Hegel, Nietzsche, and the Postmodern Teleological Impasse

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Our postmodern intellectual climate is characterized by two apparently contradictory impulses. One seeks to undermine, unmask, and deflate the pretenses of philosophy as traditionally conceived. The result is a focus on difference, surfaces, and fragmentation. The competing impulse seeks to reconcile, integrate, and synthesize. The result is a holistic focus on deeper similarities behind surface differences. I argue that these competing impulses can be traced back to Hegel and Nietzsche. Thus, an understanding of the relationship between these two thinkers can illuminate our current postmodern condition. I argue that Nietzsche and Hegel are remarkably similar in their approach to many philosophical problems. Their main disagreement concerns teleology. No thinker in history more completely embraces teleology than Hegel, and no thinker in history more thoroughly denounces it than Nietzsche. This divide remains with us in the form of the apparently contradictory impulses that characterize postmodernity. After briefly examining the western genesis of teleological thinking in the thought of Aristotle I examine Hegel’s affirmation and Nietzsche’s rejection of teleology. I argue that both Hegel’s radical affirmation and Nietzsche’s radical rejection are inappropriate and ultimately the result of a model of speculative metaphysical theorizing that should be rejected. I present Ken Wilber’s system as an alternative. His system, I argue, avoids the problems that plague both approaches and the warring impulses that spring from them. In this way his thought represents an overcoming of the postmodern teleological impasse.
Dedicated to Mary Riney
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Is there a deep structure? This is certainly one of the most basic philosophical questions and it is the traditional rationale of that branch of metaphysics known as ontology. A related question is the following: Do events in the world fit into some intelligible pattern and thus express some deeper purpose?¹ This question can be thought of as a temporalization of the first and it is the traditional rationale for teleology. There have always been two answers to this set of questions. One group argues that there is a deep structure and thus events in the world are an expression of an underlying purpose or goal. This group usually adds that human beings have access to this deep structure in one way or another. The second group argues that there is no ultimate reason for the way the world is. Thus, the unfolding of events in the world is in a deep sense unintelligible. Any apparent intelligibility is a mere human projection among many possible others. The aim of this investigation is to trace the lineage of these competing answers over the last two centuries with the aim of illuminating the relationship between these questions at the present time. According to intellectual historian Richard Tarnas our contemporary intellectual situation exemplifies “two antithetical impulses . . . one pressing for a radical deconstruction and unmasking – of knowledge, beliefs, world views – and the other for a

¹ Throughout I will be concerned with deep purpose as opposed to what might be called surface purpose. While few would disagree that this or that process can be described as purposeful, the question here is whether existence itself is purposeful. This deep structure is the traditional subject matter of metaphysics and the foundation of the world’s great wisdom traditions.
radical integration and reconciliation." It is within this intellectual climate that this set of questions, which I will refer to simply as the question of purpose, is being engaged and it is because this climate exemplifies two antithetical impulses that this question remains open. A negative answer at this time in history is often motivated by the first impulse and this impulse has been by far the predominat impulse of twentieth century thought. However, the second impulse has, I argue, gained momentum in the later part of the twentieth century thus reopening the question. A full understanding of the current question of purpose will involve the construction of a kind of developmental history of Tarnas' "antithetical impulses" of which the positive and negative answers are an expression. These impulses, I will argue, can be traced back to two philosophical giants of the nineteenth century. The negative impulse can be traced back to Nietzsche. The positive I argue can be traced back to Hegel. Those tracing their lineage back to Nietzsche I will call "the unmasking camp" and those tracing their lineage back to Hegel I will call "the integrative camp". Thus, this thesis is about this watershed relationship between Hegel and Nietzsche regarding purpose. Much has been written about the relationship between these two thinkers, especially in recent years, reflecting the growing recognition of the importance of understanding this relationship for understanding our own times.

The first full-length book written explicitly about this relationship appeared in 1986. In this book entitled Hegel, Nietzsche and the Critique of Metaphysics, Stephen Houlgate points out that despite the fact that much has been written about Hegel and Nietzsche, the task of imposing conceptual order on this body of work is difficult:

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Summarizing the work of previous commentators who have compared Hegel and Nietzsche is made difficult by the fact that no single theme or approach has guided their research. The reason for this is, however, clear. Both Hegel and Nietzsche are extremely wide ranging thinkers who have turned their philosophical attention, amongst other things, to religion, art, history, ethics, metaphysics, and language. Furthermore, the notorious complexity of their thought, sometimes exaggerated and sometimes disguised by the philosophical and political prejudices of their commentators, has given rise to many varied and often contradictory interpretations, by no means all of which can be supported by the texts. As a consequence, therefore, discussion of the relationship between Hegel and Nietzsche has taken on radically different forms.

Houlgate’s own approach is to divide the literature into three broad categories: 1) those commentators who favor Nietzsche over Hegel (R.J. Hollingdale, G. Deleuze), 2) those commentators who stress similarities between the two thinkers (W. Schulz, K. Brose, R. L. Zimmerman, W. Kaufmann), and 3) those who favor Hegel over Nietzsche (R. F. Beerling, S. Rosen, M. Green, and W. Seeberger). Houlgate locates himself in this third group. His book is an extended argument for the superiority of Hegel’s metaphysical system as opposed to Nietzsche’s. However, what is most important for my purposes is the starting point of Houlgate’s analysis. He argues that the main topic with which any comparative study of Hegel and Nietzsche should be concerned is their common rejection of dualism:

This parallel, it seems to me, is the main topic with which the comparative study of Hegel and Nietzsche should be concerned. . . . Other topics, such as ‘history’, the importance of science’ or ‘freedom of the will’, could also yield interesting results; but for us to reach a proper understanding of the ways in which Hegel and Nietzsche treat such topics, they would have to be studied in the light of the philosophers criticisms of dualism.

It seems right that the agreement shared by Hegel and Nietzsche here is important. In fact, widespread agreement on monism is what I argue distinguishes the postmodern

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4 ibid., 16.
teleological impasse from earlier philosophical battles over the idea of purpose. My study of Hegel and Nietzsche assumes that this agreement is correct and focuses on their disagreement over the status of teleology.

The second book dealing with these two thinkers, Francis Fukuyama’s *The End of History and the Last Man*, appeared in 1992 and can also be placed into Houlgate’s third group. Unlike Houlgate’s book which dealt with metaphysics, this book deals with social and political theory. Because of the horrible events of the twentieth century the vast majority of its intellectuals had abandoned the Hegelian view that history exemplifies cosmic purpose. However, the end of the Cold War and the increasing proliferation of democracy around the globe have led some like Fukuyama to embrace a revised Hegelian view of history. As is evident by the title, Fukuyama believes that the biggest obstacle to overcome in making this argument is not Marx but Nietzsche.⁵

In 1998 two books about the relationship between Hegel and Nietzsche appeared, both of which could be placed in Houlgate’s first group. Yirmiyahu Yovel’s book *Dark Riddle: Hegel, Nietzsche, and the Jews* examines the representation of Judaism in the thought of Hegel and Nietzsche. Hegel’s view of Judaism as a pre-Christian stage in the development of history, denied Jews contemporary historical relevance as Jews. Nietzsche’s championing of Jewish strength stands in sharp contrast. Thus, Yovel shows how a philosophy of reason can coexist with a negative view of Judaism and how a philosophy of power need not necessarily be anti-Semitic.⁶

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In his book *Metaphysics to Metafictions: Hegel, Nietzsche, and the End of Philosophy* Paul Miklowitz argues that Nietzsche responds to the metaphysics of Hegel by addressing the same problems in a self consciously non-metaphysical way through narrative thus undermining all claims to universality. Therefore, the movement from Hegel to Nietzsche is the movement from metaphysics which gives us the end (*telos*) of philosophy to metafictions which gives us the end (destruction) of philosophy.\(^7\)

The most recent book appeared in 2000 and is entitled *Beyond Hegel and Nietzsche: Philosophy, Culture and Agency* by Elliot Jurist and should probably be placed in Houlgate’s second category. He argues that in the Continental tradition at least, Hegel and Nietzsche are the crucial thinkers who determine the development of philosophy in the 20\(^{th}\) Century and that 20\(^{th}\) Century philosophers in this tradition can be classified roughly as either Hegelian or Nietzschean. Jurist attempts to overcome this impasse by arguing that Hegel and Nietzsche are in many ways closer than they are most often thought to be.\(^8\) While he is right to argue this he fails to focus on the crucial difference between the two thinkers. This difference concerns the status of teleology in the thought of Hegel and Nietzsche. Paying attention to this difference, I argue, can reveal how to move beyond the Hegel/Nietzsche impasse, not just within the narrow confines of professional academic philosophy in the Continental tradition but within the arena of culture generally. I will argue that both Hegel and Nietzsche make mistakes about teleology due to blind spots inherent in their own thinking. Hegel thinks that the development of History is a teleological process. After explaining his overall


\(^8\) Elliot L. Jurist *Beyond Hegel and Nietzsche: Philosophy, Culture, and Agency* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000)
philosophical system I will examine his abstract theory of historical development in his famous master/slave dialectic found in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. I will then examine the content of this theory as presented in *Reason in History*. Finally, I look at Hegel's argument that the modern state represents the *telos* of history found in his *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. It has often been argued that his rational ontology blinds him to evidence that might count against his progressive teleological view. I will argue that his rational ontology blinds him to evidence for teleology. Nietzsche, because he lacks this rational ontology, can see much of what Hegel cannot in history. Thus, his alternative account of historical development is richer in many ways. After explaining the central notion of the death of God in Nietzsche's thought I will examine two of Nietzsche's "histories," the critical *Genealogy of Morality* which provides an alternative non-teleological method and account of historical development, and the mytho-poetic *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* which also deals with developmental themes. It is in the latter text that Nietzsche presents the core of his philosophy in the doctrine of eternal recurrence, which he takes to be the ultimate anti-teleological gesture. Nietzsche's alternative ontology or lack of ontology entails a collapse of philosophy and psychology, such that the question "is there a deep structure?" is dismissed out of hand as an expression of weakness. Thus, if there were evidence for a deep structure Nietzsche could not or would not see it.

Thus, both Hegel and Nietzsche are prevented in a sense from honestly evaluating the evidence by their own philosophies. Nietzsche's belief that all fixed belief systems are prisons seems appropriate here. But is there evidence for purpose? Over a century ago both Hegel and Nietzsche proffered their final answers, "yes" and "no" respectively,
before the world had finished speaking. And the 20th Century has had much to say from
the global proliferation of democracy in the later half of the century to the big bang in
physics to amazing advances in biology, psychology, health care, and religion. The
conflicting interpretation of these developments currently advanced by the integrative
camp and the unmasking camp are merely the prison walls of a fixed “yes” and a fixed
“no” offered over a century ago before these remarkable developments had taken place.
However, as we enter a new millennium the walls of these prisons are breaking down
with the emergence of a new paradigm. Tarnas goes on to write, “In obvious ways these
two impulses work against each other, yet more subtly they can also be seen as working
together as polarized, but complementary, tendencies.”9 In my opinion no thinker
exemplifies this dynamic more than Ken Wilber. While metaphysical speculation
without regard for evidence is alive and well in both camps perhaps the most important
development in the twentieth century is the emergence of a new kind of metaphysician.
In thinkers like Alfred North Whitehead, Teilhard de Chardin, Jean Gebser, and Sri
Aurobindo we see a brand of speculation closely tied to evidence and thus open to
revision. These thinkers pursued a middle path between certainty sought by the tradition
and the rejection of philosophy common among thinkers in the unmasking camp. Ken
Wilber is the most recent and I believe the greatest representative of this group. His
cross-disciplinary examination of the logic of development provides a powerful
philosophical reworking of the integrative impulse inspired by Hegel that incorporates
much of what is valuable in Nietzsche’s thought and the unmasking tradition it gives rise
to. In this way Wilber’s thought represents an overcoming of the postmodern teleological

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9 Tarnas, Passion of the Western Mind, 407
impasse. Thus, the final section of this thesis will be devoted to an examination of the argument of his main work, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution. Wilber’s project does not answer the question “Is there a deep structure?” with a fixed “yes.” Rather, it presents a probabilistic case based on empirical observation that can serve as the basis for a tentative “yes.”

It should be clear that this examination of teleology in the thought of Hegel and Nietzsche with the aim of understanding postmodernism and the paradigm shift within which we currently exist should not be understood as mere intellectual history. Rather than provide a detailed listing of philosophers’ opinions on the subject of teleology over the past two hundred years I have chosen two thinkers that I think can be used to represent the basic impulses that characterize our age. Like Nietzsche’s choice in The Birth of Tragedy of Apollo and Dionysus to represent dual aspects of the Greek spirit, mine is an interpretive move in the broadest sense. Thus, it should not be assumed that tight historical connections between these thinkers and the later movements I associate them with can always be made.

Before exploring these two aspects of our own age I will first attempt to convey what teleology is by examining a philosopher whose thought is the precursor for developmentalism in all its Western forms, Aristotle.
Aristotle is the father of developmental thinking in Western thought. Thus, his thinking can serve as a reference point for all later teleological thinking in this tradition. Aristotle's thought can be organized into the theoretical disciplines (logic, physics, psychology, metaphysics), the practical disciplines (ethics, politics), and the productive disciplines (aesthetics, rhetoric). The hierarchical relationship between these disciplines is an expression of the "great chain of Being", the idea that Being is a hierarchy of connected levels. This ontology implies teleology since the movement of each level is determined by its position in the overall system, the highest level of which is divine. Since the idea of a great chain has been found in various religions, traditions, and cultures spanning the ages it has also been called "the perennial philosophy". Although it undergoes many changes this basic idea lies at the foundation of Western thinking up to the close of the nineteenth century. Aristotle did not invent this notion. Its genesis can be found in Plato. However, Aristotle's particular version of it, in addition to being the most easily summarized, has had the most influence on the subsequent development of Western thought. Thus, I will start by attempting to understand Aristotle's version of the great chain. I will do this by examining the relationship between the disciplines as Aristotle conceived them. Specifically I will look at how the relationship between logic, physics, psychology, ethics/politics, and metaphysics reflects the hierarchical structure of the great chain.

In Aristotle's system the discipline of logic, based on the principle of identity (A = A), provides us with the forms of our thinking and in this sense it is the most basic.
However, unlike Plato, who argued that separate forms have primary ontological status, Aristotle argued that only things in this world (ousias) are primarily real. Thus, for Aristotle, logic is not a science because it examines form in abstraction from things in this world. Aristotle’s physics is the application of logic to the natural things found in this world. It is here that we encounter beings and are confronted for the first time with the question of whether they can be understood. For Aristotle, nature (phusis) is a system of motion and change. Prior to Aristotle, many philosophers were puzzled by change. Some such as Parmenidies and his disciple Zeno even denied that change actually occurred. Aristotle is the first developmentalist in the Western tradition because he was the first to argue that change is real and it can be understood. He will attempt to explain motion by integrating it with form. This is the aim of his physics which is based on the fundamental distinction between dunamis and energeia.1 The word dunamis in Greek means “force” and is often translated “potentiality.” Aristotle refines this term to mean something like potency, the capacity to develop or be. This term conveys the sense of a “not yet but can be,” a tending toward some end. Aristotle, coins the term energeia from the Greek word ergon which means “to work.” It is often translated “actuality.” This term means the actualizing of some potential or capacity. Thus, we could conceive of energeia as being at work in the actualizing of potential. How do these terms illuminate the phenomenon of change? Aristotle argues that movement in nature is the actualizing of potentials. Being is not static; rather, it is that which undergoes change. The puzzle of how it is possible for a thing to become that which it is not arises from the ontological error of treating concepts as if they had their own independent reality. Thus, change

gives rise to the problem of how the concept “being” can connect to the opposite concept of “nonbeing.” Aristotle argues that the concept “acorn” does not change into what it is not. For him, there are no concepts apart from **ouisas**. Rather, the potential to become an oak tree can be actualized by a particular acorn. Aristotle, associates **dunamis** with matter and **energeia** with form. To fully explain the transition from a particular **ousia** into that which it is not it is necessary to examine its matter and form. There are four ways in which such explanations (**aitia**) are specified.\(^2\)

The first is the matter or material explanation. Searching for the material cause involves asking the question “what is this thing made of.” In the case of a rock the answer would be solid mineral matter. Knowing the material explanation is not sufficient to give us knowledge of that thing. It simply gives us a particular thing, an **ousia**. To know what a rock is we must grasp the general category of which this particular **ousia** is an instance. The remaining three ways in which we state the explanation of a thing are three different ways of specifying its form.

The second way of specifying the explanation is to specify the form as such, the formal explanation. Specifying the formal explanation involves asking “what is this.” The answer to this question is the abstract category that this particular thing is a member of. In the case of a particular rock the answer might be coal.

The third way of specifying the explanation is to identify the primary source of change or rest, the efficient explanation. Specifying the efficient cause involves asking “what moves this thing into being.” For example, the efficient explanation of coal is the partial decomposition of vegetable matter without free access to air and under the

\(^2\) Ibid., 194b17-195a4, 102-103.
influence of the right moisture, pressure, and temperature. In artificial processes such as house building, the principle of change is external. However, in natural processes such as the emergence of coal the principle of change is internal. This internal principle is what Aristotle calls nature.

Finally, the fourth way of specifying the explanation of something is to determine what its purpose is, its final explanation. This involves asking "what is this thing moving towards." The formal explanation is what gives us the answer to this question because it defines the end. Why then is the specification of the final explanation needed? The answer is that specifying the formal explanation provides the end result of a process. Specifying the final explanation gives us the why of that process. For Aristotle, the form towards which every ousia tends to moves is some good state. This good state is not determined by human interests but by natural tendency. For example, coal tends to be found in and on the earth. For Aristotle, this is where coal naturally should be and thus it is this that gives us its final cause. The natural movement of inanimate ousias is rectilinear. For example, heavy objects such as coal move straight down towards the earth. Light objects such as fire move up to the lunar sphere. However, this tendency can be interrupted. A piece of coal can be dug out of the ground and thrown into the air. Aristotle refers to this as "violent motion" because it is counter to the natural tendency of the ousia.

It should be clear how Aristotle’s four causes are really a detailed elaboration of his distinction between duname and energeia for the purpose of understanding motion. Movement is a dynamic relationship between duname (matter) and energeia (form).
Once the form is grasped we can locate the particular *ousia* in a larger scheme of classification according to genus (general group) and species (specific difference). For example, coal can be categorized under the genus of mineral. However, there are many different types of minerals. The features which distinguish coal from other minerals constitute the form of coal. Once we have this we can give a full, rich answer to the question “what is coal and why is it the way it is?” According to Aristotle, it is only at this point that we have knowledge of coal.

Teleology is the science of final explanation or causation. The above example illustrates how this science contributes to the overall knowing process. To understand the teleological nature of reality as a whole I will now examine how Aristotle applies logic to levels beyond merely inanimate nature.

The application of the rules of thought to living things is the task of psychology. Aristotle’s psychology is the study of *psuche* which is often translated “soul.” For Aristotle souls are the forms of animate *ousias*. Thus, we are now dealing with a higher level of reality. Aristotle argues that a higher level is a sphere that contains all the elements of the lower level plus a new element that was not found in the lower level and thus defines the higher level. Inanimate things are moved naturally or unnaturally. Animate things are moved by soul. This includes everything from plants, to animals, to human beings. Living things have the capacity (*dunamis*) for metabolism, growth, reaction to stimuli, and reproduction. Thus, the good state towards which plants move is the actualization (*energeia*) of these capacities. In addition to these capacities animals possess the capacity for locomotion and sensation. Likewise, the good state towards which animals move is the actualization of these capacities. In addition to these
capacities humans possess the capacity for reason. Thus, Aristotle will argue that the highest good of human life (*eudaimonia*) is the full flourishing of capacities in accordance with the characteristic human capacity for reason. This is the subject matter of ethics. After he has defined the highest good for human life, in the following famous passage from Book 10 of the *Nichomachean Ethics,* Aristotle argues that realizing this good affords us a glimpse of the highest level of reality:

Such a life would be superior to the human level. For someone will live it not insofar as he is a human being, but insofar as he has some divine element in him. And the activity of this divine element is as much superior to the activity expressing the rest of virtue as this element is superior to the compound. Hence if understanding is something divine in comparison with a human being, so also will the life that expresses understanding be divine in comparison to human life.³

Here Aristotle argues that the good state towards which human life aims provides a glimpse of the highest level of reality, the divine life itself. In fact, Aristotle believes that it is not just humans but the universe as a whole that tends towards the divine. God is the final explanation of nature as a whole in that every *ousia* is drawn by God’s perfect form. In the terrestrial realm this striving naturally takes the form of rectilinear motion. In contrast, movement in the celestial realm is naturally circular. The material explanation of the heavenly *ousias* is a fifth element the natural motion of which is circular and immutable. To explain the patterns in which these *ousias* moved Aristotle argued that they were points in a series of nested spheres, each of which was moved by the sphere beyond it. However, Aristotle was not comfortable with the idea of an infinite regress of spheres. If there is not an infinite regress of spheres, Aristotle reasoned, the outer most

sphere must be moved by an unmoved mover.\(^4\) This first mover does not move the outermost sphere by way of efficient causation but by love \(\textit{Eros}\). The outer sphere desires the first mover and thus moves towards it in a circular free fall that never fully reaches its goal. However, while God moves the world, it is not the case that God is moved by the world. There can be no \textit{dunamis} in God because any change in the being of God would either be for the better or worse. However, God’s perfection precludes the possibility of change for the better or worse. Thus, according to Aristotle, God is pure \textit{energeia}. All such a God can do is think about thinking.\(^5\) This being is the ultimate explanation, it is that towards which all things move. Questions about the nature of God fall within the province of metaphysics, that discipline that applies the rules of thought to the highest level of being. The hierarchical relationship between these theoretical disciplines and their corresponding ontological spheres is represented in the following diagram:

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\textbf{Fig. 1. Aristotle}


\(^5\) Ibid., 1074b34-35, 343.
Thus, we can see that for Aristotle Being is a hierarchy and the movement of each level is determined by its location in the overall system.

The basic notion of a great chain of Being would undergo many subsequent revisions in the history of Western thought. For example, while for Aristotle the universe itself has no beginning or end in time, medieval thinkers influenced by Christian theology argued that history has a structure that can be discerned in the scriptures. The events of creation, fall, redemption, second coming, and eschaton could be seen as stages in God’s unfolding plan for his creation. In the modern period, the great chain underwent radical changes in the wake of the emergence of modern science. These changes were primarily the result of increased skepticism about purpose in nature. Modern thinkers believed that in order to make room for the new sciences final causation must be attacked. Charles Taylor writes,

As epistemological innovators, the moderns of the seventeenth century directed their scorn and polemics against Aristotelian science, and that view of the universe which had become intricately with it in Medieval and early Renaissance thought. Final causes and the related vision of the universe as a meaningful order of qualitatively differentiated levels give way first to a Platonic-Pythagorean vision of mathematical order (as in Bruno, Kepler, and partly too, in Galileo), and then finally to the ‘modern’ view of a world of ultimately contingent correlations, to be patiently mapped by empirical observations.\(^6\)

Taylor goes on to state that this modern view of the world could be characterized as atomistic, mechanistic, homogenizing, and committed to the rejection of final causation in favor of efficient causation alone. However, while this new view rejected final causation it did not reject the great chain of Being. Taylor argues that the dominant theme of the Enlightenment was the harmony of an interlocking order of being.\(^7\)

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\(^7\) Ibid., 10.
However, the great chain was now thought of in purely empirical, materialistic terms, and this pushes the great chain further in the direction of dualism. A kind of dualism was already inherent in Aristotle’s conception of the great chain. For Aristotle, while God moves the world, it is not the case that God is moved by the world and this creates a kind of ontological split. Despite this split, however, this world was conceived of as meaningful in itself such that goodness and purpose were intrinsic to Being. In contrast, the method of modern science had resulted in a picture of the natural world as devoid of meaning. To avoid nihilism modern thinkers located meaning in the subject and this creates a new split that serves as the rationale for a more radical dualism and the movement away from ontology in favor of a focus on epistemology that characterizes modern philosophy from Descartes to Kant.

The dualism inherent in Kant’s critical philosophy provides the context for the problem of teleology as it presented itself in the nineteenth century. According to Kant, reason is limited to the world as it appears to the human mind (phenomena). The world as it is in itself (noumena) is unknowable. This fundamental distinction results in Kant’s division of disciplines into the disciplines of pure reason (the sciences), practical reason (ethics), and aesthetic judgment (the arts). In the Critique of Pure Reason Kant argues that because we can only know the world as it appears to the human mind, even though the world often appears to be orderly and purposeful, we cannot know if it in fact is orderly and purposeful in itself. However, late in life Kant seems to have become convinced that his division of human faculties resulted in an overly fragmented view of human nature. Thus, he believed theoretical reason and practical reason required reunification at a higher level. To this end the Critique of Judgment examines aspects of
the natural world that lend themselves more readily to teleological than mechanistic explanations. In this study Kant was examining mysteries that remain with us to this day in the form of questions about the mechanism of evolution. For this reason some have called him the "first holist in modern times." However, it is the more immediate influence of the *Critique of Judgment* over the subsequent development of German Idealism which provides the link to the battle over teleology in the nineteenth century:

With this work Kant provided his successors with much of the ammunition they used to assault Kant’s critical philosophy itself, as presented in the two earlier *Critiques*, that of *Pure Reason* and that of *Practical Reason*. In the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant is attempting to uncover possible indications of the unity of the realms of nature and freedom he so sharply divided in the earlier *Critiques*. In other terms, he is seeking to understand the sources of human unity, specifically investigating aesthetic experience and organic or teleological and non-mechanistic aspects of nature. Several of the systematic programs of German Idealism start from this work . . .

I am now ready to examine the most important of these systematic programs in the thought of Hegel.

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Hegel is struck by the rejection of teleology in the modern period. He asked the following question: if the world is in fact purposeless, how is it that it has produced people like us who are naturally purposive? Hegel, however, does not advocate a rejection of modernism, but rather, a rethinking of it. I have argued that since the time of the Greeks the Western philosophical tradition tended in the direction of dualism. Furthermore, it was theistic and, until late modernism, teleological in its orientation. Hegel’s thought can be understood as an attempt to defend teleology, and thus theism, by rejecting Western dualism and its prioritizing of the world of static being over the world of becoming. This involves rethinking the traditional philosophical notions tied to divinity in a monistic framework. These notions have created insoluble problems according to Hegel because they have been thought of as somehow separate from this world. The static being of these ideas could not be reconciled with the becoming of this world. Hegel argues that this hostility between being and becoming finally manifests itself in the philosophy of Kant, which distinguishes between the world as it appears to us (\textit{phenomenon}/becoming) and the world as is in itself (\textit{noumenon}/being). We can know the former but not the latter. One of the consequences of this position is a questioning of the validity of teleological explanations. The human mind cannot know if the world is purposeful in itself but only that it appears purposeful. In contrast, Hegel thinks that philosophical problems spring from dualism rather than teleology. As with Aristotle, Hegel’s solution to philosophical problems flows from his conception of the great chain
of Being. Thus, I will begin my examination of his thought with an examination of his ordering of the disciplines in relation to the great chain.

Hegel’s thought can be understood as an extension of Aristotle’s developmental logic to the world as a whole, or Being. The world can be thought of as one giant ousia. Each discipline takes as its object of study a particular phase in the development of this ousia. In Hegel’s Logic this giant ousia is designated by the term “the Idea”. He argues that understanding this Idea requires a new conception of rationality. Aristotle’s logic takes as its starting point the principle of identity (A = A). Aristotle believed that we could not even begin philosophy without assuming this principle. Hegel recognizes that this principle is based on the Platonic metaphysical presupposition that reality is made up of static, stable forms. He wants to challenge this metaphysical position and thus he must devise a new mode of philosophizing. A more adequate candidate for the most basic starting point for philosophy according to Hegel is the idea that things are dialectically related to each other. His new method, which he calls dialectical thinking, subordinates the principle of identity to the principles of relation and negation. The notion of relation is directly counter to the notion that the essence of a particular ousia can be captured in a stable, discrete definition. For example, we could define a pencil ostensively by pointing at one and saying “this is a pencil.” But, a full understanding of the pencil would require an understanding of its relations to its environment, the people who use it, the reason they use it, and so on. It becomes clear that any adequate list of relations has no terminus other than the totality that Hegel equates with truth itself, the Idea. Among these relations are negative relations. Negation is that process whereby the inadequacies of a particular category are revealed. The tradition had tended to look upon negativity as the
enemy of thinking. Hegel argues that, in fact, negation is the engine of thinking. It is the confrontation between thinking through relations and negativity that forces thinking to a higher level that is closer to the Idea.

The Logic examines the categories that make up the Idea in pure abstraction. As each category is examined it reveals a contradiction and this in turn reveals a more adequate category that is then subjected to the same process. The Logic is divided into three sections according to three different kinds of contradictions: Being (examination of opposed concepts that seem to be unrelated), Essence (examination of opposed concepts that imply one another), and Concept (examination of concepts the component parts of which are interrelated). For my purposes, this section of the Logic is important because it is here that Hegel explicitly addresses the topic of teleology. In his third critique Kant recognizes that there are levels of reality that cannot adequately be understood in terms of efficient causation alone. For example, living things have a form that is not imposed on them externally. Rather, this form emerges from their very nature as they grow. An adequate explanation of the organism then will explain partial processes not simply in terms of other partial processes but in terms of their role in the whole organism. Thus, since Hegel is concerned with understanding Being as a whole, his route to this understanding will necessarily be teleological. However, because of the dualism of the tradition, previous attempts to explain the world as a creation of God were examples of what Hegel calls external teleology. God externally imposed form on the world. In accordance with his monism Hegel wants to understand the world as the result of internal
teleological processes\(^1\). This project presupposes a hierarchical conception of Being.

Taylor writes:

> The underlying conception here is one of different levels of being, the necessary articulations of a universe which must exhibit both independent externality and inner connectedness. Because there are different levels of being, there are also different levels of explanation. Mechanism can thus provide adequate explanations on its level (and the different stages of mechanism each on its own sub-level), while the phenomena it explains are incorporated in more complex beings which must be accounted for in higher categories, and ultimately in a whole which can only be understood teleologically.\(^2\)

In addition, in this section of the *Logic* Hegel is concerned with divine truth that has liberated itself from representation, thought thinking itself. While Aristotle’s definition of God is present at the culmination of the *Logic*, it is probably more helpful to think of God as pure potentiality rather than pure actuality at this level in Hegel’s version of the great chain. Hegel conceives of logic as the mind of God *before* the creation of any finite spirit. Thus, we can think of logic as the seed of the *ousia* that develops toward the full bloom of Being. This is a significant break with the dualism of God and temporal nature inherent in Aristotle’s version of the great chain. For Hegel, God too is a development.

In Hegel’s *Philosophy of Nature* he examines concrete manifestations of Idea in the natural world. Nature can be thought of as Idea objectified in space. It is here that he provides his famous definition of nature as self-alienated spirit.\(^3\) However, this is generally considered to be the least original section of Hegel’s work. Furthermore,

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although he conceives of nature as a system of levels he does not think of the higher levels as generated out of the lower ones. This is due to the fact that he rejects the idea that nature develops, and thus, it is this area of his thought that has fared the worst in relation to later developments in the sciences such as Darwin’s theory of natural selection. Movement is not present in Hegel’s system apart from the most concrete form in which the Idea manifests itself in *Geist*.

*Geist* or “Spirit” can be thought of as the Idea as it develops through time. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* gives us an introduction to the inner logic of this development. Its purpose is to introduce readers to the idea that there is in fact a structured system, the Whole, in contrast with their limited understanding. On its way to the Whole *Geist* moves through the stages of Subjective Spirit, Objective Spirit, and finally, Absolute Spirit. Absolute Spirit has three moments: art, religion, and philosophy. Hegel gives us the empirical evidence for this development in his histories. Hegel wrote histories of the world (the development of Spirit in human life), art (the representation of Spirit in sensuous form), religion (the representation of Spirit in images), and philosophy (thought thinking itself). These histories are the empirical aspect of Hegel’s system. They reveal that the Idea that is striving to actualize knowledge of its own nature is the Idea of Freedom. Thus, for Hegel, the great chain of Being is not merely a framework within which movement occurs. The great chain itself moves toward thought thinking itself, the Idea of Freedom. Hegel’s dynamic version of the great chain is represented in figure 2.
The movement in this version of the great chain can be seen if it is turned on its side as in figure 3. To appreciate Hegel’s argument that Being has a direction I will focus my attention on specific sections in this chain. First I will look at the overall argument of the *Phenomenology* paying special attention to the master/slave dialectic. Then I will examine how the logic of this dialectic plays out in history by examining the argument of Hegel’s summary of his view of history found in *Reason and History*. I will examine this work because unlike most of his other works its argument is easy to understand and it affords the optimum range from which to view the development of Being. Since history
is the basic framework within which other developments occur examining the *Philosophy of History* will enable me to comment easily on other areas (art, religion, and philosophy) in which Geist comes to a realization of itself. Finally, I will examine his argument that the modern state represents the culmination of this developmental process in his *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*.

The first step toward understanding Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* is understanding its title. For Hegel, the term *Geist*, often translated “Mind” or “Spirit,”
designates the conceptual space in his system where those aspects of human existence which were traditionally thought of in terms of some other world (God, Truth, Freedom) are located. It can be understood as the Idea of the Logic in time. Recalling Kant’s distinction, if noumenon refers to the thing in itself, and phenomenon refers to the thing as it appears to human consciousness, then phenomenology is the study of the way things appear to consciousness. However, breaking with Kant’s division between mind and reality, for Hegel, a phenomenology of Spirit is an examination of the way in which reality appears to itself as Spirit or consciousness.

In what sense is the structure of this examination teleological? I have already stated that for Hegel, “the truth is the whole. But the whole is nothing other than the essence consuming itself through its development.”⁴ Hegel is arguing here that truth is a process as well as the goal or telos of that process. In the Phenomenology, each form of consciousness examined reveals inadequacies and limitations (negativity) that can only be overcome by its telos, the higher, more complex form of consciousness that resolves its limitations. I argued that traditionally such limitations were seen as a barrier to the truth. Hegel’s monistic naturalism takes them as a necessary part of the truth in that they are the engine of its realization.

Inspired by Plato Hegel used the word “dialectical” to characterize this process. However, for Hegel, the dialectic is not merely a way of arriving at truth in critical dialog with others. Rather, it is the process whereby reality itself develops. Hegel associates the concept of dialectic with the term aufheben which means to sublimate, cancel, preserve, or lift up. In the movement from one form of consciousness to another the negative

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limitations of that form are canceled while at the same time the positive essence of that form is preserved at a higher level through integrating with an opposite condition that represented its limit. Throughout his writings Hegel proposes many dialectical schemes for explaining the whole of reality. In the *Phenomenology* he looks at the dialectical development of consciousness from its most simple interaction with the world to its *telos* in Absolute Knowledge or the Whole. Like the seed that actualizes its potential through self-division in accordance with the form of the plant, in the development of consciousness *Geist* actualizes its potential through historical divisions in accordance with the idea of the Whole (the Absolute) introduced in the *Phenomenology*. In this sense the Whole can be understood as the goal of history within which all of its movements find their place. It is the Absolute of the *Phenomenology* and it corresponds roughly to Hegel’s “Idea” which is the Absolute of his *Logic*. However, unlike the abstract potentiality of the Idea in Hegel’s *Logic*, the Whole as realized in the Absolute Knowing of the *Phenomenology* is concrete. To understand the argument of the *Phenomenology* I will look at the specific stages in the development of consciousness it lays out.

The *Phenomenology* can be divided into two parts. The first part, after the Preface and Introduction, includes sections entitled Consciousness and Self-Consciousness. The second part includes the following four sections: Reason, Spirit, Religion, and finally, Absolute Knowing. The first section entitled Consciousness examines consciousness at its most basic level and discusses the reality of objects or the “in-itself”. It examines the naïve supposition that consciousness encounters the world as it is independent of consciousness. This examination reveals that what seems to be
immediately present to consciousness (this, here, now) is in fact mediated by
consciousness through general notions of space and time that go beyond immediate
conditions. Whenever we encounter the world it might seem as if we are encountering
nature as it is in itself but in fact we are actually encountering the world through
subjective categories. The discovery of this fact is the realization of Self-Consciousness.
This section is concerned with what it means to be a self or the "for-itself."
Consciousness and Self-Consciousness together make up the realm of Subjective Spirit.
The section entitled Reason brings together the reality of objects (consciousness) with the
meaning of selfhood (self-consciousness). This joining refers to what Hegel calls
Objective Spirit, the political and social organization of modern life. For Hegel, the
environment within which we live, everything from our laws, homes, bridges, and
schools, is thought become tangible. Mind emerges in human life and transforms its
environment such that mind and the world cannot be distinguished. The section entitled
Spirit deals with the culmination of the joining of subject and object in the state. It is
here that Hegel argues against the modern notion that the state is antagonistic to the self.
The liberal idea of individual freedom as lack of constraint is shallow and inconsistent
with our nature as social beings. Paradoxically, it is only through submission to the state
that true human freedom can be realized. In the section entitled Religion Hegel argues
that Christianity is the highpoint of religious insight in that it expresses the truth that God
and man are not separate. The final section is entitled Absolute Knowing. It is here that
Spirit recognizes itself and realizes the necessity of its development.

For my purposes I will focus on the second part of the Phenomenology, Self-
Consciousness. I have argued that this section is an elaboration of what it means to talk
about the self (the for-itself). When Hegel examines selfhood he begins by looking at the notion of desire. Aristotle argued that the soul is a hierarchy of desires that can often conflict. Humans share with animals the desire for food, sex, and drink. However, in addition to these desires we also have distinctively human desires: the desire for companionship, the desire to express ourselves in meaningful work, and the desire to understand things. The goal of the ethical life is the harmonious arrangement of our desires for the purpose of maximizing our well being. Hegel, in his examination of selfhood, picks up on this theme of desire and elaborates it. He agrees that there is a hierarchy of desires and he adds that the limited nature of lower forms of desire leads us to seek the fulfillment of higher desires. Lower desires mock efforts to satisfy them. Thus, the self searches for another level at which satisfaction can be achieved. It discovers that only in relation to other selves can true satisfaction be achieved.

It is in this context of the satisfaction of desire that Hegel introduces the concept of recognition. According to Hegel our selfhood at the deepest level consists in our relationships to others, the way others "recognize" us. Hegel's master slave dialectic is a quasi-historical account of the social emergence of selfhood, the process of recognition. Selfhood first emerges in human societies, according to Hegel, in hierarchical relationships. We can think about this historically. For example, early human societies were aristocratic. Because of random distribution of capacities some members of society were weak and some strong. Hegel would argue that there would be a natural tendency for the strong and the brave to achieve social status due to their ability to protect others. The strong and the brave will risk their life to be recognized as the masters. The weak will sacrifice recognition just to stay alive as slaves. This dynamic results in freedom for
the master. The master is able to realize his desire without restriction. Thus, historically
the first moment of human freedom is realized in the domination of others. However, it
soon becomes evident that this freedom is limited. It is dependent on the recognition of
the slave:

... the object in which the lord has achieved his lordship has in reality turned out
to be something quite different from an independent consciousness. What now
really confronts him is not an independent consciousness, but a dependent one.
He is therefore not certain of being-for-self as the truth of himself. On the
contrary, his truth is in reality the unessential consciousness and its unessential
action.\footnote{Ibid., sec. 192, 117.}

Thus, the master is limited and the slave has a certain power. Masterhood is limited in a
second important way. Because the master has power he no longer has to work. The
slave toils and works and hands over the surplus to the master. According to Hegel, this
is a condition of alienation for the master because to work with nature is essential to
human nature. Thus, the slave is connected to nature in a positive way: "... it is
precisely in his work wherein he seemed to have only an alienated existence that he
acquires a mind of his own."\footnote{Ibid., sec. 196, 119.} Thus, according to Hegel, the limitations inherent in
unequal distributions of power will inevitably lead to reciprocal power arrangements.

The master-slave dialectic is an abstract philosophical theory of the development
of human freedom. In his histories Hegel attempts to present empirical evidence that
supports this theory. Hegel's book *Reason in History* is an introduction to the empirical
part of his system. Here he provides a summary of arguments he will pursue in much
greater detail in his histories. One such argument illustrates the master-slave dialectic by
tracing the development of freedom through world history.
Hegel begins this analysis with Asian or Eastern civilizations. This includes the Egyptian, Chinese, Indian, and Persian empires. Hegel argues that this stage in human history is the first moment in the development of human freedom because these civilizations begin with the recognition that one person, the emperor, is free (self determined). In more primitive societies all human beings were restricted in some way. The emperor in contrast has no restrictions on his self-determination. This “freedom” however shows itself to be one sided:

Orientals do not yet know that Spirit - man as such - is free. And because they do not know it, they are not free. They only know that one is free; but for this very reason such freedom is mere caprice, ferocity, dullness of passion, or perhaps, softness and tameness of desire- which again is nothing but an accident of nature and thus, again, caprice. This one is therefore only a despot, not a free man.  

The next civilization to emerge in world history is Greek civilization. Hegel argues that Greek civilization represents an expansion of freedom beyond the emperor. Athens was the birth place of democracy which means rule by all citizens. But not everybody in ancient Greece was a citizen because Greece was built on a system of slavery. Thus, freedom was only partly realized by the Greeks and their Roman successors:

The consciousness of freedom first arose among the Greeks, and therefore they were free. But they, and the Romans likewise, only knew that some are free - not man as such. Not even Plato and Aristotle knew. For this reason the Greeks not only had slavery, upon which was based their whole life and the maintenance of their splendid liberty, but their freedom itself was partly an accidental, transient and limited flowering and partly a severe thralldom of human nature.  

The Romans became the cultural heirs of the Greeks. They went beyond the Greeks by joining the Greek emphasis on individual freedom to the idea of centralized imperial

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8 Ibid., 23-24.
control. Thus, according to Hegel in the Romans we see Greek pluralized freedom synthesized with the Eastern emphasis on unity. The Romans thought of themselves as spreading these cultural developments to the world. In the process of this spreading Roman civilization is joined with Christianity. Hegel argues that the idea of monotheism that comes from Judaism finds its full flowering in Christianity. The central insight of the Christian religion is that God and man are not separate. Consequently, the joining of Roman civilization with Christianity enabled the spreading of the idea that all human beings have a common spiritual essence and that Spirit is not separate from this world. Although it took time to develop, only Germanic Europe (Western European civilization), influenced by Rome and Christianity through the Holy Roman Empire, realized the full flowering of this idea:

Only the Germanic peoples came, through Christianity, to realize that man is free and that freedom of Spirit is the very essence of man’s nature. This realization first arose in religion, in the inmost region of spirit; but to introduce it in the secular world was a further task which could only be solved and fulfilled by a long and severe effort of civilization. Thus, slavery did not cease immediately with the acceptance of the Christian religion. Liberty did not suddenly predominate in states nor reason in governments and constitutions. The application of the principle to secular conditions, the thorough molding and interpretation of the secular world by it, is precisely the long process of history. 9

The application of the principle of freedom to secular conditions can be seen in the modern state. Hegel’s work *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* is the first modern attempt to explain the State. Hegel thinks that this attempt shows that freedom realized in the modern state is the end, the *telos* of the long process of history.

In *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* the term “Concept” (*Begriff*), refers to abstractions that we can think but cannot see. In contrast, the term “Idea” refers to

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9 Ibid., 24.
concrete realities that can be seen as well as thought. It should be clear that in the
Oriental, Greek, and Roman world’s freedom was simply Conceptual. Freedom as Idea
would be a state in which all institutions recognized or exemplified freedom. Hegel’s
term “Right” refers to freedom as Idea: “Right is any existence [Dasein] in general which
is the existence of the free will. Right is therefore in general freedom, as idea.”10 The
subject matter of the philosophical science of Right is the Idea of Right or Freedom.

In Elements of the Philosophy of Right Hegel argues that this development from
Concept to Idea moves through three stages. These stages can be understood on an
individual or social level. The first stage Hegel calls the stage of abstract indeterminacy.
At this stage freedom is abstract but universal. Here Freedom is realized in a purely
negative sense. It can be understood as the recognition of a universal capacity to resist:

The will contains the element of pure indeterminacy or of the ‘I’’s
pure reflection into itself, in which every limitation, every content,
whether present immediately through nature, through needs, desires, and
drives, or given and determined in some other way, is dissolved; this is the
limitless infinity of absolute abstraction or universality, the pure thinking
of oneself.11

Thus, this stage is abstract in that the only real content is the content of rebellion. A
rebellious child might be cited as an individual example of this stage of development.
The rejections of inherited social structures in the French or American revolutions could
be cited as examples of this stage of development at the social level. Hegel writes, “Only
in destroying something does this negative will have a feeling for its own existence.”12

10 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Elements of the Philosophy of Right, trans. by H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge:
11 Ibid., sec. 5, 37.
12 Ibid., sec. 5, 38.
The second stage is the stage of abstract determinacy. At this stage freedom is abstract but particular. Here freedom has content in particular decisions made. However, it is abstract in that it is characterized by subjective uncertainty. Hegel writes,

In the same way, 'I' is the transition from undifferentiated indeterminacy to differentiation, determination, and the positing of a determinacy as a content and object. – This content may further be given by nature, or generated by the concept of spirit. Through this positing of itself as something determinate, 'I' steps into existence [Dasein] in general – the absolute moment of the finitude or particulariztion of the 'I'.

The self-doubt of a recent college graduate in search of a career might serve as a particular example of this stage of development. Here choices are being made which have some content to them but these choices are characterized by doubt. The birth of a nation might serve as an example of this stage on a larger scale. The uncertainty which surrounded the formation of America and which exercised the efforts of the founding fathers is a case in point.

The final stage is the stage of the concrete determinacy of universality. This stage is connected to the particular in a universal way:

The will is the unity of both these moments – particularity reflected into itself and thereby restored to universality. It is individuality [Einzelheit], the self-determination of the 'I', in that it posits itself as the negative of itself, that is, as determinate and limited, and at the same time remains with itself [bei sich], that is, in its identity with itself and universality; and in this determination, it joins together with itself alone.

An individual example of this stage would be the established citizen who, although embedded in institutional life (family, marriage, career, politics, etc.) and loaded down with responsibilities, gladly embraces his obligations. A larger example would be the

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13 Ibid., sec. 6, 39.
14 Ibid., sec. 7, 41.
willingness of a mature nation to commit to protecting its way of life in a war time situation.

The first stage corresponds to what Hegel calls abstract right. We can think of the liberal notion of freedom (absence of constraint) as exemplifying what Hegel means by abstract right. While abstract right is important it is not the full meaning of freedom.

The second stage corresponds to what Hegel calls morality. Morality is the realm of conscience and questioning of motives:

Conscience . . . is that deepest inner solitude within oneself in which all externals and all limitation have disappeared – it is withdrawal into the self. As conscience, the human being is no longer bound by the ends of particularity, so that conscience represents an exalted point of view, a point of view of the modern world, which has for the first time attained this consciousness, this descent into the self. Earlier and more sensuous ages have before them something external and given, whether this be religion or right; but my [my] conscience knows itself as thought, and that this thought is mine is the sole source of obligation.¹⁵

Modern developments such as rationalized ethics (Kant) and contractarianism (Hobbes, Rousseau, Locke) can be seen as exemplifying what Hegel means by morality. Kant’s ethical system is abstract in that it is not connected to concrete circumstances. Hegel argues that the categorical imperative can give no guidance in particular situations. Likewise, social contract theories are abstract. Contracts are characterized by uncertainty and arbitrariness because they are always based on external conditions. But the state is not an external condition; rather, we are born into it. Contracts imply an arbitrariness that the state is not. Thus, while suitable in some contexts, contracts are not suitable for constructing a government that exemplifies freedom in its most developed form.

¹⁵ Ibid., sec. 136, 164.
The final stage corresponds to what Hegel calls Ethical life. Ethical life can be thought of as a synthesis of all previous stages in which universal truth and concrete circumstances are brought together. Unlike the previous stages Ethical life is characterized by an awareness that actions are connected to a larger whole. For Hegel, the state is the objective embodiment of Ethical life. Thus, Hegel’s strategy for overcoming alienation involves incorporating the individual into the larger whole of the state.

The course of this development that Hegel describes is not arbitrary. It is, he believes, the inevitable working out of the implications of our nature. The traditional notion of freedom associated with divinity, full self-determination and self-sufficiency, is realized here and now in the rational structure of our social relations. Hegel thus represents an attempt to think divinity in terms of this world.

Hegel is often criticized for the optimism that results from his teleological system. However I think it is his rational ontology that is most vulnerable to criticism. Hegel believes that the starting place for philosophy should be consciousness at its most basic level (this, here, now). But it is only his rational ontology that causes him to characterize this kind of consciousness as most basic. The consciousness of very young children, for example, could not be described in terms of “this,” “here,” and “now” since these are themselves rational abstractions. As Heidegger has shown, the ability to disengage such abstractions like these can be posited presupposes a prior existential familiarity with the world. Thus, there is a pre-rational realm which Hegel’s ontology does not adequately account for. Furthermore, as Nietzsche and Wilber will argue, there might be transrational realms as well. Can a more adequate teleological scheme that avoids this
difficulty be constructed? Before answering this question I will examine Nietzsche’s rejection of teleology and his critique of the entire Western philosophical tradition of which Hegel can be thought of as the last and greatest representative. I will begin with an examination of Nietzsche’s heralding of the death of God.
CHAPTER IV

NIETZSCHE

The theme of the death of God is a good place to begin an examination of Nietzsche’s thought because it is the motivation behind his philosophizing. The major themes of his philosophy can be seen as a response to this important event. I have argued that since the time of Plato and Aristotle that the idea of the divine (self-sufficient, necessary Being) has been the organizing principle of Western thought. The idea of God is the anchor that has kept thought from slipping into the ungraspable. However, the dualism of the tradition has always been the justification for thinking of God in terms of some other world. For Hegel, a God who exists in a static world of Being creates all the problems of philosophy and is more dead than alive. I have attempted to show that Hegel’s philosophy can be thought of as a great attempt to think of the life of God in terms of this world. Nietzsche, is the first Western philosopher since Plato and Aristotle to attempt to think through the radical consequences of a world without God. While in the spirit of modern secularism many had been willing to affirm atheism, no one prior to Nietzsche had explored the cultural implications of this position with such ruthlessness and honesty. Many modern secularists believed that cultural developments such as science, democracy, and humanism rendered God obsolete. Nietzsche points out that these modern developments have their historical roots in theological notions. For example, it is easy to see how the emergence of modern democracy can ultimately be traced back to the belief in the equality of all souls in the eyes of God. Thus, we can not consistently reject God and accept modern values. However, for Nietzsche, rejecting
God and modern values does not mean the rejection of all values whatsoever. In fact, Nietzsche thinks it is impossible to live without some sense of purpose. Throughout his work he presupposes that finding purpose is absolutely essential to human life.\footnote{Friedrich Nietzsche, \textit{The Gay Science}, trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1974) 74.} “No people could live,” Zarathustra proclaims, “without first esteeming.”\footnote{Friedrich Nietzsche, \textit{Thus Spoke Zarathustra}, trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin, 1978) 58.} What he does reject are global stories of purpose that find their justification in the traditional concept of God. This project was given its last great articulation in the thought of Hegel. So Hegel believes in God and Nietzsche does not. Despite this difference, however, Hegel and Nietzsche are closer than is often acknowledged. While Nietzsche at times has harsh things to say about Hegel it is clear that he had a certain degree of respect for him. For example, he lists him alongside Schopenhauer, Goethe, and Heine as a thinker whose impact has been European in scope.\footnote{Friedrich Nietzsche, \textit{Twilight of the Idols}, trans. by Richard Polt (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997) 63.}

There are a few possible reasons for this admiration. It could be partly due to some broad similarities between the two thinkers. These similarities can be found in their thinking on truth, metaphysics, and culture.

First, both Hegel and Nietzsche reject dogmatism in light of new conceptions of truth. According to Hegel, dogmatism assumes that isolated propositions can be the form of the truth. But the truth of an isolated proposition depends on the context within which it occurs. Likewise, the tendency to think of one philosophical system as “true” in contrast with other systems that are “false” is to assume a static rather than dynamic view of the truth. A dynamic view of the truth attempts to fit these apparently contradictory truths into a larger framework. Thus, for Hegel, the Whole is the form of the truth. Like
Hegel, Nietzsche's rejection of dogmatism is connected to a new conception of the truth.\textsuperscript{4} Nietzsche's pronouncements on truth are difficult to interpret and perhaps not always consistent. However, in some passages Nietzsche's account of truth, while certainly not identical with Hegel's, bares some similarity to it. For example, Nietzsche seems to suggest that the view that is closest to "the truth" is the view that takes the most perspectives into account.\textsuperscript{5} The obvious difference between the two thinkers is that for Hegel different perspectives fit together into a larger whole, whereas for Nietzsche different perspectives can conflict. With the death of God, the great chain of Being within which different truths find their natural place is shattered. This ontology can be represented as follows:

\begin{center}
\textbf{Fig. 4.} Nietzsche
\end{center}


The circles in the diagram above can represent specific disciplines or whole world-views both of which I will simply call perspectives. There can be some common ground between different perspectives as is represented by the overlapping circles. However, a perspective is what it is partly due to its struggle against other perspectives. For example, Christian morality arose in relation to the very different moral systems of the pagan world, and thus, is partly defined by them. This is represented by the arrows between the different perspectives. Thus, while it is true that for Nietzsche there is no ontological organizing principle that holds together and harmonizes different spheres there is a psychological principle that accounts for the development of views in relation to each other. As I have argued Nietzsche thinks humans necessarily value and rank by their nature and this ranking produces a world-view. They do this in accordance with a principle that Nietzsche calls the will to power. Ranking is one among many expressions of power that strives to create meaning over and against some Other. The way this ranking unfolds is a direct expression of one's position in relation to this Other. An aperspectival account of the way things are, i.e., God's perspective, is not possible:

Henceforth, my dear philosophers, let us be on guard against the dangerous old conceptual fiction that posited a 'pure, will-less, painless, timeless knowing subject'; let us guard against the snares of such contradictory concepts as 'pure reason,' 'absolute spirituality,' 'knowledge in itself': these always demand that we should think of an eye that is completely unthinkable, an eye turned in no particular direction, in which the active and interpretative forces, through which alone seeing becomes seeing something, are supposed to be lacking; these always demand of the eye an absurdity and a nonsense. There is only a perspective seeing, only a perspective 'knowing'; and the more affects we allow to speak about one thing, the more eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will be our 'concept' of this thing, our 'objectivity,' be. But to eliminate the will altogether, to suspend each and every affect, supposing we are capable of this -- what would that mean but to castrate the intellect? . . .

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It is clear that Nietzsche would acknowledge that even his own view, represented by the above diagram, is simply another perspective. Philosophers should be concerned then, not with the impossible task of describing the world itself, but with understanding the values that underlie particular descriptions. Thus, Nietzsche replaces theology with psychology as the new queen of the sciences. The following diagram (see figure 5) is not a representation of the way things are but of the different ways in which particular individuals and groups evaluate. In this diagram strength is defined as ability to affirm the world as valuable simply in all the ways it presents itself. The weak affirm the world as valuable but only by positing some future goal or purpose within which the flux of experience makes sense. This is the psychological origin of teleology. In contrast, the strong affirm the world as valuable without qualification and this includes affirming the value of the weak and their evaluations (See figure 5).

While it might appear as though Nietzsche and Hegel are complete opposites at this juncture, a closer look can reveal some deeper structural similarities even here. First, Nietzsche, like Hegel, believes that the definition of a thing is determined partly by what it is not, its Other. In addition, the evaluations of the strong in Nietzsche’s scheme can be understood as similar in some respects to the wider embrace of higher stages of development found in Hegel. For example, Nietzsche’s own affirmation of the perspective of Christianity as a life enhancing strategy for the weak does not affirm it as Christians affirm it. Rather, this affirmation is a reinterpretation from the stronger perspective of life affirmation. In this way the “truth” of Christianity can coexist with the

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7 Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 220-221.
8 Ibid., 221-222.
apparently contradictory truth of life affirmation. However, for Nietzsche, this evaluation should not be understood as synthesis. The highest harmony that can be achieved for Nietzsche is one of antithetical coexistence. Hegel and Nietzsche are in agreement, however, regarding the transpersonal nature of evaluation. In at least one place the evaluative process is characterized by Nietzsche as not merely individual or social projection but a projection of the world as a whole when he writes that the world values itself through us.\(^\text{10}\) This resonates with the rationale of Hegel’s whole philosophical project: If the world is ultimately purposeless how did it give rise to beings like us who are purposeful? Finally, as I will argue in examining Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Nietzsche’s Übermensch should be interpreted as representing the overcoming of absolute distinctions between humanity and the world and this bears obvious affinities

\(^{10}\) Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols, 28.
with Hegel's attempt to overcome the subject/object division. Thus, both Hegel and
Nietzsche are metaphysical monists and it is because of this that both have a positive
view of features of this world such as time, change, and negativity that were traditionally
thought of as a hindrance to philosophical understanding. The similarities I have
highlighted thus far might suggest that traces of teleology remain in Nietzsche’s thought.
I will consider the extent to which this is true when I examine the relationship between
Nietzsche’s teaching concerning the Übermensch and the doctrine of eternal recurrence.

I have argued that Nietzsche and Hegel are similar in their thinking regarding
truth and metaphysics. Finally, Nietzsche, like Hegel, is a philosopher who is concerned
with understanding culture. It is on this point that Nietzsche is closer to Hegel than other
19th Century developmentalists such as Darwin. The problem with Darwin, Nietzsche
argues, is that he “forgot intelligence [Geist].”11 Nietzsche, like Hegel, thinks that Geist
is crucial and can not be ignored in a full account of human development. However,
adding Geist to the equation does not lead Nietzsche to adopt a progressive view of
development like Hegel (or Darwin). Here, the fundamental ontological difference
between the two thinkers manifests itself despite their many similarities. According to
Nietzsche it was God as ontological ground that made thinkers like Hegel see a pattern in
the world that in fact was not there. With the great chain of Being destroyed we can see
the development of the human species for what it really is. Nietzsche believes that an
examination of the development of human culture provides more evidence for regress as
the rule and progress as the exception. The proceeding quote is embedded in a larger
context that makes this clear:

11 Ibid., 59.
Species do not grow more perfect: the weak become the masters of the strong, again and again—because they are the great majority, and also cleverer... Darwin forgot intelligence [Geist] (that's English for you!), the weak have more intelligence... One has to need intelligence in order to get intelligence—one loses it if one no longer needs it. Anyone who has strength gets rid of intelligence.  

Thus, Nietzsche advocates a kind of spiritual selection rather than Darwin’s natural selection as the mechanism of development more broadly conceived. In this broader view it is the most creative rather than the most fit who survive. Just as Darwin uses natural selection to understand the development of biological forms, so Nietzsche uses “spiritual selection” to understand the development of values. But Nietzsche, like Darwin and unlike Hegel, rejects teleology. Thus, Nietzsche will attempt to understand history without the notion of global purpose so crucial to Hegel’s account.

I have argued that Hegel and Nietzsche share certain orientations towards truth and metaphysics. Thus, Hegel and Nietzsche represent an interesting mixture of agreement and disagreement. Their disagreements spring from their different stances toward God and this basic disagreement manifests itself in their differing accounts of culture. While there are many similarities in their approaches to understanding history, their fundamental ontological disagreement surfaces when it comes to the task of interpreting the direction of cultural development. A main difference between the two thinkers concerns methodology. Whereas Hegel uses teleology to understand historical development Nietzsche uses genealogy. Genealogy as Nietzsche uses it is a method of understanding that is characterized by contingency, discontinuity, marginality, materiality, and reversal. Nietzsche attempts to write a history of the development of values in Western culture by way of genealogy in his On the Genealogy of Morals. This

12 Ibid., 59.
work traces the development of two warring value systems: master morality and slave morality. Like Hegel’s master/slave dialectic, it is a psychological/historical investigation of the development of consciousness. The morality of the master designates qualities such as health, strength, beauty, and power as good. According to this table of values “bad” refers to that which is base, weak, low-minded, or sick. Early human societies affirm master morality and this is expressed in hierarchical political arrangements. Eventually this unequal arrangement leads to a slave revolt based on ressentiment. The English word resentment simply refers to a feeling of displeasure at having been wronged. The French word *ressentiment* in addition conveys the notion of being trapped without effective expression and it is this notion which Nietzsche uses to describe the consciousness of the slave. Slaves cannot directly challenge masters. Thus, they are trapped. This condition forces the slave to be creative in the search for freedom:

> The slave revolt in morality begins when *ressentiment* itself becomes creative and gives birth to values: the *ressentiment* of natures that are denied the true reaction, that of deeds, and compensate themselves with an imaginary revenge. While every noble morality develops from triumphant affirmation, slave morality from the outset says No to what is ‘outside,’ what is ‘different,’ what is ‘not itself”; and *this* No is its creative deed.\(^{13}\)

On the basis of this creative “no” a transvaluation of values is effected whereby the master’s distinction between good and bad is replaced with the slave’s distinction between good and evil. Good is now defined in a way that is beneficial to the slave. Love of neighbor, humility, and pity are now all good qualities. Unlike the master’s “bad,” the slave’s “evil” condemns the masters virtues absolutely. The very existence of these qualities is seen as incompatible with the good.

\(^{13}\) Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals, 472.*
Notice that slave morality is associated with something Nietzsche is interested in, namely creativity. While many read Nietzsche as simply criticizing slave morality and advocating a return to master morality, some have pointed to passages that complicate this reading.\textsuperscript{14} For example, Nietzsche characterizes the culture of the master as simple: “all the concepts of ancient man were rather at first incredibly uncouth, course, external, narrow, straightforward, and altogether unsymbolical in meaning to a degree that we can scarcely conceive.”\textsuperscript{15} The stress that brought about slave morality should not be thought of in purely negative terms. Without slave morality we would not have been able to move beyond the crudeness of the master to higher forms of culture.\textsuperscript{16} Thus, passages in which Nietzsche describes “higher types” can not be interpreted as a call for a simple return to master morality. Rather, he seems to suggest that progress would involve an integrating and balancing of qualities possessed by master and slave:

There are master morality and slave morality – I add immediately that in all higher and more mixed cultures there also appear attempts at mediation between these two moralities, and yet more often the interpenetration and mutual misunderstanding of both, and at times they do occur alongside each other – even in the same human being, within a single soul.\textsuperscript{17}

It seems that there are some interesting similarities between the accounts of master and slave offered by Hegel and Nietzsche. First, for both thinkers, the initial advantage of the master is limited. For Hegel, this implies the development of reciprocal power arrangements. Although this reciprocity does not imply the absence of hierarchical distributions of power within the state, Nietzsche’s fierce opposition to


\textsuperscript{15} Nietzsche, Genealogy of Morals, 467-468.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 469.

\textsuperscript{17} Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, 394.
democracy and the modern idea of equality would seem to contradict Hegel here. However, Nietzsche’s positive view of the future with respect to individuals in what might be called higher and more mixed cultures can best be characterized as a joining or “synthesis” of master and slave characteristics. At the social level, while the logic of Nietzsche’s position excludes modern liberal notions often associated with democracy, it can be argued that such a synthesis could and should be interpreted in democratic terms.\(^{18}\)

In addition, some have suggested that apart from their difference on the viability of global teleological stories, the views of Hegel and Nietzsche on history are virtually indistinguishable:

> ... for Nietzsche, I think we must say that whole stretches of history operate on the Hegelian developmental model of disciple, interiorization, and sublimation. This build up can even last for centuries before an Übermensch comes along with the power to build a new heaven. In fact, it would seem in large part that the whole Jewish and Christian era up to the present, and perhaps also a good part of the tradition back to Socrates and Homer – in other words, most of Hegel’s *Philosophy of History* – can be accepted roughly as it stands, accept that, for Nietzsche, it is not headed for the Absolute ... \(^{19}\)

Kain here locates the crucial teleological impasse dividing the two thinkers. For Nietzsche, history is not the unfolding of a telos. It is Nietzsche’s doctrine of eternal recurrence that offers a non-teleological alternative to Hegel’s Absolute.

Despite the possibility of reading Nietzsche and Hegel as closer than they are usually thought to be, there is no denying that, for Nietzsche, the general trend of Western cultural development has been negative rather than positive. While Nietzsche recognizes the indispensable role of slave morality in cultural development he believes its actual influence has been disproportionate. Decisive historical moments in the “slave


\(^{19}\) Kain, “Nietzschean Genealogy and Hegelian History,” 136.
revolt in morality” include the acceptance of the philosophies of Socrates and Plato in the wake of the Peloponnesian war and the political and cultural power acquired by Christianity in the wake of Constantine’s conversion. For Nietzsche, apart from the Renaissance and the career of Napoleon, this victory of slave morality has been nearly total. With few exceptions then, a sickly life denying morality has dominated Western culture.

In the modern world this sickness expresses itself in a number of ways. Philosophically, the clearest modern manifestation of this sickness is Kantian ethics. Kant describes morality as based on a rational universal principle, the categorical imperative. According to Nietzsche, this principle is clearly a modern expression of the slavish concept of equality. Nietzsche devotes considerable effort to criticizing Kant’s ethics throughout his work. However, this problem is not merely an academic one. The modern drive toward equality expresses itself publicly. Nietzsche sees this as a necessary component in the decline of the modern age:

... we moderns with our timid concern for ourselves and love of our neighbor, with our virtues of work, humility, propriety, scientific thought – hoarding, economical, mechanical – prove to be a weak age... Our virtues are conditioned, are demanded by our weakness... ‘Equality,’ a certain actually growing similarity of which the theory of ‘equal rights’ is just an expression, belongs essentially to the decline: the gulf between one human being and another, between class and class; the multiplicity of types; the will to be oneself, to distinguish oneself – what I call the pathos of distance is typical of every strong age.20

Specifically, Nietzsche thinks the modern notion of equality has lead to decadent social and political arrangements. Democracy and Socialism are both expressions of equality, and thus, Christianity. Modern secularism has rejected God and yet, without realizing the implications of this, continues to rely on his cultural legacy.

20 Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols, 73.
In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Nietzsche gives us an image of the comfort such a position provides in the "last man". Most commentators agree that Nietzsche's last man represents a will to comfort born from weakness whether by retreat to the old lies or by standing in their modern shadow. Thus, the long process of history has ended not in absolute knowledge but in bourgeois decadence. Nietzsche's *Übermensch* is apparently meant as a future contrast to this present reality. Does this mean that the *Übermensch* is the end at which the evolutionary process of history aims? If so, is there not still a trace of teleology in Nietzsche's thought? To answer this question I will look more closely at the structure of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

It is easy to read the first part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as presenting a linear model of progress from better to worse. According to this reading, the bourgeois contentment of the last man is simply a transitional stage to a higher existence. However, this progressive view seems to contradict other elements of Nietzsche's thought. For example, Nietzsche diagnoses progressive views as expressions of the tradition's privileging of being over becoming. The tradition sees becoming as unacceptable. Thus it posits a being or *telos* at which becoming aims and in which the negativity of becoming ceases. Even Hegel is guilty of this because, although he affirms negativity, he affirms it as a step in the process of overcoming alienation. All such teleological orientations violate what Nietzsche calls "the innocence of becoming."21 Unlike Hegel and the tradition, Nietzsche affirms the becoming of the world as valuable without qualification.

For Nietzsche the ultimate test of affirmation of the innocence of becoming is presented in the doctrine of eternal recurrence. If the death of God is the motivation

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behind Nietzsche’s philosophy, the doctrine of eternal recurrence is the culmination of it. According to the doctrine of eternal recurrence time is infinite. However, there are a finite number of possibilities that can be actualized. Therefore, once these possibilities have been realized the sequence repeats itself again, *ad infinitum*. This is obviously inconsistent with any possible linear view of history. How then should we understand Nietzsche’s hope in the *Übermensch*? Lawrence Lampert argues,

> Caution with respect to the teaching of the superman can be seen to be in order if one measures the beginning of Zarathustra’s course by its end, for he begins as the teacher of the superman but ends as the teacher of eternal return. The first teaching requires a linear concept of time, with the meaning of time’s passage dependant on the future achievement of those who have contempt for the past. But the final teaching seems to contradict the notion that time is linear, that the past is worthy only of contempt, and that the future alone can be the ground of meaning. Interpretation of the superman teaching requires that it be reconciled with the doctrine of eternal return.²²

Lampert reconciles this apparent contradiction by arguing that the teaching of the first part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* should be understood as provisional. It is only Zarathustra as the herald of the *Übermensch* who teaches a progressive view. Zarathustra as *Übermensch* teaches eternal return.²³

Thus far I have only designated the *Übermensch* as a future improvement on the decadence which was characteristic of modern culture according to Nietzsche. What positive meaning does the doctrine of the *Übermensch* signify? A clue to interpreting the positive meaning of the *Übermench* can be found in Zarathustra’s proclamation that the *Übermench* is the “meaning of the earth.”²⁴ This can be interpreted as a rejection of the

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²³ Ibid., 81-82
traditional tendency to polarize humanity and world into separate spheres. Thus, when Zarathustra proclaims that man is something that must be overcome he is teaching that the Übermench is the overcoming of the polarity between man and world. This is a project that Nietzsche advocates throughout his writings:

The whole pose of ‘man against the world,’ of man as a ‘world negating’ principle, of man as the measure of the value of things, as judge of the world who in the end places existence itself upon the scales and finds it wanting- the monstrous insipidity of this pose has finally come home to us and we are sick of it.  

It is only the distinction between man and world that enables us to frown on the world when it does not correspond to our desires. It is this disposition that leads to a denial of the innocence of becoming in the positing of a goal toward which it aims. The Übermench in undermining the human/world distinction undermines the teleological impulse that flows from it. Thus, the Übermench is a goal, but it is a goal that undermines the possibility of all global goals. Nietzsche’s philosophy then, culminating in the doctrine of eternal recurrence, offers us a truly anti-teleological view of human history. In figure 6 there are no levels, merely a single point representing acceptance of the world as it is.

I have tried to argue that despite numerous similarities between Hegel and Nietzsche their basic ontological difference over divinity accounts for their differing views concerning the directionality of history. Nietzsche diagnoses teleology as a form of life denial that ultimately has its origins in the notion of God as that being that is privileged over the becoming of the world. However, while Nietzsche is a harsh critic of a certain kind of religious orientation I think it is possible to interpret his teachings

Fig. 6. Nietzsche

congering the Übermensch as right in line with a central focus of the world's great wisdom traditions. Overcoming the judgmental pose of man against the world is an essential prerequisite for meditative practice in many contemplative traditions. The meditator is instructed not to focus on the imperfections of the present moment as compared to some future moment. To use the language of Buddhism, this type of rejection of the present is a state of consciousness characterized by samsara (striving, judgment, non-acceptance, grasping). Rather, meditation is a focusing of consciousness on the present just as it is. Likewise, the Übermensch is one who has ceased judging the world and accepts it as it is. I have tried to show that this can be represented by a single point. However, thus far I have associated the perennial philosophy very closely with the great chain of Being. Could it be that this chain can be discarded once the top link has been reached and that Nietzsche's Übermensch represents this "attainment"? I think this reading makes sense. However, the following question now presents itself: If the top link of the great chain represents the discarding of all previous links then is there anyway to
distinguish the person who has attained this from the person who has not? In other words, can the wise be distinguished from the foolish? To use an example from Buddhism again, in the tradition of Zen many argued that because the doctrine of original enlightenment claims that all sentient beings are already enlightened, there is no need to practice formal meditation. Zen master Dogen is famous for arguing that although *samsara* and *nirvana* are not two, there is a sense in which they are as different as night and day.\(^\text{26}\) What is this sense? In the case of Nietzsche this question invites a close examination of the doctrine of eternal recurrence. Does its affirmation lead to transcendence and inclusion or regression and dissociation? Despite Nietzsche’s success in demonstrating the regressive rather than progressive tendency in the development of Western culture I think affirming the doctrine of eternal recurrence amounts to a reduction of philosophy to psychology which is itself regressive. To demonstrate this I will have to examine developmental thinking in the 20\(^{th}\) century by way of the philosophy of Ken Wilber. Wilber’s thought, I believe, represents an integration of the strongest elements in the thinking of Hegel and Nietzsche, and thus, an overcoming of the teleological impasse that divides them.

\(^{26}\) Zenji Dogen, “Recommending Zazen to All People” in *Enlightenment Unfolds: The Essential Teachings of Zen Master Dagen* ed. by Kazuaki Tanahashi (Boston: Shambhala, 2000) 32.
I have argued that both Hegel and Nietzsche have problems when it comes to purpose. Hegel's thought on purpose is characterized by a rational ontology that seems inadequate. Nietzsche's reduction of philosophy to psychology precludes even the possibility of exploring larger senses of purpose. I have also argued that 20th century philosophers can be divided into Hegelian and Nietzschean camps and some, like Tarnas, have argued that the core impulses lying at the root of these two camps are currently coming together in interesting ways. Ken Wilber's thought, I believe, represents the most important synthesis of these apparently contradictory impulses. To get an appreciation for this I will look at the argument of his main work, *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution*. This is the first volume in a projected three volume series to be entitled *The Kosmos Trilogy*. The sheer size of this book and the wealth of evidence it draws upon makes any attempt to summarize its argument a difficult task. However, my examination of teleology thus far has already opened up many of the key concepts of this book. In particular, the examination of Hegel and Nietzsche as developmentalists will help. However, summarizing Wilber's thought is necessarily more difficult because it attempts to incorporate 20th Century advancements in a wide cross section of disciplines. Its main aim is to trace the directionality of evolution in each ontological sphere. A secondary concern is the tracing of the evolution of the human relationship to the environment and the evolution of gender relations throughout history. I will focus,
however, on Wilber's ideas about teleology and evolution in general, and thus, will only mention gender and ecology when it is relevant to deeper developmental themes.

*Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* begins with an examination of the current ecological crisis which is characterized as an expression of the limits of our particular stage of development. A variety of movements have argued that the problem with the current stage of development is the notion of stage as such. In other words, ecological problems are the result of hierarchy. For example, many ecofeminists and deep ecologists have attacked the notion of hierarchy. Wilber argues that not only does this result in preformative contradiction, many developments in 20th century science which provide the theoretical background for these criticisms such as modern systems theory depend on a notion of hierarchy. Understanding this embracing of hierarchy requires understanding the problem to which modern systems theory is the solution. In physics, the second law of thermodynamics seemed to show that the universe is moving towards entropy. In biology however, Darwin seemed to show that evolution moves in the direction of increasing differentiation/integration, increasing structural organization, and increasing complexity. One aspect of reality appeared to be winding down and the other appeared to be winding up. Through its discovery of the self organizing properties of matter modern systems theory was able to provide a solution to the famous "two arrows of time" problem which separated biology and physics since Darwin. This opened the door for the claim that evolution follows the same basic patterns in every sphere of reality. To use terms borrowed from Teilhard de Chardin, the same evolutionary principles are at work in the physiosphere, the biosphere, and the noosphere. Wilber agrees with this; however, he argues that all previous attempts to articulate these principles have been reductive:
... the problem with virtually every attempt to outline the common patterns found in all three domains of evolution is simply that the patterns are presented in the language of objective naturalism ("it" language), and thus they fail miserably when applied to domains described only in I-language (aesthetics) and we-language (ethics). Every "unified systems attempt" that I have seen suffers from this crippling inadequacy.¹

Thus, for Wilber, these attempts take a method appropriate for understanding one sphere of reality and attempt to extend that method to all spheres. In so doing they collapse the Kosmos (physiosphere, biosphere, noosphere, and theosphere) into the cosmos (physiosphere and biosphere only). In this way systems theory embraces a one-sided hierarchy. Wilber's own attempt to articulate these principles in twenty tenets will, he argues, rehabilitate hierarchy in such a way that honors the Kosmos in all its aspects. In the same passage he goes on to write:

I have been very careful, therefore, to cut these tenets at a level and type of abstraction that is, I believe, fully compatible with it-, we-, and I- languages (or the true, the good, and the beautiful), so that the synthesis can proceed nonviolently into domains where previously systems theory was intent upon aggressive reductionism to its own naturalistic and objectifying terms.²

These twenty tenets define evolutionary patterns across ontological spheres. He summarizes these tenets in the concept of a holon, which is also the first tenet:

Reality is not composed of things or processes; it is not composed of atoms or quarks; it is not composed of wholes nor does it have any parts. Rather, it is composed of whole/parts or holons. This is true of atoms, cells, symbols, ideas. They can be understood neither as things nor processes, neither as wholes nor parts, but only as simultaneous whole/parts, so that the standard "atomistic" and "wholistic" attempts are both way off the mark. There is nothing that isn't a holon (upwardly and downwardly forever).³

While we can see a strong influence from Hegel's Logic on Wilber's theory of holons, we can also begin to see connections with Nietzsche and the "unmasking impulse" noted by

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² Ibid., 33.
³ Ibid., 33.
Tarnas. In his explication of the first tenet Wilber calls on the tradition of which Nietzsche is the fountainhead:

The “postmodern poststructuralists” – usually associated with such names as Derrida, Foucault, Jean-Francois Lyotard, and stretching back to George Bataille and Nietzsche – have been the great foes of any sort of systematic theory or “grand narrative”, and thus they might be expected to raise stern objections to any overall theory of “holarchy”. But a close look at their work shows that it is driven precisely by a conception of holons within holons within holons, of texts within texts within texts (or contexts within contexts within contexts), and it is this sliding play of texts within texts that forms the “foundationless” platform from which they launch their attacks.  

This openness to the unmasking impulse extends to an embrace of deconstruction. Derrida, an interesting synthesizer of Hegel and Nietzsche in his own right, is interpreted by Wilber, not as denying truth, but as insisting that truth and meaning are context bound. This insight has rightly lead many in the unmasking camp to criticize the Hegelian quest for the Whole as a quest for a contextless causi sui or transcendental signifier. This does not mean the death of metaphysics, as Miklowitz’ interpretation of the relationship between Hegel and Nietzsche holds, but of a certain type of metaphysics. We need not abandon the attempt to synthesize disparate elements of our experience in favor of an absolute perspectivism in the absence of a contextless ground. However, we must abandon the notion that the aim of this project is Hegel’s Whole. Wilber modifies Hegel’s Whole in accordance with his theory of holons:

... I will usually refer to the sum total of events in the universe not as the “Whole” (which implies the ultimate priority of wholeness over partness) but as “the All” (which is the sum total of whole/parts). And this sum total is not itself a whole but a whole/part: as soon as you think “the All,” your own thought has added yet another holon to the All (so that the first All is no longer the All but merely part of the new All), and so off we go indefinitely, never arriving at that which we symbolize as the “All,” which is why it is never a whole but an

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4 Ibid., 38.
5 Ibid., 39.
unending series of whole/parts (with the series itself a whole/part – and so on “transfinitely”).

Later, combining ideas from Whitehead and Teilhard de Chardin, Wilber will call the All the manifest omega point for each finite thing. However, it is in his designation of the unmanifest omega point that he supplements Western teleological notions with mysticism and Eastern thought.

While I can not look at the twenty tenets in detail, to understand Wilber’s teleological view, I must examine the twelfth tenet, for it is here that Wilber treats the notion of teleology specifically. The twelfth tenet states that evolution has directionality. Although regressions and arrests occur, evolution moves in the direction of increasing complexity, increasing differentiation/integration, increasing organization/structuration, increasing relative autonomy, and increasing telos. Increasing complexity is the mark of evolution. However, as Wilber points out, each new level of complexity contains within it a higher grade of simplicity because the new whole is simpler than its formerly disconnected parts. For example, cells are structurally more complex than molecules. However, they are simpler, at a higher level of system function, then the many molecules that make them up. Likewise, molecules are simpler, at a higher level of system function, than the many atoms that make them up. Finally, atoms are simpler, at a higher level of system function, than the many subatomic particles that make them up. Evolution also moves in the direction of increased differentiation/integration: “Differentiation produces new partness, or a new “manyness; integration produces wholeness, or a new “oneness.”

And since holons are whole/parts they are formed by the joint action of differentiation

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6 Ibid., 37.
7 Ibid., 628.
and integration.” Here we can also see a synthesis of the warring impulses inspired by Hegel and Nietzsche. While both Hegel and Nietzsche emphasized a correlation of apparent opposites like differentiation and integration such that no perspective is excluded, it is true that many contemporary thinkers in both the “unmasking camp” and the “integration camp” privilege one or the other. Quoting Whitehead, Wilber writes,

... evolution requires both differentiation and integration operating together — “the many become one and are increased by one” — and indeed, these two normally (in healthy holarchies) occur conjointly, which is why I usually write it as “differentiation/integration.” These appear as opposites (or utterly opposed tendencies) only in flatland ontology where more of the one means less of the other. But in the multidimensional Kosmos, more of one means more of the other. They join hands endlessly to produce new whole/parts or many/ones or holons. The dialectics of depth...

Evolution also moves in the direction of increasing organization/structuration.

This simply means that the problems present at one level of complexity are resolved at a higher level of organization. Wilber uses the biological distinction between clades and grades to illustrate this point. A clade is a group with a common ancestor and a grade is a group at the same level of organization or depth. A new grade represents an increase in organization. Evolution also moves in the direction of increasing relative autonomy. This means that a holon’s capacity for self preservation in the midst of change increases. Finally, evolution moves in the direction of increasing telos. The deep structure or form of a particular holon acts as a “pull” for the actualization of that holon. Wilber argues that teleology was eclipsed because the empirical sciences got their start by studying those holons that exemplify a minimal degree of creativity — “rocks in

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8 Ibid., 68.
9 Ibid., 71.
10 Ibid., 71.
motion (mass moving through space over time).”\textsuperscript{11} The success of prediction in these spheres led to a collapsing of the reconstructive sciences into the predictive sciences. It also caused a kind of physics envy that inspired a reductive program in which a wide variety of disciplines attempted to squeeze their subject matter into a predictive model. This had the most devastating effect on the humanities, formerly those disciplines which took as their subject matter the highest levels of the great chain of Being were now reduced to a method thought to be appropriate for the lowest levels. However, Wilber argues, the development of physics in the 20th century has shown that even in the physiosphere things are not that simple. Quantum mechanics revealed that we can not achieve 100% predictive certainty even with rocks. Thus, for Wilber, all sciences are reconstructive sciences. Certainty can be achieved in no area. Thinkers in all disciplines must wait, observe, and then reconstruct their system.\textsuperscript{12}

At this stage in his argument Wilber does not go into detail about developments in physics that mark a revival of teleological thinking. I will mention two such developments. The emerging “sciences of complexity” can be contrasted with the previously predominant focus on simplicity. These sciences study how simple elements develop into complex systems. In physics, the question of why simple particles obeying simple rules will sometimes self organize to form more complex structures has lead some physicists to posit a hidden yearning for order in the heart of reality. Speculation about the anthropic principle has lead to similar conclusions. According to this principle, the fundamental constants of physics must be such that what we expect to observe is restricted to the conditions required for our presence as observers. While this might seem

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 48.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 48.
like a tautology, these constants are such that extremely slight variations would render life impossible. Thus, they seem finely calibrated for the eventual emergence of life.

While fierce debates rage in physics, we might suspect that it is biology that will provide the most glaring exception to Wilber’s twelfth tenet. Regarding the biosphere Wilber says remarkably little other than that biologists recognize direction towards future functions.\textsuperscript{13} What does directionality mean in this context? Despite its anthropomorphic ring doesn’t Darwin’s theory of natural selection give us an account of the Kosmos without invoking anything other than blind chance? Thus, making use of Dennett’s distinction, it might be said that natural selection is like a crane rather than a skyhook.

Dennett argues that while skyhooks would be useful in a wide variety of situations where lifting is required, unfortunately, there are no such things in the real world. Likewise, teleological explanations are not real explanations in that they do not make reference to real things in this world. While skyhooks do not exist, however, cranes do. Cranes like skyhooks are lifters but they are built from the ground up out of materials that are found in this world and are readily available. Thus, cranes do their work “in an honest, non question begging fashion.”\textsuperscript{14} But cranes are not inherently non question begging. It is true that while biologists, as Wilber notes, use the language of directionality (design, purpose, etc.) what they do not do, at least as biologists, is talk about natural selection itself as having a purpose. But this is an open philosophical question. As a metaphysical materialist Dennett would have to answer this question negatively. However, many with different metaphysical presuppositions have argued persuasively that natural selection

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 76.
itself is best understood as a purposive process. Dennett cannot argue that the choice between cranes and skyhooks amounts to a choice between materialism and rival metaphysical theories open to teleology lest he beg the question in favor of materialism. In explaining Wilber's thought I hope to show that it is possible to affirm teleology without reference to skyhooks at all.

As for the noosphere, Wilber argues that liberation from physics envy has allowed the first glimpses of the mind's *telos* to emerge. He cites examples of teleological thinking at the level of mind in what I have called the unmasking camp and the integrative camp. However, he does not provide a positive account of this *telos*:

Now, I haven't actually mentioned the nature or the actual content of the mind's omega point, its basic attractor, its end state toward which earlier stages are struggling to reach, because it is at this point that the story becomes truly fascinating. The mind's omega point, *for each theorist*, is the context that they believe *cannot* be outcontexted, the context beyond which growth or expansion cannot or does not or should not proceed.

He goes on to cite various modern versions of this *telos* (Freud - genital organization and integrated ego, Piaget - formal operational thinking, Hegel - rational state, Marx - communist utopia, Teilahard de Chardin - resurrection of Christ consciousness, etc.) While each theorist's version of the mind's *telos* is usually presented in such a way that other versions of this *telos* are simply distorted versions of their own account, Wilber sees important moments of truth in all these systems. However, most are modern in holding that reason gives us or is the ultimate *telos*. Wilber's system can be described as

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postmodern in that it recognizes levels beyond the rational. To understand this we have to look more closely at his epistemology.

I have argued that, according to Wilber, previous attempts by systems theorists to rehabilitate hierarchy have been reductive. This is because they were based on an epistemological vision that was too narrow. By limiting themselves to empirically observable phenomena they were able to capture information about each ontological sphere because the physiosphere is included in the biosphere and the noosphere. However, higher order biospheric and noospheric phenomena simply could not be adequately explained in terms of the laws of physics. Thus, Wilber argues that a full epistemology includes the empirical objective approach to the behavior of individual holons as well as the interpretive approach to their interiors. Furthermore, this full epistemology would include the study of social holons in both their exterior and interior dimensions. The empirical, objective approach to understanding the surface aspect of holons (extension) can be found in the sciences which all ask the behavioral question “what does this do?” The orientation here can be described as monological or structural/functional. In contrast, the interpretive, subjective approach to understanding the depth of holons (intension) can be found in those disciplines that aim at mutual understanding and are usually classified under the Humanities. The orientation here is dialogical or hermeneutical. The question that drives all disciplines in the Humanities is “what does this mean?” We can think of the left side of a vertical axis as representing interiors and the right side as representing exteriors. If we then think of the top of the horizontal axis representing individuality and the bottom as representing sociality we can begin to conceptualize Wilber’s four quadrants. See figure 7.
All right hand disciplines (upper and lower) study the behavior of observable surface structures. The orientation in these disciplines is monological, structural, and functional. They advance propositional truth claims that are tested by correspondence. This is the realm of the “It”, Plato’s truth, Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* (What can I know?), Popper’s first world. Left hand disciplines study interiors or meanings that cannot be directly observed empirically. Understanding meaning requires interpretation. Thus, the orientation in these disciplines is dialogical, experiential, and subjective. Following Habermas, Wilber argues that in the upper left quadrant (interior individual) the validity criterion is not correspondence but sincerity. This is the realm of the “I”, Plato’s
Beautiful, Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* (In what can I hope?), Popper’s second world. In the lower left quadrant (social cultural) the validity criterion is cultural fit, mutual understanding, intersubjective agreement. This is the realm of the “We”, Plato’s Good, Kant’s *Critique of Practical Reason* (What should I do?), Popper’s third world.

Wilber argues that both right and left hand forms of disclosure are needed because every holon has all four aspects. In the above diagram each quadrant is divided by an arrow which is itself divided into thirteen sections. These arrows represent teleological directionality in each of the four quadrants. The stages of development in each quadrant can be seen in figure 8.

As I examine the rest of the argument of *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* I will be considering whether or not the pattern represented here makes sense. However, it should be noted that Wilber would acknowledge that this model is incomplete. This is because, first, although he affirms with neo-Hegelians such as Fukuyama that history as the struggle for recognition has come to an end, as I have noted, he believes that there are structures of consciousness beyond the rational-egoic structure that gave birth to modern liberal democracies. Thus, history itself has not come to an end with the blooming of the rational structure of consciousness, only rational-egoic history. Second, as a thoroughgoing fallibilist he would allow for the possibility that future developments could necessitate revision or rejection of his model. Here we see a major difference with Hegel’s system which presented the modern state as the highest stage of cultural and social development and reason resulting in certainty as the highest stage of cognitive/spiritual development.
It should be clear that the four quadrants enables Wilber to trace development in all its facets from the big bang to the present: 1) upper right (exterior individual): atoms to molecules to cells to organisms to neural organisms to triune brained neural organisms, 2) lower right (exterior social): superclusters to galaxies to planets to Gaia to ecosystems to groups/families to villages to nation states to planetary systems, 3) upper left (interior individual): prehension to sensation to impulse to image to symbol to concept to con-op to form-op to vision logic, 4) lower left (interior social): physical to pleromatic to

Fig. 8. Wilber
[Reprinted, by permission, from Shambhala, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, pg. 193]
protoplasmic to vegetative to locomotive to uroboric to typhonic to archaic to magic to mythic to rational to centauric.

I will focus on only a slice of this developmental pattern, the human slice. This has the advantage of being the least esoteric and thus affords the best grounds for comparison with Hegel and Nietzsche. Wilber argues that human history shows the relationship of individual cognitive development and the development of shared world-views and moralities. In the area of individual cognitive development he draws heavily on the ideas of Piaget. In the area of shared world views many philosophers working in the tradition of Hegel such as Aurobindo and Teilhard de Chardin had previously argued that history is a spiritual unfolding. Later theorists such as Jean Gebser and Jurgen Habermas attempted to support this view with anthropological data and specify stages of world-view development. Finally, in the area of moral development theorists such as Kohlberg have argued that moral development moves through distinct stages. Thus, I will now examine Wilber’s ideas about human evolution in which he joins Piaget’s stages of individual cognitive development (sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational) and Kohlberg’s ideas of moral development (preconventional, conventional and postconventional) to Gebser’s structures of collective consciousness development (archaic, magic, mythic, rational, integral) and Habermas’ anthropological grounding of these stages. The focus on the development of world-views in particular will enable a reassessment of Aristotle, Hegel, and Nietzsche in terms of the developmental stage of which their thought is an expression. However, before examining this aspect of Wilber’s thought I will try to anticipate some possible misunderstandings. First, the following structures define the average mode of consciousness for people living
at that particular time. Of course, history is full of individuals who were able to transcend the average mode of consciousness of their times and penetrate the highest levels of awareness. Second, it is tempting to think of this sequence of consciousness development on the model of blocks stacked on top of one another. On this model, a lower stage of development must be completed before a higher stage can begin. In fact, it is much more complex than that. Wilber argues that various capacities can develop in relative independence from one another. For example, it is altogether possible for an individual person to be at a rather high stage of cognitive development while at the same time being at a rather low stage of moral development. It is no different at the collective social/cultural level. In his most recent writings Wilber has adopted the model of spiraling dynamics to capture this complexity.

The first structure of consciousness is the archaic structure (preconventional/sensorimotor). This structure begins 3 to 6 million years ago and covers all structures of consciousness up to and including the first hominids prior to the dawn of self-consciousness. Following Piaget Wilber argues that this stage is characterized by autism, thought in which truth is confused with desire, and magic, the state in which desire is believed to influence objects. These characteristics point to a consciousness in which self and world have yet to be differentiated. With the emergence of homo sapiens from 200,000 to 150,000 B.C.E. the species begins to move into the magical stage (conventional/preoperational). While the world is still experienced


as magical a number of important developments take place. First, at about 10,000 B.C.E. farming is discovered. Second, this stage marks the emergence of a rudimentary self-sense, the beginnings of language, and the expansion of consciousness beyond present needs to future concerns. This stage also marks the transition from archaic packs to families. These families eventually organize into clans, and finally, clans group themselves into tribes. In the neolithic tribe, individual identity was established by clearly defined roles within the tribe and collective identity is secured through kinship ties to a common ancestor. The limits of this stage manifested when groups who could not be traced back to a common ancestor were encountered. Without a common ancestor tribalism has no resources for socially integrating varying interests. Thus, while the magic stage marks the beginnings of a differentiation of self and world, the social and the natural remain undifferentiated.20

The mythic structure (conventional/concrete operational) overcomes this limit. In the second millennium B.C.E. cultural evolution shows evidence of a new form of thinking that transfers magical power to superhuman beings. The expansion and codification of stories about these beings (myths) allows for the integration of the varying interests of non-genetically related tribes. Membership is now secured not by blood ties but by acceptance of the prevailing mythology. However, this strategy, because it is inherently sociocentric, simply transfers the problem to a higher level. It works as long as everyone accepts the myth but it did not have the resources to integrate the interests of those who would not. Thus, starting at about 500 B.C.E. the mythic stage came into conflict with new views of reality. This marks the beginning of the transitional

20 Ibid., 164-169.
mythic/rational period (post-conventional/concrete-operational). In the west the old mythologies were challenged by Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Later, as the ancient state gives way to the empire, the universalistic themes within Christianity will be exploited by a new mythic imperialism. Habermas writes,

...imperially developed civilizations had to secure their collective identity in a way that presupposed a break with mythological thought. The universalistic world interpretations of the great founders of religions and of the great philosophers grounded a commonality of conviction mediated through a teaching tradition and permitting only abstract objects of identification. As members of universal communities of faith, citizens could recognize their ruler and the order represented by him so long as it was possible to render political domination plausible in some sense as the legacy of an order and of salvation that was believed in and posited absolutely. 21

It is at the emergence of what Wilber calls the mythic/rational stage of development that we see a divergence in the interpretations of history offered by Hegel and Nietzsche. While Hegel interprets Socrates as a positive unfolding of Spirit, Nietzsche interprets him as the beginning of decadence in the West. Unlike the early Greeks, Socrates did not have the strength to embrace the world on its own terms. Thus, he escaped the world by ascending to rational abstraction. Platonism is the philosophical systematization of this ascending impulse and Christianity is its popularization. Wilber, while arguing that mythic/rationalism represents many advances over previous forms of social integration as noted above, agrees with Nietzsche's critique of the ascending ideal that characterizes this structure. 22 However, his account of its origin is somewhat different. While Nietzsche clearly places much of the blame for this impulse squarely on the shoulders of Plato, Wilber blames Aristotle. Following Lovejoy, Wilber argues that while Plato is

22 Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, 205.
often interpreted as a pure Ascender, his thought taken as a whole in fact represents an integration of both Ascent and Decent. This is clearly seen in the allegory of the cave; the escaped prisoner does not remain in the world above but descends back into the cave to free those still in bondage. Lovejoy writes of Plato,

\[\ldots\] his own philosophy no sooner reaches its climax in what we might call an otherworldly direction than it reverses its course. Having arrived at the conception of an Idea of Ideas which is a pure perfection alien to all the categories of ordinary thought and in need of nothing external to itself, he forthwith finds in just this transcendent and absolute Being the necessitating logical ground of the existence of this world; and he does not stop short of the assertion of the necessity and worth of the existence of all conceivable kinds of finite, temporal, imperfect, and corporeal beings.\[23\]

Wilber, commenting on this aspect of Plato highlighted by Lovejoy, writes,

And so, after establishing an ascending “return to the One,” Plato then sets forth a genuinely creation-centered spirituality, an effulgence and embrace of the radiant splendor of the Many. The purely ascended One, far from being a complete Perfection in itself, is viewed as decidedly inferior to a One that also flows out of itself and into all manifestation, into all creation. Indeed, for Plato, an Absolute that cannot create is no Absolute at all, and thus true Perfection means a Perfection whose superabundance flows out into all beings without exception.\[24\]

These two sides of Plato can clearly be seen in the thinking of later philosophers such as Plotinus. However, on the whole it was not the integration of ascent and descent that was emphasized in the subsequent interpretation of Plato, but rather, ascension only. This can be most clearly seen in the thought of Aristotle. As I mentioned in my treatment of Aristotle’s metaphysics, while the world aims toward God as its final cause God does not aim back toward the world. Thus, Aristotle’s God is a God of pure Ascent and it is this God that becomes “God” in the unfolding of Western culture. Why? Wilber argues that the emergence of Christianity as the dominant myth provides the answer:


Plotinus had held the Ascending and Descending currents together admirably, expressing and polishing the original Platonic nonduality. And the nondual school of Plato/Plotinus would have almost certainly carried the day – as the essentially similar Nondual systems of Shankara and Nagarjuna would do for Hinduism and Buddhism, respectively – were it not for one overwhelming and utterly decisive factor: the entrance on the scene of mythic-literal Christianity. With its mythic-dissociated God ontologically divorced from nature and human nature – what Tillich called “the strict dualism of a divine sphere in heaven and a human sphere on earth” – there was no way to finally ground God in this world. And thus, no way that a human being's final destiny could be realized in this life, on this earth. Thus, the other-worldly Ascenders, fractured through and through – and driven, as all exclusive Ascenders are, by Phobos (fear of earth, body, nature, women, sex, and sense) – could and would dominate (although never exclusively rule) the Western scene for a millennium.25

The Roman/Christian empire represents a transcendence of earlier mythic limits in many respects, most importantly regarding the beginnings of a post-conventional morality that recognized equality of all citizens under law and all humans in the eyes of God.

However, while all stages of development are suspicious of stages that lie beyond it, in the west the transition from mythic to rational was problematized by the interpretation of the realization of Jesus as unique and unreproducible. While this allowed for imperial-political cohesion, Wilber argues that it is the intensity with which this realization was reduced to the mythic structure that was problematic. While myths surround the stories of Adepts from other traditions only in mythic Christianity was the realization of unity with the deepest levels of reality reserved for one. Thus, integration could not be achieved:

The peculiar and net effect of all this was that, although the God of the Church was primarily an Ascending God - in this aspect, otherworldly to the core – there was no way to consummate the Ascension, not even for the leading edge few; only Jesus had done that. And while we might to varying degrees “participate” in Christ’s nature, there could be no true and whole-bodied Realization and Ascension until after death, at some other time, and certainly in some other world. This world is merely a runway for the real takeoff. Precisely because there was no way to consummate Ascension in this body, in this life, on this earth, there was

25 Ibid., 350.
no way whatsoever for the Way Up to spill over into the Way Down. No way for causal level Oneness with the Good to issue forth in all-pervading, all embracing Goodness, grounded thoroughly in this world, resplendent as the entire world. The extraordinary reversal that Plato (and all nondual realizers) had made – transcend this world, awaken as this world – could not be called upon as compass.26

This Ascending flight built on Aristotle's God, the Ascending side of Plato, and the mythic interpretation of Jesus characterized Western culture for the next thousand years and began to give way only with the dawn of the Renaissance. It should be clear that this account of the mythic/rational structure of consciousness represents an affirmation of Nietzsche's charge of a decadent downturn in Western cultural development from Socrates to the Renaissance within a progressive teleological framework influenced heavily by Hegel.

The dawn of the Renaissance marks the beginning of the transition from the mythic/rational structure to the rational (post-conventional/formal-operational). Wilber argues that modernity represents good news and bad news. The good news is the movement beyond myths to rationality and evidence. This does not lead to a rejection of the great chain of Being. In fact, Lovejoy argues that there is no other time in history when the idea was more popular.27 However, the rejection of myth resulted in the rejection of Ascent and this is the bad news.28 Thus, with modernism comes a radical ontological "flattening" of the great chain of Being to those dimensions that can be studied empirically (right hand). The vertical dimensions of the great chain (depth/height) were ignored and emphasis was placed on the horizontal (span). All of this amounted to exchanging a purely Ascended God for a purely Descended God. With

26 Ibid., 355.
27 Lovejoy, Great Chain, 183-184.
those aspects of the great chain studied by way of left hand disciplines ignored phenomena such as values and purpose were interpreted as groundless. This is Weber’s “disenchantment of the world picture” and it coincides with the eclipse of teleological thinking. With the epistemological emphasis now exclusively to the Right, there results a differentiation of “the big three” (the true, the good, and the beautiful) in the Kantian culmination of the Enlightenment project. From a developmental perspective the central project of post-Kantian philosophy is the integration of these spheres at a higher level. Wilber argues that this project is pursued by way of the question of the subject’s place in nature. One strand of post-Kantian thought characterizes the self as separate from nature. Kant’s autonomous subject provided the paradigm example and this notion would be the focus point of a new Ascending impulse. Another strand characterizes the self as immersed in nature. According to Wilber the limits of both approaches eventually became apparent. Followers of the first approach, whom Wilber calls the ego camp, in their search for freedom from nature and social constraint tended to ignore exteriors. Followers of the second approach, whom Wilber calls the eco camp, tended to characterize reason as the cause of alienation from nature and thus, tended to devalue its importance. The first tendency manifests itself conceptually in the absolute subject of Fichte; the second in Spinoza’s one infinite substance or object. Fichte gives us pure freedom separated from nature. Spinoza gives us connection with nature but forfeiture of freedom. Concerning this relationship Taylor writes,

> What is missing in Fichte, the grounding of nature in some cosmic spiritual principle, can be found in Spinoza, who offers union with a cosmic substance. But this system suffered from the opposite fault, that in it finite subjectivity seemed to sink without a trace. 29

What Wilber calls “the agony of modernity” is the fracture between a purely Ascended subject and a purely Descended object. While the big three had been differentiated, the question of how to integrate them remained. The longer this problem remained the more these realms separated into dissociation. The later movements of Romanticism and Positivism are simply the continuation of this fracture.

Wilber argues that it was the German Idealists, Schelling and Hegel, who would make the most plausible attempt to reconcile Ascent and Decent, integrate the “big three,” and thus move beyond the rational structure of consciousness. Thus, German Idealism represents an attempt to move from the rational structure of consciousness to the integral or planetary structure (post-conventional/vision logic). Wilber argues the strength of German Idealism lies in its intuition of the transpersonal domain expressed in vision-logic. He provides a definition of vision-logic in the following passage:

As rationality continues its quest for a truly universal or global or planetary outlook, noncoercive in nature, it eventually gives way to a type of cognition I call vision-logic or network logic. Where rationality gives all possible perspectives, vision-logic adds them up into a totality, which is simply a new and higher interior holon. Aurobindo gave the classic description of vision-logic, which “can freely express itself in single ideas, but its most characteristic movement is mass ideation, a system or totality of truth-seeing at a single view; the relations of idea with idea, of truth with truth, self-seen in the integral whole.” What I am trying to do in this book, and what you are trying to do as you read it (or other similar books), is use vision-logic: not just reasonably decide the individual issues, but hold them all together at once in mind, and judge how they fit together as a truth-vision. In other words, vision logic is a higher holon that operates upon (and thus transcends) its junior holons, such as simple rationality itself. As such, vision-logic can hold in mind contradictions, it can unify opposites, it is dialectical and nonlinear, and it weaves together what otherwise appear to be incompatible notions, as long as they relate together in the new and higher holon, negated in their partiality but preserved in their positive contributions.

31 Ibid., 507.
32 Ibid., 185.
It is this that Hegel called “Reason” and it is through Reason that the Idealists would argue that both subject and object were different movements of one reality, Spirit, actualizing itself in stages of evolutionary development. Thus, nature is objective Spirit, mind is subjective Spirit, and both are transcended in the synthesis of subject and object where Spirit knows itself as Spirit. The idealists viewed nature not merely as an interlocking system of objects (its) but as potential subjects (I) that live in a community (we). Thus, the idealists integrated the “big three” as moments in the unfolding of Spirit. This process whereby Spirit becomes conscious of itself is evolution and the purpose of this process is the transcending of limits.

Despite the depth of this integration, Wilber argues that German Idealism collapsed soon after it was constructed. There were two reasons for this. First, he argues that they failed to provide a method or practice whereby their insights could be reproduced. Thus, German Idealism was soon branded as “mere metaphysics.” Second, while the idealist program was driven by a mystical intuition of nonduality, this intuition was expressed exclusively through vision-logic and this was a task that vision-logic was not adequate to perform. This, the equation of thinking with being, is what I criticized Hegel for in my examination of his system. I now want to contrast the responses of Nietzsche and Wilber to this failure.

Nietzsche’s response to the failure of Idealism was to interpret it as the last failure of the Western tradition as a whole. Thus, he abandoned the philosophical project of attempting to articulate the idea of God and identified the motivating psychological force behind Western metaphysics as hatred of life. Despite this, Nietzsche is a developmentalist who, like Wilber, is interested in the movement beyond reason.
However, a compelling account of this movement would have to be conveyed at least partially through something like vision-logic. But, Nietzsche eschews vision-logic: “I distrust all systematizers and stay out of their way. The will to a system is a lack of integrity.”33 From a developmental perspective, it can be asked how the movement beyond the rational structure of consciousness could be articulated if its highest potential is associated with vice? I will argue that from a developmental point of view there are good reasons to reject Nietzsche’s reduction of philosophy to psychology and this opens up the possibility of purpose in the developmental unfolding of history. Furthermore, my examination of Wilber’s thought has shown that many of Nietzsche’s insights can be incorporated into a teleological framework. Wilber, while happy to abandon the traditional quest for certainty and the modern divorce of speculation from practice (mere metaphysics) is none the less a metaphysical thinker. He argues that while the Idealist integration ultimately failed to bring about a movement to the transrational, despite its promise, so too did Nietzsche’s proclamation of the death of God:

.... my conclusion will be that in throwing out a prerational, anthropomorphic, mythic God figure, the “modern West” also tossed out any transrational, nonanthropomorphic, superconscient Godhead. Gone was a mass of bathwater; gone too a precious baby.34

In a sense, both Hegel and Nietzsche fail to move to the transrational for the same reason. While the Idealists could be charged with engaging in mere metaphysical speculation, so too can Nietzsche. Eternal recurrence, while a brilliant piece of metaphysical speculation, doesn’t have much to do with evidence or the way things actually are. The defender of eternal recurrence has three options here all of which can be justified on the

basis of Nietzsche’s texts. First, she might argue that eternal recurrence is merely a psychological test for *amor fati* (love of fate/ strength). However, it seems that unless eternal recurrence is taken seriously as a real possibility, unless it is a “live option” to use James’ language, it is hard to see how it could possibly have the existential impact that Nietzsche wanted it to have. If the merely psychological interpretation of eternal recurrence is discarded there are two remaining possibilities. The defender of eternal recurrence might argue that it is in fact an accurate account of the way the world is. In this case she could be charged with going beyond the evidence and a critical audience would be justified in suspending judgment until such evidence is provided. However, the defender of eternal recurrence might then take the remaining option and argue that the whole notion of “the way things actually are” is an expression of weakness which can be remedied by adopting the doctrine of eternal recurrence. However, this clearly begs the question. If she then argues that the notion of question begging is an expression of weakness then it would seem that in this case eternal recurrence facilitates a move to a prerational rather than a transrational structure of consciousness.

Wilber’s project can be understood as an attempt to avoid the problems that caused both Hegelian and Nietzschean attempts to move to the transrational. Hegel’s rational ontology identifies vision logic and Spirit and Nietzsche’s thinking stops short of vision logic. Wilber will move through vision logic by grounding his metaphysical theorizing in experience. The influence of Hegel is clear here. However, unlike Hegel, Wilber will argue that careful examination of experience ultimately reveals injunctive practices whereby the transrational claims of the world’s great wisdom traditions can be
reproduced.\textsuperscript{35} To explain how he accomplishes this grounding I will examine his philosophical method. This method has three steps. The first step is phenomenological. At this stage he looks at different fields of human knowledge and attempts to ascertain that which is generally agreed upon in each area. He calls these agreements “orienting generalizations”. Sex, Ecology, Spirituality assembles a vast array of such generalizations from the physical, biological, and human sciences. The second step is systematic. This stage is concerned with finding a system that would accommodate the greatest number of these truths. Wilber believes that the system articulated in Sex, Ecology, Spirituality incorporates the greatest number of truths from the greatest number of areas of human inquiry. The third step in Wilber’s philosophical method is critical. Once an adequate system is articulated it can be used to criticize more limited approaches.\textsuperscript{36} Thus, while Wilber is a metaphysician, his philosophy could not be described as “mere metaphysics”: “I suppose many readers will insist on calling what I am doing “metaphysics,” but if “metaphysics” means thought without evidence, there is not a metaphysical sentence in this entire book.”\textsuperscript{37} This is why Wilber’s thought cannot be characterized as a skyhook.

How can this methodology illuminate the next jump in the development of consciousness? Wilber’s application of this method to the area of religion provides the answer. He argues that an examination of the world’s great wisdom traditions reveals that they are all basically variations on the perennial philosophy. The term “perennial

\textsuperscript{35} It is here where all of the idealists, even Schelling, ultimately failed. Wilber’s project can be understood as an attempt to revive the idealist project in the spirit of late Schelling, by arguing that Schelling’s positive/existential attempt to move beyond vision logic can be realized through contemplative practices taught by the world’s great religions. Volume 3 of The Kosmos Trilogy will be devoted entirely to idealism.

\textsuperscript{36} Wilber, One Taste, 17.

\textsuperscript{37} Wilber, Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, x.
philosophy" refers to orienting generalizations in the area of religion. While there are many points of agreement among the world’s great religions, perennialists argue that these can all be understood as expressions of a belief in the great chain of Being. Summarizing the world’s major religions, Huston Smith writes “The basic claim of religion is that God’s relation to the world presents us with paradigmatic instance of a benign, empowering hierarchy.” In all traditions there are a small number of people who are able to break through to higher levels of the hierarchy, thus achieving enlightenment, salvation, liberation, etc. This is the movement to the transrational at the level of the individual. However, there is no use in examining this movement if the idea on which it is based is a fiction. Nietzsche’s rejection of the great chain marks the beginnings of the postmodern pessimism concerning deep structure. Thus, before I examine Wilber’s account of the transrational I will examine his restructuring of the great chain of Being.

Traditional models of the great chain of Being tend to arrange reality from less real to more real including levels of matter, body, mind, soul, and spirit. According to Wilber, all such models suffer from four major problems. First, while traditional models are supposed to account for all of Being these levels in fact only describe the upper left quadrant. Traditional models of the great chain were therefore vulnerable to the critiques of modernity. Thus, in Wilber’s model each level will include the four quadrants: upper

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38 These agreements include the following: 1) There is a spiritual reality in some sense, 2) Humans are in some sense spiritual beings, and 3) Humans can have authentic spiritual experiences. Furthermore, there is a tremendous amount of agreement in detail on ethical matters. While there is a great deal of disagreement in dogma, ritual, etc. in every tradition there have been a minority of practitioners who have placed less emphasis on those aspects of religion about which particular traditions tend to disagree. What these people say about the nature of reality at the deepest level is remarkably similar regardless of tradition. It is this “common core” that has been called the perennial philosophy.

left, lower left, upper right, and lower right. Second, traditional models of the great chain were static. Starting with Hegel we see attempts to put the great chain in motion and Wilber’s model will follow this trend. Third, developmental psychology has shown that the level of mind needs to be subdivided into four major stages: pre-operational, concrete-operational, formal-operational, and vision-logic. Finally, because traditional models of the great chain lacked these divisions in the development of mind they failed to adequately capture the prerational and to understand the problems that can arise from complications at this level. One result of this was a confusion of prerational with the transrational. Thus, lunatics and mystics were seen as equally touched by the divine and this eventually made it easy for modernity to dismiss all forms of spirituality as prerational.\(^{40}\) Now that the stages of cognitive development are more adequately understood what Wilber calls the “pre/trans fallacy” can be avoided in the search for evidence of the transrational. His claim is that a representative sampling of the world’s contemplative disciplines suggests that there are four structures of consciousness beyond the rational.\(^{41}\)

The first transrational structure he calls the psychic structure. This structure is characterized by mystical union with nature. Wilber cites Emerson’s nature mysticism as an example of this structure of consciousness. Here the universal nature of vision-logic passes over into a direct experience of universal selfhood at one with nature.\(^{42}\) Apart from the connection to vision-logic, the closeness of this structure of consciousness to nature suggests a possible connection with Nietzsche’s Übermensch. However, the next

\(^{40}\) Wilber, *One Taste*, 114-119.
\(^{41}\) Wilber, *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*, 277.
\(^{42}\) Ibid., 279-292.
transrational structure of consciousness, the subtle structure, would have been described by Nietzsche as regressive rather than progressive. In this realm of consciousness nature mysticism gives way to deity mysticism:

That Spirit which is within and beyond the Earth, which is prior to the Earth but not other to the Earth, that Spirit which is the source and support and goal of all – that Spirit is intuited at the psychic and comes to the fore in the subtle stage of consciousness evolution, utterly including the previous stages, utterly outshining them. Let the Earth and Cosmos and Worlds dissolve, and see Spirit still shining in the Emptiness, never arising, never dissolving, never blinking once in the worlds of created time.\(^{43}\)

This passage describes the subtle realm as constant, unchanging Spirit. Wilber cites the writings of Teresa of Avila as providing an example of subtle level awareness.\(^{44}\) He will use Meister Eckhart and Sri Ramana Maharshi both as providing examples of the next two structures of consciousness. At the level of the causal structure of consciousness deity mysticism gives way to formless mysticism. Different traditions refer to this structure with different names: pure Emptiness, the formless unmanifest, the abyss, etc. Wilber notes that Eckhart refers to this structure as “God beyond God,” “the essence of the subject,” and “mindless awareness.” Ramana refers to it as “I-I” because it is that which witnesses the ordinary self.\(^{45}\) This structure is without qualities and thus can only be only be described negatively. It is at the level of the causal that we can appreciate Wilber’s critique of Hegel more fully. Hegel’s categories, similar to high subtle awareness, and his Absolute, similar to the low causal awareness, are interpreted in terms of vision-logic and thus their transrational nature is obscured. These forms of consciousness cannot be grasped cognitively but must be experienced directly. However,

\(^{43}\) Ibid., 293.
\(^{44}\) Ibid., 292-301.
\(^{45}\) Ibid., 303-306.
although Hegel misinterpreted the means whereby we have access to this structure of consciousness, he was right to think of it as a kind of *telos*. For reasons mentioned previously, Wilber replaces Hegel’s “Whole” with the term “All” to refer to low causal awareness as the manifest omega lure of all finite things. He describes this Omega point as never fully realized because each new self transcendence creates a new whole of which the previous whole is now a part. As the causal structure unfolds does it disclose an ultimate unmanifest Omega point? Does there exist an ultimate end of Being? Wilber writes,

\[ \ldots \text{the answer is that It does exist, and we are not heading toward it. Or away from It. Or around It. Uncreate Spirit, the causal unmanifest, is the nature and condition, the source and support, of this and every other moment of evolution. It does not enter the stream of time at a beginning or exist at the end. It upholds all times and supports all places, with no partiality at all, and thus exerts neither push nor pull on history.} \]

In this passage Wilber describes the final structure of consciousness where formless mysticism gives way to nondual mysticism and it is here that his unique perspective on teleology can be seen. This nondual structure is the goal of all previous structures but, unlike Hegel’s Whole, this goal is not realized at some point in the manifest world because it is always already realized:

\[ \text{Evolution seeks only this Formless } \textit{sumnum bonum} - \text{it wants } \textit{only} \text{ this ultimate Omega} - \text{it rushes forward always and solely in search of } \textit{this} - \text{and it will } \textit{never} \text{ find it, because evolution unfolds in the world of form. The Kosmos is driven forward endlessly, searching in the world of time for that which is altogether timeless. And since it will } \textit{never} \text{ find it, it will } \textit{never} \text{ cease the search. Samsara circles endlessly, and that is always the brutal nightmare hidden in its heart.} \]

hit is also the ever present origin or unmanifest ground of all structures. Although

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46 Ibid., 627-628.
47 Ibid., 315.
48 Ibid., 316.
argued that there are good reasons to be skeptical of the doctrine of eternal recurrence as presented by Nietzsche, the above passage demonstrates that something like eternal recurrence (samsara circles endlessly) is not incompatible with all teleological views. While it is true that nondual awareness is discontinuous with the great chain and the teleology that flows from it this discontinuity does not leave the great chain shattered. Rather, nondual awareness transcends and embraces the great chain simultaneously. Thus, Wilber gives us an updated model of the great chain of Being in which it is not Being which has levels but only illusion (*maya*). This model is represented as follows:

![Diagram of Wilber's model of the great chain of Being](image)

Fig. 9. Wilber
[Reprinted, by permission, from Shambhala, *One Taste*, pg. 44]
In this diagram Spirit (nondual) represents the highest goal and the ever-present ground of the great chain of Being. It is similar to the single point representing acceptance of the world just as it is in Nietzsche diagram 3. It can also be understood as the Tao, Brahman, Plato’s form of the Good, Plotinus’ One, Nargarjuna’s Void, etc.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I will summarize the postmodern teleological impasse defined by the opposition of Hegel and Nietzsche and how Wilber overcomes it. After a basic introduction to teleology and the great chain of Being by way of Aristotle’s thought I argued that Hegel’s thought represented a powerful attempt to save the great chain through a revival of teleology. While Hegel’s project has been criticized from many angles I questioned the adequacy of his rational ontology. Nietzsche’s response to Hegel’s failure is to reject the great chain and teleology altogether in his proclamation of the death of God. I argued that while Nietzsche’s alternative account of historical development has many merits his rejection of teleology in affirming eternal recurrence reduces philosophy to psychology and it is this that is ultimately responsible for our fragmented postmodern condition in which the apparently contradictory impulses identified by Tarnas struggle. I then explained Wilber’s thought in an attempt to show that it incorporates the best from both thinkers while avoiding the difficulties. Like Hegel, Wilber is a metaphysician and a teleologist. However, unlike Hegel he believes that there are stages of development beyond the rational. Furthermore, as thoroughgoing fallibilist he would acknowledge that his system could never be described as Absolute knowledge. His theory of holons implies that the Absolute as contextless caus sui could never be reached in time because each new synthesis itself creates a whole of which the previous whole is now a part ad infinitum. Thus, like Nietzsche Wilber is a contextualist. Furthermore, Wilber is in sympathy with Nietzsche’s critique of a decadent downturn in
Western cultural development although Wilber focuses on Aristotle’s purely ascended God rather than Socrates and Plato as the source of this downturn. Unlike Nietzsche, Wilber believes that various contexts can be integrated into a system and the overall directionality of this system can be discerned through vision-logic. Thus, Wilber is able to incorporate Nietzsche’s account of a decadent downturn in Western cultural development within a teleological, progressive framework influenced strongly by Hegel. While there is some affinity between Nietzsche’s view of the Übermensch as an integration of master and slave and Wilber’s view that moving to transrational stages of development requires an integration of Ascent and Descent, Wilber’s project is motivated not by the death of God but by the death of either of two one sided visions of the divine that can only be joined in mystical insight.

In the wake of Nietzsche’s destruction of the great chain of Being Heidegger argued that we are living in a time between the fleeing of the old gods and the arrival of the god that is coming. The thought of Ken Wilber and its heralding of an eventual collective movement to transrational awareness marks the beginning of the end of this transitional stage in the evolution of Being.


VITA

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