



LIFE, DEATH AND THE ABSOLUTE: A THEOLOGICAL CRITIQUE OF HEGELIAN IDEALISM THROUGH PARMENIDEAN RESURRECTION THEOLOGY IN CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIANITY

Peter Anakobe Adinoyi

Federal University Lokoja, Department of Christian Religious Studies

peter.adinoyi@fulokoja.edu.ng-08032780855/08055214140

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5880-9888>

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Miriam Member Asuwe, PhD

Federal University Lokoja, Department of Religious Studies

08034972606

ABSTRACT

In the philosophy of absolutism, the initiator Hegel postulates a magnificent schema of a tripartite process that propels development, and he names it the dialectics (Hegel, 1977). Another personality to be considered would be Parmenides who preached the doctrine of oneness of being and unreality of change at the same time. For Parmenides, being or reality simply is and being is one, since plurality is also illusion (Parmenides, Fragments 2 & 3, as cited in Burnet, 1930). More often than not, the implicit implications of some scholars' views are usually and naturally taken for granted or even regarded as negligible, while the contrary may be the case. Therefore, my exploration of the Hegelian idealism in relation to the Parmenidean metaphysics is an attempt to critically consider the notions of change and permanence amidst the diversities and singularity of being: the development of the Absolute Spirit in juxtaposition with the idea of permanence in order to see if Hegelian absolutism allows for permanence, which is the focal point of Parmenidean metaphysics; if need be, to establish or demonstrate another relationship between Hegel and Heraclitus, in order to expose their similitude: and to find out whether we can talk of the Christian God in Hegelianism. As would be observed, this paper would also employ this analysis in proposing a synthetic dialectics of life, death and their aftermath in the light of these two philosophies, and in relation to a certain Christian existential theism. The total implication of Hegel's philosophy in relation to Parmenides would reveal at least that, there is a relation of implicit implication between them. This would have added to the reservoir of appreciable framework of knowledgeability.

Keywords: Hegel, Parmenides, Resurrection, Absolute, Christianity

INTRODUCTION

Hegel's philosophy, otherwise known as Hegelianism, is simply termed Absolute Idealism, "the view that all reality is shaped and constituted by the mind. But this is actually different from the subjective idealism of Berkeley. Firstly, the German word for 'mind,' Geist, refers not to individual minds; but to something that is essentially shared and is realized in what people do. It is closer to what we mean by spirit when we speak of the 'spirit on campus' or a team's 'fighting spirit'" (Beiser, 1993). And secondly, instead of denying the actuality or existence of matter, Hegel's idealism teaches that, mind needs a material world in order to be able to manifest and fulfill itself in a concrete form. It follows that, the ideas in this Hegelian idealism are more like the



ordering Ideas in Platonism than the mental ideas in Berkeleanism. Thus, to hold that, mind constitutes reality then, is to state that there is a rational order fundamental to all reality or as Hegel puts it, “the real is rational and the rational is real” (Hegel, 1977).

The philosophy of Hegel came up as a new way of thinking which is actually the way of development of some grand theories like Evolutionary theory, Marxism, existentialism, phenomenology and all systems of totalitarianism. Hence, in the words of I.M. Bochenski, Hegel “is one of the forces changing the world” (Bochenski, 1969). Obviously, his intention was to present reality as one single rational or intelligible system. He differed from the traditional dualism of infinity and finitude by saying that, there is no difference between being and knowledge. He starts with a proposal that, we must take a distance from sensuous appearances and look into the beyond in order to discover the truth, which is objective reality.

Hegel consequently proposed a system, which he called the dialectic. It is a process of contradiction between a thesis and an antithesis that results into a synthesis. The influence of Fichte on him when he talks of the Absolute Ego really helped him to formulate the dialectical method. Hegel simply adopts Fichte’s Absolute Ego and transforms it into the actual universe, which is a universe that undermines all forms of Personalities. This Absolute Ego is renamed Absolute Spirit. Thus, Hegel’s abstract and enthusiastic objectivity and rationalization is so exaggerated that, it jettisons the inimitableness, individuality and tangible personality of the human person who should be seen as a being that is endowed with will and freedom. But the idea of development in Absolutism brings us to the Parmenidean focus on being as one, and as that, which does not admit the possibility of becoming. For him, becoming is illusory and so he talks of permanence in nature (Parmenides, as cited in Burnet, 1930). This is why this essay is a conglomeration of important themes like change and permanence, dialectics, and philosophers like Hegel, Heraclitus and Parmenides. Hence, necessitating the topic of this work. It is thus essentially, having a second look at these matters that matter, and also provoking a certain approach of considering the Hegelian Idealism via his dialectics. It was in this same spirit of looking for ultimate and synthetic explanation for reality, that Hegel wrote recalling the legend that, Plato revised *The Republic* seven times and remarked as follows: “... There is left any room for sympathy with the passionless stillness of a science of pure thought” (Hegel, 1977).

THE PHILOSOPHICAL GOD OF HEGEL AND CHANGE

Hegelian idealism in terms of the absolute Spirit, has divided people into warring camps, namely, the right Hegelians and the left Hegelians. While the former interpret Hegel as having found God in the philosophical system, the latter think that Hegelianism is simply atheistic. So, Scholars find in Hegel, either theistic or atheistic attitude at the same time. But this largely depends on a proper and wholistic understanding of Hegel as a modern German Philosopher.

Once again, we are compelled here to gaze into Hegel’s idealism in order to decipher accurately the nature of the philosophical God of Hegel. But we must at first hand, grant the basis for such an assumption that Hegel’s God is the God of the philosophers and not the Christian God who is a personal God to be worshipped by men.

According to Hegel, there is a moment of logical and rational arrival of the absolute as pure thought in man. For him, all conflicts are resolved at the synthesis of art and religion that gives rise to



philosophy as such. Here, he asserts, we find full freedom. Absolute being is embraced, and the ultimate metaphysics of absolute knowing and the “gnoseology of being” is attained. Like Kant, Hegel finalizes his metaphysics in man. Their difference is that while Kant rejects the rational possibility of the Absolute, Necessary and Infinite Being, Hegel encompassed him, but subsumed him under “a higher anthropological philosophy”. Following Hegel’s logic, “which is the epitome of his theory of reality in general”, pure thought is being in general. It manifests itself in Nature and History. But prior to this manifestation, being which Heidegger calls “sein,” was empty. Pure being is nothing until it is qualified and then it becomes something. But moving from the second stage, this pure thought, which is self-thinking thought, becomes speculative reason. This occurs when it receives or accepts the intrinsic contradiction of entities inside themselves and resolves them into a new and elevated unity. In its internal movement, his speculative reason of pure thought penetrates reality. Thus, it singularises it as one and self-explaining foundation of beings. Thus, pure thought considers God as the unifying principle, that is, self-thinking thought. This is the level of theology. In this God, the strife of antithesis ends for this stage of ratiocination. In his *Logik*, Hegel progresses from “Sein” as pure being, which is vacuous, through the negation of becoming (a movement from being to not-being and vice versa) to pure thought and back to being (Hegel, 1959).

This lands us in the realm of “Dasein,” which is a determinate being, concrete, identifiable, and real being. Thus, the progression is from the cosmological to the anthropological standpoint, (the starting point of reflection) that is, the being we encounter daily. In short, the movement from Sein to Dasein can be illustrated in this manner.

Now the minimum statement that could be made about anything is to affirm that it exists or that it is. For instance, Nduka exists. One cannot say less than this. It is simply minimal. However, additional information could be provided when one qualifies, quantifies or measure it. Hence, we can construct a dialectical analysis of Nduka as Dasein from here:

1. Nduka is fair in complexion, weighs 70kg and measures 4.2 f. These are peripheral characteristics of Nduka and they are not sufficient. So, Hegel could employ a more fundamental frame of analysis, say, in terms of essence, ground, identity and divergent causes. Thus, he could say Nduka is a rational animal, a human person living autonomously as well as communally at the same time and born of Mr. And Mrs. ABC in Ogun State of Nigeria.

2. At this level, from the class of actuality contained in the logic of essence (*logik des Wesens*). Hegel “extrapolates the categories of such things as substance and accident, actions and reaction (reciprocal action), and cause and effect.” Thus, for him, though absolute and therefore a unity, being in its totality and contents, diverse. It is diversity-in-unity, “identity-in-difference,” concrete in ideal, relative in Absolute and subjective in objective. In the dialectical process, it undergoes the self-mediation or self-development (Hegel, 1977).

3. Hegel would conclude that at this last stage, Dasein would be situated in the milieu of lived life, objective will, values and careers. Thus he could say, Nduka is currently a final year student in Delta State University, Abraka, trying to be specialized in his discipline, namely, English and Performing Arts. His goal of Specialization is the education of prospective Nigerians who would be placed in his educational and other professional responsibilities. Hence, it is obvious how this



Dasein, Nduka, develops from mere Sein (being) to the palpable or definite human being of our experience.

It follows from the itemized analysis that, by identifying or specifying the Dasein (i.e. a human being in Heideggerian ontology), one absconds from the vacuity of the Sein. We could also notice that Hegel serves as a corrective fluid for the abstraction of Kant who could not project himself above the being of the synthetic unity of self-consciousness.

Consequently, via the “Dialectics of upward magnification,” the tangible idealistic, actual - logical being of Hegel’s logic of the Geist, advances through external reality or nature, up to the absolute spirit, whereas noted earlier, it is made known in aesthetics, religion and philosophy. So, we continue to see the relatedness of a thesis, antithesis and synthesis in that order. The culmination is what “Hegel calls the Geist,” perfectly knowing itself. It is realisable through the “inwardizing, self-storage of its knowledge that brings it to the freedom of the totality. This is what he calls comprehensive knowing.” Tracing the history of philosophy to Hegel and indeed our time, we would see that it is a classical picture of this climaxed point of Absolute knowledge. The contemporary philosophies are a conglomeration and high point of antiquated philosophies. They reached their apogee in the idealism of Fichte and Schelling and now consummated in Hegel’s Absolutism. For him, the goal of the dialectics is attained. Hence, he wrote to put a stop to his Phenomenology of Spirit while stating unequivocally that:

The goal, absolute knowing, or Spirit that knows itself as Spirit, has for its part the recollection of the spirits as they are in themselves and as they accomplish the organisation of their realm. Their reservation, regarded from the side of their free existence appearing in the form of contingency, is history: but regarded from the side of their (philosophically) comprehended organisation, it is the science of knowing. In systematic Science the distinction between subjective and objective knowledge is eliminated...Systematic Science cannot, however, remain a pure conceptual development: it must step out of itself and see Spirit developed in space and time and nature. It must then study Spirit returning to itself in time, i.e. in the long procession of historical cultures and individuals (Hegel, 1977).

What then is the nature of the philosophical God of Hegel given here the Hegelian euphoria of a new discovery: the revelation of Sein through the Dasein; the grasping of self-knowing truth that is totality; that which all philosophies constitute in: “a new epoch has risen in the world. World history seems to be at its goal”. Also, given that Hegel is contented with this glorious achievement?

Hegel no doubt, has influenced the world. Little wonder then that a scholar named Vander veken of Louvain opines that, Hegel “marks the beginning” of all that is magnificent in the last century of philosophy namely, Marxism, Nietzsche, phenomenology, psychoanalysis, and existentialism.

In addendum, the atheism and agnosticism of left-wing Hegelians are traceable to it. Also the absolute monarchy of the state, the totalitarian chauvinism of European nations, and the imperialism of some misguided Christian missionaries over the mission territories, is partly an offshoot of right-wing Hegelianism (Taylor, 1959).



From the foregoing it is undeniable that, Hegel's God is notoriously submitting to the natural process of change. It develops; it grows from Sein to Dasein for instance. It undergoes alienation, extension, and it is not impassible since it expresses itself in man who is both rational and emotional. Hegel's God finds consummation in spatio-temporal order or nature. It absolutizes itself in concrete beings.

He says the universe is part of his philosophical God. This position is implicative with regard to the basic problems of the world as identified in philosophy of nature. This implies that the many evils in the world, the imperfections, the absurdities found sometimes in nature, are not unconnected with Hegel's philosophical God. In fact, it could be said that this philosophical God is the "first and efficient cause" of such cataclysmic catastrophe in nature. Since Hegel himself does not even explain in detail the "being qua tale," in his encapsulating system, he becomes unsuccessful in talking about the ultimate being, God. He does not treat the infinite being in a satisfactorily causal and fundamental manner. So, Hegel's God with its defects is simply the God of the philosophers, but not of the theologians who believe in God as the essence of being. It is appropriate then to state categorically that Hegel's God is changing. It becomes. It is mobile in the system of the dialectics, which is a continuum. Hence, if there comes a time of absoluteness as Hegel presents it, it would amount to an irredeemable contradiction or absurdity. Hegel's God is not the Christian's for the Christian God is impassible and unchanging.

Again, with regard to the state and or individuals in society, Hegel's God has made the state absolute, the individual is also absolute hence it is too totalitarian to be true. For instance, there is no such thing as absolute freedom. Everyone understands freedom, and experiences it differently in different dimensions and degrees. Now if Hegel's God is such that, it is the mind that absolutely supersedes and impersonates then, all individual things would be destroyed, since all things would lose dynamism, evolution, change, progress and betterment. For, the Absolute would only be interested in its own self-realisation at the expense of other selves. Is this God the same God that allows for freedom and responsible actions and decisions? Certainly not! If it were, he would be a self-contradictory God, a relativistic being that seeks the full being of himself alone. History, Politics, States, and persons become tools for him. And his absolutism will be showcased in all facets of life. But "Absolute power corrupts absolutely." Hegelian search for an absolute being is not exhaustive for it only stops at the met-empirical realities like intellection, mind, soul or spirit.

The climax of the search should be the quest for a total meaningfulness. The answer to the problem must also be real since it is a real quest. And by necessity, it can only be found in the ultimacy of a being in which all things can be explained. And this must be the Ultimate Being, God in whom there is neither change nor shadow of any alteration. According to Pantaleon Iroegbu, to limit oneself to a peripheral explication of all there is; and to end at a quest that is merely an indication of an array of brute facts of the pluralities in things, is an expression of "intellectual timidity" or "rational inconsistency." Continuing he contends that, it is also a lack of investigational nerve to stop at the level of drawing attention to the empirical concatenations of events and data in the physical world. For to talk of the physical implies that there is metaphysical. To be consistently rational, one must inquire further into the total explanation, into the integral meaning, into ultimacy. Not to explain the given reality up to its ultimacy or to limit its ultimacy to its one aspect is to fail to explain it in its most important aspects. It is a hermeneutical failure (Iroegbu, 1995).



He adds that, On the contrary, to arrive at the total or ultimate explanation i.e. to God is a necessary consequence of any sustained project of explanation. Conclusively, since we are all engaged in this hermeneutic project. We are mediately or immediately to conclude to God's existence (Iroegbu, 1995).

So the nature of Hegel's 'God' is first and foremost not a transcendental personal being even though he thought, he was giving a philosophical expression to the Christian concept of: God. This is why he says, "the absolute is the process of its own becoming... it becomes concrete or actual only by its development and through its end. He repeats, the Aristotelian notion of God here and for him, totality is simply a process. "In fact, total reality knows itself in and through the human spirit." This means that without the human spirit, the Absolute would never come to terms with itself. What a great and yet helpless God! An infinite that depends on a finite being. This is so because the Absolute expresses itself concretely via the configuration of nature. Hence, it would be a truism to say for instance, that the thought and action an individual conceives and exhibits in relation to nature "is also the way the Absolute expresses itself in nature". And it suffices to note that Hegel's philosophical God is a changing God that still "never reaches nor even totally comprehends itself in full as expected" (Hegel, as cited in Taylor, 1959).

THE CHRISTIAN GOD AND HEGEL'S PHILOSOPHICAL GOD

Reflecting on the nature of the Christian God and the essence of the philosophical God of Hegel, one would not hesitate to observe a formidable figure of friction between them. For the sake of clarity and proper emphasis, I would describe more suitably and sufficiently, the nature of the Christian God following an orthodox and traditional understanding via philosophico-religious concepts.

Among many philosophers and theologians, there seem to be a general idea of God as the being qua being and the finality of all essences. The Christian God is personality and, St. Thomas Aquinas says, he is knowable. He is infinitely knowable but he is not infinitely known by the consciousness of finite beings like men. Hence, we can grasp the reality of God through his attributes. Apart from the fact that we can know God by analogy, having the knowledge of God could also ensue through a process of negation (via negationis), that is, we can know God from what he is not. For instance, God is not evil means God is essentially good. This discovery of Aquinas is what C.A. Hart describes as, "one of the greatest triumphs of human reasoning in the whole history of philosophy" (Hart, 1959). Let us first accede to the agreement of these Scholars, Bertrand Russell and Fredrick Copleston, who during a debate about the existence of God in 1948 on U.S. Television, stated, "God is a supreme personal being - distinct from the world and creator of the world." God is that being whose existence is his essence for he necessarily exists. This also implies that he is the efficient cause of things. He is Pure Act (Actus Purus); hence, there is no potentiality in him. The ancient Jewish nation conceptualised God as the being that subsists by Himself in their knowing him, as "I am who I am" (Exodus 3: 14).

In fact, the most constitutive definition of God indicated above is the 'self-beingness' of God known as the "Aseity" of God. It is from this that all his attributes as well as perfection are derived. Hence, God as an entity has the following attributes: simplicity, unicity, infinity, incorporeality (supra-sensible and non-spatial). immutability, impassibility, eternity, immensity, ubiquity, omnipotence, omniscience. Truth and Goodness;



Again, in respect of his functions or operations, he is the infinite intelligence. hence, possesses Absolute knowledge. He is the perfect will; hence, voluntariety belongs to him. Causality is his because, by knowing and willing, he causes or creates (hence, Aquinas asserted: “scientia Dei est causa rerum,” meaning that, “Divine Science is the cause of things”). His Causality presupposes other sub-attributes namely, consciousness, immanence, wisdom, conservation, concurrence, freedom and personality eternal law or government, providence in which God is known as the being who is the “terminus ad quem” of other created things. All of these presuppose the transcendence of God and the absoluteness of God who exists freely and makes and allows other things to be (Aquinas, 1948).

In Hegel, we see a Philosophical God that is also absolute but has no personality and does not allow individual things to be of themselves. For, the latter wills itself as spirit into the other selves. For Hegel, then, the Absolute is characterised by its potential to dominate all things including man, it is like loss in the crowd, which Kierkegaard speaks about and in this case, “the crowd of the Absolute per se. For instance, Kierkegaard could criticise Hegel on this note by saying that if “man became sufficiently steeped in Hegel, he would become so anonymous that he could not even have a letter addressed to him. Thus, Kierkegaard would think that the crowd whether in the form of the pluralities of things or in the form of the Absolute, is always dead wrong, “while the genuine actions always arise from the individual.” But unfortunately too, Hegel’s elucidations on the issue of the transcendental attributes of being, the fundamental metaphysical themes and ideas, and their relatedness, are trivialised or not fully explained in his system. Hence Iroegbu says, “In him we admire the immensity of the Geist. But we have no emmerveillement (static marvelling) towards Ens (being), Esse (to be) and Entia (beings)” (Iroegbu, 1995). This is why Kierkegaard notwithstanding, looked upon Hegel as the greatest of all speculative philosophers and as one who had attained a stupendous intellectual “tour de force.”

“Hegelianism was a gigantic tour de force and nothing more. Hegel sought to capture all reality in the conceptual net of his dialectic, while existence slipped through the meshes” (Kierkegaard, as cited in Campbell, 1969).

So, the essential contrast between the Christian God and the philosophical God of Hegel is quite obvious. They are not synonymous. The Christian God is absolute and possesses the initiative, transcendental as well as functional qualities that go with such an Absolute being that subsists; whereas, the Absolute in Hegel is that submits to the process of becoming or change. Hence, it simply changes and submits itself to the Heraclitean “omnia flux,” becoming many by manifesting itself in individual things. The Geist or Absolute Spirit is ipso facto, synonymous to things in nature by implication and therefore, things in nature are not simply sacrosanct as distinct realities in the face of the Absolute of Hegel. Now, if the Absolute in Hegel’s system is synonymous with other beings or rather, are subsumed in it then, it follows that the system is absolutely pantheistic.

But the Christian God is not synonymous with particular entities. There is no such necessary relation of “synonymousity” that exists between him and created things as in Hegel. The only relation is that of necessity and contingency (the kind that should exist between a necessary being and a contingent being). Hence, they remain separate, that is, God and other beings are not the same by essence. Hence the Parmenidean One with regard to the Christian God has a sense here if



we take the one to mean the completeness of this God, who has no parts but simply said to be pure and simple. A cursory look at the two “Gods” also reveals that, while Hegel’s God presupposes potentiality, the Christian God does not admit it since, the latter has no such quality of reaching a possible or future stage that he does not already possess, the Christian God is the real Absolute who does not aspire to be something else either in himself or outside of himself.

Another implication is that, any state and stage in the life of men is determined by the absolute of Hegel, which means a strong determinism that destroys free personal actions and goal. But in the Christian God, determinism in relation to man is such that man, though created by him, has the freedom to be what he truly wants to be whether good or bad. His personal actions are not conditioned. Yet, he must act only in his capacity and quality as man. He cannot be anything other than man. Thus, man can act only as man and he does so freely. These two senses of determinism are different, following the logic of the characteristics of the two “Gods” being compared there. I hereby assert that there is a substantive difference between Hegel’s God and the Christian God. This difference is at least, more obvious than the seeming similarity.

THE APPLICATION OF THE DIALECTICS IN EXISTENTIAL PHENOMENA OF LIFE, DEATH AND ETERNITY

Indeed, the dialectical theorem of this theoretician can be applied to the philosophy of life situations as it affects man in the universe. Yes, dialectics is obviously an inevitable truism of nature. Hegel’s contention that there is an intrinsic force in reality that accounts (partially) for its manifestation or changing nature is also undeniable. While Hegel calls this Geist, J.S. Mbiti, in his Bantu philosophy, calls it “force vitale” (vital force). Hegelian approach to metaphysics that seeks to once for all, explain the whole of reality, with the idea of the absolute spirit (Das absolute Geist), could also be applicable to the fact of plurality and unity, change and permanence, absurdity and paradox of life and death of man and their culmination in an absolute personal being, God, who should really be all things in all (Hegel, 1977).

THE IMAGO DEI, THE PARALLELISM AND LOGICAL IMPLICATION

If there is any dialectical process in nature, it is in relation to man, his origin and history, potentiality and actuality, activity and finality. All forms of his being could be said to be capable or is in fact involved in some dialectics whether cultural, social, political, moral, religious or philosophical. It is with regard to man that we say all things move towards a definite end, in spite of the contour of the internal mechanics of contradictions in life. Hence, I am affirming that we do not talk of the “being-qua-being” (that is, God, for the Christians), as undergoing a dialectics or self-realisation. For in him, is completeness already realised before and outside space and time, He is the “Self” from which other “selves” or persons are ontologically derived, and since other beings including man do not just be in emptiness as such, their reality are dependent upon being himself. And since he creates them with a purpose, then, purposiveness of beings presupposes the owner of purpose and this implies an architect of such a creation, a “creator of purpose” per se.

THE IMAGO DEI

What I know about human beings and we who are Christians could be counted on five fingers in summary, namely that, since we do not exist by willing our existence ourselves and therefore causing ourselves to be, then it could be said that: (i) We are made in the image and likeness of God by his own volition, hence, we are “Imago Dei” because as it were, man is originally meant



to be the best possible picture of God in the world; (ii) By the original fall of man, he incurred the stain and guilt of original sin and lost his true life, of communion with God, which is the true Paradise he first belonged to; (iii) But according to St. Bonaventure, “man has a natural desire or appetite for happiness. This is because he has a natural and just motivation to live on for good: (iv) So, God sent his Son to give us a new life by teaching us the way to gain in full, what was lost, and by dying and winning eternal redemption for humanity using his own “garment of humanity.” Bonaventure also says that, we are “capable of attaining everlasting happiness,” which is in corollary with his vivid insistence on the imperishability of the human soul at death and capability of transcendence; that is, “the soul... can live on without the body after their separation” (v) Now, Jesus the Son of God, “the Word made Flesh (John 1: 14),” has called us and asked us to follow him, and bear a burden or “yoke,” which he says is light (Matthew 16: 24 - 25).” Though Christianity is not a crossless religion, but is this cross or yoke truly light? Is the yoke of life and death truly easy and light? Is it not the case that sometimes, the cross of life and death crushes us or our loved one at our very sight? Does not this cross bring us to a “9th station of life” where we must say, “I am physically weak” and completely drained of strength? This is the reason for one’s confusion for, one does not know how to answer this basic question.

Consequently, more often than not, I continually ask these fundamental questions: what is then the meaning of life and death? What is this enigma of living and dying in this cosmic or global village known as the earth and world of humanity? What does this fugitive operation of the physics, chemistry, and biology of life and death of an individual person entail? Who is responsible for this “art and science” of these two phenomena of life and death that are rather too phenomenal in nature? How are we to couch and comprehend this paradox and exclusive nature of life and death? Why this potentiality and actuality, change and permanence, coming and becoming, being and not being? Who will save us from this conundrum of this daily routine that confounds us? In trying to grapple with this single puzzle of different facets, the lips do not give the answer but the illumined mind or heart does, because the mind ponders on the mysterious nature of these realities. ‘The briefness of human life., the struggles, ups and downs, man’s strength and frailty, his joys, sorrow, finitude, suffering misery, death, and decay “have led to deep reflection” and philosophising all over the world. Thus, the human mind ceaselessly desires to grasp ontologically and epistemologically, these paradoxical binarisms or complexities in life in order to duly appreciate the three laws of thoughts, which include, the law of identity, the law of contradiction and the law of excluded middle with regard to the life and language of man.

THE LOGICAL NEXUS

There is an irresistible connection between life and death as evidently known in human experience. We notice that we are born and “planted in the soil of the world” to germinate and grow and mature like a mustard seed, yet, we die as a result. Since, we are even capable and old enough to die as soon as we all possess life. Human history has taught us that, one is born and dies within space, in the face of time, in this phase and maze of our palpable world or plant. The possibility and occasion of birth naturally presupposes the possibility and occasion of death. One comes prior and parallel to the other.

Similarly, it is true to declare that the inestimable magnitude and momentum of life, presupposes the negligible inertial at death. Thus, the velocity and speed of life is a standard Matrice and an index of the force of death, which is mediated by a normal retardational power and impedance as



in the physics of motion and electricity. Hence, undermining with great ecclesiastical prudence the atheistic attitude of the French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre, I there to notice the Sartrean notion of facticity when he says, “death is pure fact as is birth... it is in no way distinguished from birth and it is the identity of birth and death that we call facticity” (Sartre, as cited in Blackham, 1965).

While Parmenides of Elea would adhere to the idea of permanence in nature, Heraclitus would endorse change since he insists in his writings that, “you cannot step into a river twice” (Heraclitus, as cited in Burnet, 1930). If we liken this river to the phenomena of life and death then it follows empirically that, there seems to be a clear constant change from life to death. And if Heraclitus teaches that, everything is in a state of perpetual flux or persistent motion, then it is proper to agree that, one cannot retain the same mode of being in life and at death at once. This is why the sage in the book of Ecclesiasts, puts it beautifully that, there is a season for everything, a time for every human endeavour under heaven. Thus, the author of the Inspired Book, states that all things have their reason and season:

A time for giving birth, a time for dying; a time for planting a time for harvesting; a time for killing, a time for healing; a time for knocking down, a time for building. A time for tears, a time for laughter; a time for mourning, a time for dancing. A time for throwing stones away, a time for gathering them; a time for embracing, a time for restrain from embracing. A time for searching, a time for loosing; a time for keeping, a time for discarding. A time for tearing, time for sewing; a time for keeping silent, a time for speaking. A time for loving, a time for hating; a time for war, a time for peace (Ecclesiastes 3: 1 -8).

The writer supplements the discourse on time by saying that:

All is apt for its time... but he (God) has given us an awareness of the passage of time there is no happiness for a human being and when we... find (any) happiness... this is a gift from God. I know (too) that whatever God does will be forever (Ecclesiastes 3:1 - 13).

The above quotations express a realistic observation of human experiences in their multifarious nature and the descriptions of the inner feelings of humanity as a whole. The writer thinks that what we call coincidences could be looked upon as “God-incidences” for only in such a gigantic and all-knowing being (God), can we appreciate such a magnificent architecture of creation. Thus the beginning and end of all times and indeed, all things find meaning in the “essence of time,” namely, a being that precedes time and existence and has a mastery of all events in time.

However, as we constantly find inter-relations in the world, we also see that the facts of death and life are closely bound together in an apparently endless, and cataclysmic bond because there is an interaction of parallelism that exists between them. This of course, is as a result of the observable latent logical sequence that is inexorable and inevitable in respect of the variation from life to death. But as indicated in the earlier points, it must be said that this connection between life and death began in the distant episode of the fall of mankind in the “Garden of Eden (Genesis 2: 2f.).”

It is a causality or causal relation that began in space and time in history, and such is the relationship between life and death. Since there can be no death where there is no life, we say then that, the fact of death follows from the fact of life. The reality of life is simply a sufficient condition for the actuality of death. This is why J.P Sartre dreads death when he laments thus, “Death haunts



me at the very heart of each of my project as their inevitable reverse side.” Again Jean Paul Sartre in his existential atheistic frame of mind says, “death has been - rightly or wrongly is what we cannot yet determine- considered as the final boundary of human life.” In addition, he opines that, “the very existence of death alienates us wholly in our own life for the advantage of the other.”

And in a more radical manner Sartre asserts:

I can neither discover my death nor wait for it nor adopt an attitude toward it, for it is that which is revealed as undiscoverable, that which disarms all waiting, that which slips into all attitudes (and particularly into those which are assumed with respect to death) so as to transform them into externalised and fixed conducts whose meaning is forever entrusted to others and not to ourselves, death is no longer the great unknowable which limits the human; it is the phenomenon... that is, a life which does begin again, a life in which one never recovers his stroke. Hence, I become responsible for my death and for my life (Sartre, as cited in Blackham, 1965).

THE PARADOX OF LIFE AND DEATH: THE SYNTHESIS IN CHRISTIANITY AND IN CHRISTENDOM

Following the logic of the dialectics, a thesis is negated by the antithesis, which when combined with the former becomes a new thesis known as synthesis. And in this case, life and death are the thesis and antithesis respectively. Here, I have chosen to differ from Hegel who was later to be found to be inconsistent as would be noted in the last chapter. The synthesis of life and death tends towards an afterlife that finds its true meaning and explanation in the necessary and eternal being (God) who actually guarantees such a synthesis and in turn gives meaning to life and death. It has been said earlier and it is an issue of re-iteration that, each stage of the dialectics is not separated from the previous, and the subsequent stage makes the previous meaningful.

Hence, the manifest contrariety in life and death as apparently different stages in the mode of being of Dasein, can be neutralised or dissolved in a certain understanding which Kierkegaard may describe as “a leap of faith...” in existential quest. It is a belief that comes from reason and “divine illumination” from the true being of beings - God himself. And this knowledge and belief is grounded upon the truth of a God which Anselm describes as, “that than which nothing greater can be conceived,” and who chooses to reveal himself as the surpassing truth, to those who open themselves to him and fulfill certain conditions. The fulfillment of these conditions makes the synthesis possible and real in the life of every individual that accepts these conditions (Anselm, as cited in Copleston, 1972).

CRITICAL EVALUATION

In the course of this work, I have taken pains to explicate Hegelian dialectics vis-à-vis the metaphysics of Parmenides and in relation to the reality of Heraclitean Philosophy along the gradient of the many existential paradoxes of life, death and the aftermath that stare us on our faces. Certain intrinsic relationships were drawn out in respect of the thematic concerns. This does not necessarily imply that the work on such a gigantic philosophy like the Hegelian dialectics has been exhausted; hence, this critical evaluation becomes necessary as a re-illumination of ideas for conceptual clarity and a résumé of the work.

There is no doubt that their provoking systems could be said to be undeniable springboards for the emergence and resurgence of resilient and resplendent thoughts across ancient, medieval, modern



and contemporary periods. Hegel marks the genesis of much that is great in our times through his philosophy of the Absolute Geist, which he presents as pure thought. In his notion of essence, Hegel distinguishes what is actual and lies behind appearance from the thing as it appears to us. He maintains that these two are destined to be united in space and time. Similarly, he speaks of objectivity and subjectivity, asserting that the object of consciousness is ordained to unite with consciousness, resulting in perfect harmony.

However, I must echo a point of disagreement. Though Hegel claims that being and knowledge are inseparable, there remains a moment of separation in which the subjective self determines the form of objective reality. This position risks leading to subjectivism and ultimately scepticism in our knowledge of the external world (Hegel, 1977; Iroegbu, 1995). An extreme consequence of such subjectivism is solipsism, whereby Descartes' "I think therefore I am" cannot redeem the death of objectivity (Descartes, 1960).

On the other hand, the Cartesian Idea formed the basis for Hegelianism. Hegel's Absolute Idealism posits that the idea lies at the heart of reality, with its dynamics rooted in the dialectical method of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. For him, the totality of reality is the self-realising conscious Geist engaged in a formidable dialectical movement out of and back to itself.

Yet, if Hegel claims that all reality can be explained logically through the dialectic, how realistic is this assertion? Iroegbu observes that Hegel subsumed all reality under spirit and presumptuously closed history and development at the endpoint of philosophy (Iroegbu, 1995). Applying his own logic, philosophy as the final stage must face another antithesis, resulting in infinite regression.

Moreover, Hegel's claim of the closure of history in the German nation betrays his dialectical conviction and reveals intellectual bigotry.

In the Hegelian system, there is a manifest loophole in attempting to close the persistent dialectics within the Absolute Idea situated in the sensuous world of appearance. The reality of both change and permanence directs us toward a Being in whom all perplexities of reality can be harmonised. Only in the theistic God of Christianity, the Being qua tale, can such a sublime dialectics attain true synthesis. All knowing and being achieve full communion in the Parousia.

Critically considered, Hegel's attempt creates an absurd situation of Hegel against Hegel. While Heraclitus emphasizes change, Parmenides points to permanence. The philosophical God of Hegel is ruled by development and change, undermining its absoluteness. In sharp contradistinction stands the Christian God the real Absolute Being who sufficiently explains the dialectics of life, death and the afterlife. Indeed, the thesis of life, the antithesis of death, and their synthesis are found in God alone, who is impassible and transcends all immanent realities (Aquinas, 1948; Iroegbu, 2004).

Ultimately, while Hegel and Heraclitus represent a changing world, Parmenides serves as a pointer to permanence in the eternal Being called God. This prudent conglomeration of the three metaphysical modes unfolds in a logical, rational, yet mysteriously profound manner. Rationalisation alone is insufficient; it must be supplemented by the light of faith (Anselm, as cited in Copleston, 1972).



CONCLUSION

It suffices to conclude this paper on the note of necessary emphatic deductions, having considered the evaluation. In all philosophical extrapolations and juxtapositions, man is at the centre of the inquiry because he philosophises all other things including his own being. In this exercise, he seeks ultimate meaning in life. Regardless of the shortcomings of Hegelianism, Hegel situates man once again at the cardinal point of philosophical angle of investigation. The human being is reminded of the possibility of reaching the absolute. Our human rationality places created beings in the physical world automatically. It is not surprising that Aquinas also places man below God and the angels, but above other things in their relationship with God. This is made evident in his “scala naturae.” Planetary bodies, animals’ plants are placed below (Aquinas, 1948).

Indeed, to be optimistic about their philosophical thought, while Hegel and Heraclitus give us a sense of a changing world moving towards a definite end (that is, a sense of teleology), Parmenides remains a significant iconic reminder of stability and point of convergence in knowledge and being. And all other philosophers’ attempts to resolve the problems of unity-in-diversity in the form of the seemingly paradoxical and absurd existential phenomena, engineer us with a sense of direction to insistently pursue objective truth and the essences of things.

Man’s visible existence must be united with the finality of his essence in order for him to experience true freedom in solidarity with other beings.

Above all, in view of the resumé of the focus of this paper, let me submit that there is a relation of implicit implication between Hegel and Parmenides philosophies respectively.

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