological description, describing the phenomena.

Doing a phenomenological description. Of the growing consciousness of being. Don't look for him to prove things in the old fashion.

Don't look at this as a speculative system with no grounding in observation. It's an introspective observation or a historical observation. All the way along.

And inasmuch as history is the activity of the divine spirit, his discussion of art, religion, and philosophy is historical. You see. Because it's in the history of these creative expressions that the movement of the absolute becomes most evident.

Okay, does that come through clearly? It does to me, but I'm wondering, does it to you? Okay. I said every other day we've been talking about Hegel. But sometimes saying it in different ways helps.

Cale? Does God have any self-consciousness aside from us? Apart from us? Does God have self-consciousness apart from us? I don't know what Hegel would say there. Because his emphasis in the phenomenology is so much in terms of his self-consciousness in and through us. And this may depend on how you read his theology.

He purports, you see, he thinks of himself as a Lutheran Christian. He explicitly, however, rejects ex nihilo creation. And that part is important.

You see, that's what makes him a panentheist. Everything is in God. But if he's a panentheist and not a pantheist, you might well be asking, Cale, well, if everything is in God but God is more than everything, does he have any leftover self-consciousness that's not our self-consciousness, individually or collectively? You see.

Or does the creation, as it were, exhaust the consciousness of the divine being? Well, it certainly seems to me he ought to say the latter. Yet I don't think he does. And it may be that his response to the leftover question would be, well, history isn't finished yet.

So, at any stage in history, there is still more self-consciousness that God is going to have. Now that's an odd way to put it, God is going to have more self-consciousness. But the point is that if consciousness is a process, if he agrees with Kant that time is the form of consciousness, then there is, as long as there is a divine being and divine consciousness, there is more consciousness going on in history.

But is that always divine consciousness in and through the creation? And I don't find him saying it's not. But I don't want to prejudge it. The only other comment I can make, I think, is this, that if we are to know anything about the divine consciousness, it can only be through the creation.

And if it can only be through the creation, then what is the remainder of consciousness left over, which we have no way of knowing? Which I think follows. Look a little more closely here.

The thesis-antithesis-synthesis triad in the historical unfolding of the absolute spirit is in art, religion, and philosophy. And the initially interesting thing is to see how he differentiates those three. Some of you in literature or art may have found yourself asking, now, what is the difference between what literature is doing and what philosophy is doing when literary people get sort of philosophical? And Hegel would say it's the way in which expression finds articulation.

The arts are using images, artistic images. Sure, and to this day, you hear people in literature talking of the images that he used as a writer. You hear Joel Sheasley over in the art department in painting talking of images.

He recently had a show in Chicago that we went to see, one of the galleries in the River North area. And all sorts of images of suburbia that seem to be truncated and chopped off. And if you know Joel Sheasley, you know what he was trying to convey by those visual images.

Namely, the incompleteness, the paucity of life in suburbia, which is less than the whole story. His last show was a series of paintings about poverty in Latin America. Get the two in contrast.

You can see what he's doing. But by the use of visual images. And the poet will use verbal images.

Words are worth so many daffodils. Wandering lonely as a cloud that floats on a higher hill and vale. Images in talking about the romanticist vision of life.

And so, that's the nature of art. The German term Bild. Image.

Now, obviously, the term image is cognate of imagination. What is the distinctive activity of the artist? Not so much craft in applying the pigments.

As imagination in coming up with the images. Thinking imaginatively, that is to say, in images. And that, of course, is the romanticist view of art.

The expression of the human spirit. Imagine in imagination. And accordingly, as he traces out the unfolding of the history of art.

You find that sort of thing given expression. He moves from, for instance, Egyptian art. Which was more religious and symbolic.

Classical art has more emphasis on rational harmony and order. To romantic art, which overflows the order in its imaginative expression. There's an unfolding of it as art finds its own self-understanding.

Conscious being. And then religion, which speaks symbolically. For Stellum, a representation.

It was Kant's word for a representation. But the representation is not the reality. The representation is the idea that stands for the reality.

And the way Hegel uses it, the term symbol becomes significant. Symbolic representation, pictorial representation. And so religious language is the language of a symbolic story.

Not necessarily a parable. Historical story. Myth and so forth.

The term myth does not judge the question of whether it is historical or not. Mythos is a story that has religious meaning. So the religious form of expression then is this pictorial representation.

Symbol and so forth. And so he understands religion in those ways. Symbolic representation.

And he traces the history of religious expression from Oriental religion, which was largely pantheist, everything is one. In Greek religion, which is polytheistic, there's the antithesis. There are many deities, finite deities.

To the Christian religion, which is Trinitarian. Three in one and one in three. Combining the infinity of God with the finite expression of the deity.

Infinite spirit incarnate in all of history. That's what the incarnation means. The story of the incarnation is a symbol of the way in which God is imminent in everything that happens in history.

The story is a picture of that. So he regards Trinitarian Christianity as the highest expression of religion. Christian theology as its symbols are appropriate.

But notice that the question of historical truth is the leftover question there. But then it is in philosophy that you find the pure concept as the form of expression. The philosopher, in his analysis of concepts, tries to avoid metaphor, imagery, and story and to conceptualize with clear and distinct thought.

That's the function of philosophy, dealing with the begriff, the concept of being. Not picture stories about, not images of, but conceptualizing in a non-sensory way. So you get these three forms then of expression of the consciousness of being.

But keep in mind that while it may be the individual's self-expression at one level, more ultimately it's all the expression of the divine consciousness coming out through the individual in the cultural setting. Well, what you see then in Hegel's view of religion comes through fairly clearly. First of all, he has an immanentistic kind of theology.

That is to say, God is imminent in everything else. The transcendence of God is in traditional Judeo-Christian thought. The transcendence of God is numerical distinctness from the creation.

That is lost. God is imminent. And consequently, any notion of supernatural act is regarded as a religious symbol, a picture, rather than as historically true.

There is no act of divine revelation because everything that goes on within the human spirit is God's self-manifestation. All understanding is subsumed within that inner self-expression. This is related to the concept of the death of God, a phrase that he uses and later writers pick up.

That is to say, the death of the picture of a transcendent deity. That's a concept of God which dies in the unfolding history of religious thought. Secondly, you have his criticism of certain other views of religion.

So let's call this his criticism of Schleiermacher in his immediate context and Kant on matters of religion. Kant, of course, had tended to reduce religion to ethics, and Schleiermacher criticized him for that. But Schleiermacher tended to define religion in terms of a feeling of dependence on the all-encompassing absolute.

To which Hegel responds, if the feeling of dependence were the core of religion, then the most religious of all creatures is the dog. Even Hegel had something of a sense of humor. His point is that obviously, there is something phenomenologically awry in that description of religion.

Above feelings of dependence, you have the imagination involved in the arts. You have the symbolizing activity involved in religious stories. God is a son.

God begat. God makes. He creates.

He's the creator. You see, the symbolism of religion is going significantly beyond the mighty acts of God in history. But the point is then that the Schleiermacherian view of religion is far too limited.

And it misses the fact that the religious symbols can and are, in philosophy and in theology, translated into concepts. So that philosophy is trying to conceptualize what religion symbolizes. Which is why the history of philosophy finds its culmination in a Hegelian kind of idealism with a panentheistic being.

Because this is the truest conceptualization of what religion has been symbolizing. So his theological thinking then comes out that way, emphasizing symbolism and its philosophical conceptualization. In other words, symbols that are in their root meaning are rational concepts.

Rational concepts. And it's this which appeals to him about the Christian religion. Is that the one and the many come together, and in that rational concept, you find the pinnacle of early Greek thought, moving beyond atomism and monism to many in one and one in three.

So, okay, Hegel then on religion. Now, questions? Comments? Yeah, Troy. It seems like Hegel's panentheism more closely resembles pantheism.

There's a history, though, of Christian theologians or people writing at least matters of theology who are somewhat panentheistic. That was true of a certain amount of the Christian Platonism that developed historically. You remember the question in the discussion of Plato: Is he a dualist or an idealist? Now, if he's an idealist, matter is simply non-being, has no existence.

So that physical particulars are simply manifestations of form with physical qualities, but not with a material substratum. Now, by the time you translate that into Neo-Platonism, those manifestations of form are emanations from the one. And you've got panentheism.

Now, when you get to some of the Cambridge Platonists in the 17th century, late Renaissance, you find that some of them are not just Christian Platonists, but talk explicitly of emanation. You see, are idealists in that Neo-Platonic sense. Influenced by them, I believe, is John Milton, whose work on Christian theology talks of emanation rather than ex nihilo creation.

Curiously. And yet, of course, we think of Milton in his Paradise Lost as the epitome of somebody dealing with Orthodox theology. Well, Hegel's influence in the 19th century is such that there was quite a bit of Christian Hegelianism, Christian idealism, and I'll be commenting on that in a little while, which also tended to be panentheistic.

I think it's a fair generalization that when Christianity, Christian theology, combines with idealist metaphysics of a monistic sort, rather than pluralistic as with Berkeley, that you've got panentheism as a result. So in that sense, are you going to call his theology Christian or panentheistic? Well, I mentioned to you last week that our old colleague, Stu Hackett, is going to be doing a Kant seminar this time next year. I remember one time when we were discussing this, and he said, Well, it seems that there are others who can be reduced logically to theists, but in itself it's an unstable position.

So, you know, what's the response to your question? Maybe yes and no. Hegel thought of himself as a Christian theologian. My guess is he would have difficulty taking the Chalcedonian formulation of the Doctrine of the Trinity in its intended form seriously.

Yeah, Spinoza seems to be clearly a pantheist. Yet it's plain that these German idealists have a high respect for Spinoza. You find them referring to him.

But at the same time, they try to detach themselves from his pantheism. What conceptually, theoretically, is the difference? And I think the answer is that Spinoza has a static universe and a static deity. Consequently, there is no room for Kehl's more to God than there is to the cosmos.

Nature or God, coextensive. In the case of Hegel, by virtue of process, there is always more to God than there is at any stage in the history of the cosmos. You see, so pantheism comes through.

Some degree of initiative, transcendence, and freedom is ascribed to God, particularly freedom in the creative spirit sense. Whereas the notion of freedom is not exactly a popular term in Spinoza. Some of the things, especially a statement like our self-consciousness is really God's self-consciousness.

He said the statement reminded me a lot of the mysticism, the tradition of the mystics. Yeah, yeah. And I'm wondering if that's kind of a far-out.

Yeah, you see, I think that the mystics of the Middle Ages were, not all of them, but I think it's fair to say most of them, Neoplatonists. Christian Neoplatonists. Or Jewish Neoplatonists, as the case may be.

Islamic in some sense. And consequently, their expression of religious devotion talked of reunion with the divine. You see, not just contemplation of God, as Aquinas would put it, but some sort of mystic oneness with the divine.

There's similarity, yes, between the two for that reason. The Platonic, the monistic idealist roots. Karl? Well, he'd say any story of divine intervention is symbolic.

Now, the question is, what within the conceptual scheme is it symbolic of? You see. So, if you regard the incarnation as an intervention, or some miraculous deed as an intervention, the exodus from Egypt as an intervention, you see. Now, notice how those stories have tremendous symbolism.

I mean, you read what the psalmists say about the exodus. You see, it's a story with a great deal of symbolic significance for their faith. And think of what Christian hymnody says about the incarnation or the crucifixion.

The question is, what is it symbolic of? One thing you're seeing here, Karl, is the way in which a division between history and faith is developing. You see, the thing that's significant for faith is the symbol. You see, the symbols are an expression of faith.

Rather than the history that is the foundation of faith, to which the faith looks back. So that the historicity of the story is not important. Now, when we get to Kierkegaard, we'll find that Kierkegaard is very conscious of this.

We find reference to what's known as Lessing's ditch. The German Lessing had pointed out that there is a logical gap, a ditch, between a historical statement and a statement about faith. Jesus Christ died.

He died for our sins. How do you get from the one to the other? He rose from the dead. He rose for our justification.

How do you get from one to the other? You see, and this became one of the dominant issues in the tensions and conflicts between liberal and traditional theology in the late 19th and the first half of the 20th century. Still is. Crucial.

The inerrancy business is simply an attempt, to my mind, to reinforce emphasis on the historicity of the story. That's why it's significant. But, no, that's crucial.

Very crucial. In fact, one of our graduates, Steve Evans, used to teach here, who last year got one of these big Pew Foundation grants that Bob Roberts has coming up, one of these $100,000 grants, which is giving him a three-year research project on this problem, history, and faith. So it's still a major issue.

Um. In the scheme of art, religion, and philosophy, is a hierarchy built? Is this, say, like art and religion and philosophy? Well, no. You see, what's the relationship between thesis, antithesis, and synthesis? You see, it's not exactly a hierarchy.

It's not a case of a serial business where the second replaces the first and the third replaces the second. No. The relationship between thesis and antithesis is that in the dialectic, the thesis logically entails an antithesis.

And the thesis and antithesis together produce the synthesis, which both preserves and cancels out what's gone before. And if you want to see that more closely, see it in a normal process of growth. You see.

Where the child, thesis, is negated by the adult, antithesis, you see, and the two come together in a later stage. What should we say? Senior citizen. Yeah.

I didn't say second childhood. Senior citizen. Or use a botanical example.

I saw crocuses up at lunchtime in my front yard. Or are they croci? I think it's a Latin plural. Croci.

Thesis, the bulb, seemingly dead in the dirt. The antithesis, a little shoot, producing bloom. But soon the synthesis is coming.

They'll die off in a couple of weeks. And that synthesis will become the thesis for a new antithesis next year. Out of one grows the other.

It's an organic model. The first crocuses, they always look the best of the year. Scrawny little things.

Okay, anything else there? David? What's the antithesis to his philosophy? Oh, well, there he traces the history of philosophy from Greek thought on through medieval thought, Enlightenment thought, and the grand synthesis of Hegelian philosophy. German philosophy of his day. Now, will there be an antithesis to that? I remember we were talking about that the other day.

No, once you get the complete synthesis, the full concept of being, all you're doing now is fleshing it out in detail. That is to say, the little dialectical movements within

the synthesis. So the rest of the history of philosophy is going to be a series of footnotes to Hegel.

Is the synthesis then sort of a hierarchy? Is it supposed to be like this? You see, the thing is that if you map it out completely historically, what you have is a history of art parallel to a history of religion parallel to a history of philosophy. Art, religion, philosophy. You see.

And you can find similarities throughout. You know my story, just turn that around on the side, and you've got it. So that you've got Greek art, Greek religion, Greek philosophy, and there are these parallels.

So you can trace the thesis, antithesis, synthesis across that way. But you can also trace it historically this way. Whichever way you look, you can see dialectics.

The reason I'm saying it seems to me that perhaps religion is the synthesis of art and philosophy. Yeah, that's obviously what a religious believer is inclined to ask for. But notice that he's not saying theology is the antithesis.

Religion is the antithesis. Now there's a difference between religious language, that is to say, the language of worship, the language of piety. And theological language, which seeks to conceptualise with precision.

You get the difference? Take, for instance, the language of hymnody. Oh, safe to the rock that is higher than I. Rock. And you're getting pictures in there.

They're often picked up by preachers with stories of people who've hidden a creft of a rock during a big storm. You see. A rock that is higher.

Spatial. Now that's not quite exact. No, because the language of piety is often artistic language with imagery.

It's the language of narrative. Whereas the language of theology is that of a conceptual scheme. A conceptual scheme interpreting the theological significance of the narrative.

You see, get the difference between religious language and theological language. The difference, if you like, between the language of the Chalcedonian formula and the language of the preaching in the Book of Acts. You see.

God who sent his Son, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. That's the preaching of the Book of Acts. You see, whereas the language of Chalcedon is rather careful, and I said Chalcedon rather than Nicaea, is a rather careful conceptualisation of the three persons of the Trinity.

You see. Now there are echoes of the story in it, much more so in Nicaea. And of course, the Apostles' Creed is still the story of religion, of the religious story, the Apostles' Creed.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, story. Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord, born of the Virgin Mary, story. Crucified under Pontius Pilate.

Crucified, dead, and buried, on the third day he rose again from the dead. From whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead. Story, story, story.

But what he's working with is this distinction between the language of religious piety, which is very close to the language of artistry, image. You see. But the images that become symbols now.

But what he wants is to get the concept. So it could be that within what he calls philosophy, you have to talk of theological conceptualisation as well. Theological conceptualisation.

Now is that the grand synthesis? Theological conceptualisation. Then you have to raise questions about the whole assumption. Is the term grand synthesis really significant if you don't believe in this unfolding of the divine consciousness in the course of history? No, that's another thing.

That's another thing. But it does seem to me that there is sort of a dialectic that goes on between religious and theological expression. You see, the theologian works for the conceptualisation.

Then he steps back into his worship and sings the hymns with all of the imagery and symbolism of popular religion. Yeah. And listen to the theologian pray.

You see, his prayers will often include the religious as distinct from the conceptualisation. And I think that that's inevitable if you conceive of the Christian religion as having to do with personal relationships. Because the way you talk about relationships and persons is in terms of story, not just conceptualisation.

So I'm inclined to think that there is a story dimension that's necessary in talking of a personal God and a relationship to a personal God. Particularly when he's known because of the way in which he has acted. You can't avoid this stuff.

Okay, now let's move for a few moments, if we might, to get this glimpse of what comes after Hegel. The transition. Well, there are two ways of talking about the immediate influence of Hegel.

One is in terms of the left and right wings of religion. Where the left wing lays emphasis on the evolution of religion, the history of religion, and the symbolic nature of religion. And that left wing, as you might gather from the name, really spurs the development of liberal theology.

You'll notice that Stumpf, on page 430, refers to two individuals, David Strauss and Bruno Bauer, two German biblical scholars. Strauss wrote A Life of Jesus, who was very much in this tradition. Their emphasis on identifying God with the human spirit so that our beliefs in God are a projection of our self-consciousness.

And after all, if Hegel tells us that our consciousness of God is God's self-consciousness in and through us, then somebody's going to turn around and say, then we can think of God in terms of our own self-consciousness. And the self-consciousness, notice this picture again, the self-consciousness becomes the lens for thinking about God. Now that move becomes explicit in the work of Ludwig Feuerbach, who is one of the people I've asked you to read some selections from for this week.

Very vivid. Feuerbach is one of the primary influences in shaping the thinking of Karl Marx. That is to say, Feuerbach was a materialist.

A materialist who combined Hegel's dialectic of self-consciousness with a materialistic interpretation of history. And Marxism picks up from that and takes it further. So that you have some selections from Feuerbach in which he says, and get this, man's God-consciousness.

Now Hegel said that man's God-consciousness is the self-consciousness of God. Feuerbach says man's God-consciousness is the self-consciousness of man. And man's God-consciousness is the self-consciousness of man.

And so the idea of God, the concept of God, is something that we project as an extension of our own self-consciousness. And we ascribe to God attributes that are symbolic of what we see ourselves to be. So that theology really becomes simply a veiled exercise in psychology and anthropology.

Simply that. The essence of religion is the relationship of man to man. And that in Feuerbach is one of the main sources for religious humanism as that developed in the 19th and on into the early 20th century.

That is to say, a humanistic religion such as you often find in the Unity Church. Where religion is reduced indeed to the pursuit of human ideals. Now, the statement of this sort of thing in Feuerbach is very explicit.

Listen to this, and I'm reading from 239 in the anthology. Religion, at least the Christian, is the relation of man to himself, to his own nature. The divine thing is nothing other than the human being.

The human being is freed from the limits of the individual and made objective. Contemplated and revered as another distinct being. All the attributes of divine nature are therefore attributes of human nature.

And let's see. Only when we abandon theology, this is 250. Only when we abandon theology distinct from psychology and anthropology.

And recognize anthropology as itself theology. Do we attain a true self-satisfying identity of the divine and the human being? The identity of the human being with itself.

So read, give Feuerbach a quick reading. It's taken from his work on the essence of Christianity. Tremendously influential work at that stage in history.

And one which underlies the development of religion within a naturalistic philosophy in the 20th century. Religion within a naturalistic philosophy. Now, when Karl Marx says that religion is the opiate of the masses, what he's doing is drawing on what Feuerbach says.

He's drawing on the notion that religion is a form of sublimation of our own ideals, desires for ourselves. That we project into a hypothetical mythical being. So religious symbolism then cannot be translated into language about God.

It's simply language about the human condition and human need. And the place to address human need is not in religion, but in the story of Marxism. So that is the left wing of Hegelian religious thought.

The right wing, as you might expect again from the label, is essentially more orthodox in theological terms, retaining Hegel's idealism and his panentheism, but retaining a fairly traditional view of Christianity. And we'll see more of that in some of the later idealists. Then there is a further distinction that's drawn between the old and the young Hegelians.

Where the old Hegelians are more conservative in their interpretation, they agree that Hegel brought philosophy to its finest hour. Nineteenth century evolutionary idealism, you see. That Hegelian philosophy is probably the system to end all systems.

And so there was an extensive neo-Hegelian movement. Throughout Europe, certainly, in Britain, it took over Oxford. In this country, it was particularly centered in St. Louis and became known as the St. Louis School.

And we'll have reason to refer to that later on. Next time, in fact. That is against the young Hegelians.

Who wanted to leave to Hegel the theoretical, philosophical conceptualization, the system building, the theoretical work, and turn to the kind of action that is implicit within Hegel's thinking. That is to say, they wanted to turn more to praxis, to use the term that's current nowadays, to turn to the praxis implicit in Hegelian thinking. Where the aim is not to contemplate the world, but to change it.

Not to contemplate the world, but to change it. That is to say, to be an agent in the dialectical movement of history. And as you can anticipate, Marx and Engels were some of these young Hegelians.

So what you get then is the emergence of Marxist philosophy in the 1840s. Marxist philosophy, which is known as dialectical materialism. Now you see, the materialism comes from Feuerbach, who, to use his favorite phrase, turned Hegel on his head.

Turned Hegel on his head, Feuerbach did. How? By saying that our God-consciousness is not God's God-consciousness, but our own self-consciousness. So what you get is Feuerbach's materialism and Hegel's logic, Hegel's dialectic.

So you've got a dialectical materialism that is also known as, and this is an important emphasis, as historical materialism. And notice carefully what that means. It does not mean materialism as it has been throughout history.

The Marxist is not thinking of going back to an earlier philosophy at an earlier stage in history. No. Historical materialism is a materialist interpretation of history.

A materialist interpretation of history. You see, history is the sphere of praxis, of action. And so you want a materialist interpretation of history so that you can tap into the action of history, the praxis.

And the materialistic interpretation of history, of course, is one that is given in terms of the dialectic. That's why you call it dialectical materialism. The dialectic is a thesis, antithesis, synthesis movement of history.

But, you see, it is the material conditions of history which are the driving force. Not an absolute spirit. So instead of history being a manifestation of absolute spirit, as it is for an idealist interpretation of history, where you can say, concepts make history.

In a materialist interpretation of history, it's the material conditions that make history. Meaning what? The forces and means of production. That is to say, the economic conditions that make history.

And so you get an economic determinism, a class struggle that is the dynamic force in history. It's a change in history, class struggle, thesis, and antithesis. And this is the way in which Marxism developed.

Does that make a connection for you? Okay, next time we'll pick up on the 19th-century idealists other than Hegel. And I'll give you a grocery list of about 50.