

Mis(re)cognition of God and man: the educational philosophy and politics of Gillian Rose

Rose cites Hegel's fundamental speculative proposition as being that 'religion and the foundation of the state is [sic] one and the same thing'.¹ What Rose is drawing attention to here in her book *Hegel Contra Sociology* (first published in 1981) is the 'logic' within which modern bourgeois freedom presupposes and also reproduces the separation between thought and the absolute. It is to say that 'the *speculative exposition of the lack of identity* between religion and the state is the basic object of Hegel's exposition'.² This gives rise to the difficult suggestion that 'the idea which a man has of God corresponds with that which he has of himself, of his freedom'.³ In contrast, Kantian and neo-Kantian logic, which is not speculative, appears to itself in and as the modern diremption of law and ethics whereby the thought of the absolute in politics and religion is the 're-presentation of the extreme subjectivity, the lack of freedom, in social and political relations'.⁴ Modern consciousness in Hegel and Rose, and in their speculative logic, is this contradictory self-relation of state and religion. We think and we live in the divorce between modernity's idea of God and its idea of freedom. Rose's retrieval of a thinking of the absolute in Hegel for modern social and political thought, which rests on the phenomenological experience of the relation between substance and subject, between objective ethical life (the state) and subjectivity (religious disposition) thus renews Marx's question, 'how do we now stand in relation to the Hegelian *dialectic*?'⁵ to the historical and political contingencies which determine our thinking of, and our living with, the absolute.

That there are two logics here poses an immediate challenge for any attempt to conceive if and how Rose might be said to be something like a political theology. I am taking political theology here to mean, in its widest sense, the attempt to integrate discourse about God with an account of human interaction and meaning-making in the political sphere. But in the shadow of Rose's work it is the much more

¹ Hegel in Gillian Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, (London: Athlone Press, 1981), 49.

² *Ibid.*

³ Hegel in Gillian Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, (London: Athlone Press, 1981), 92.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Marx in Gillian Rose, *The Melancholy Style, An Introduction to the Thought of Theodor W. Adorno* (London: Verso, 2014), 3.

difficult task of a *speculative* theologising about and within the ‘divorce in the idea of the absolute’.⁶ It involves, she says, the absolute ‘misconceived as the principle of political unity’ and ‘misrepresented as a conception of God’.⁷

In this way Rose reads Hegel thinking as always already determined within the social, political and historical conditions that re-present this divorce. This is not simply a critique of determination but the contingency of our critique of determination *ad infinitum*. In the groundlessness that this imposes upon us we are dependent on illusion and on our relation to illusion. This is one of the central insights in Rose regarding the identity of state and religion. Modern freedom, as the contradictory self-relation of state and religion, finds itself separated from its own formation and development in the broken middle of their relation. Rose’s challenge to a political theology is, first of all, for it to find itself in the difficulties of thinking state and religion together and apart. Secondly, it is to know these difficulties as *philosophical*, as the ‘process or *Bildung*’ of modernity ‘as it comes up against, again and again, its own positing of ‘the world’, discovering outcomes the inverse of what it intended’.⁸

In what follows I will show that in working with these difficulties Rose finds a different logic of the thought of politics and God from within the illusions and misrecognitions of state and religion. With reference to the work of Nigel Tubbs, a former student of Rose, I argue this to be the educational logic of *mis(re)cognition*. I will show that this logic comprehends not only the religious nature of modern bourgeois freedom to be correspondingly the political actuality of religion, but that therein the absolute has its political and spiritual truth in and as education. To this end the examination seeks not to extract a political theology from Rose because, as we will see, her work undermines the thinking which would seek to posit the parameters of a political theology as ‘correction’ to the various misrecognitions of secular liberalism and political theory. I argue instead that Rose holds to the educational difficulty of the relation between politics and religion and that it is education in Rose and in Hegel that works with difficulty as of absolute significance. Reading Rose in this way we are challenged to retrieve the speculative depth of her work in its fundamentally educative ambiguities, or in the consistencies of its inconsistencies, as a radical politics and faith.

⁶ Gillian Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, 92.

⁷ *Ibid*, 92-93.

⁸ Gillian Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 74.

Reading God and Politics in Rose

In ‘Gillian Rose and the project of a Critical Marxism’ Tony Gorman argues that Rose’s early political engagement with Adorno and Lukács and the project of a Critical Marxism in *Hegel Contra Sociology* (HCS), is, in her later words, ultimately abandoned.⁹ This is due to the appearance of an ‘irresolvable aporia’¹⁰ at the heart of Rose’s attempt to retrieve a thinking of the absolute in Hegel for modern social and political thought. For Gorman, HCS ‘oscillates’ between two modes of phenomenological reconstruction; one which advances a positive or speculative dialectic through the Hegelian notion of recollection and one which ‘withdraws’ from it in an Adornoesque eschewal of all positive and thus abstract, utopian ideals or moments. This means that the radical critique of bourgeois property relations that emerges in the phenomenological reconstruction of the antinomies of modern social and political thought, leads to a ‘retrospective and resigned’ politics which, fearing the reactive, becomes ‘decidedly irrational and voluntarist’.¹¹ Where Rose sees a formative work in and within the aporias of these two modes, there is, in fact, for Gorman, only a ‘radical incompatibility’¹² leading to political impasse. Rose’s project to link ‘a presentation of the contradictory relations between capital and culture’ to ‘the analysis of the economy’, thereby to ‘comprehend the conditions for revolutionary practice’,¹³ leads only to failure.

Gorman blames this on a ‘non-metaphysical interpretation’ of the Hegelian Concept or Absolute, one which ‘fundamentally re-orders’¹⁴ its constitutive terms - universal, particular and singular - as they determine subjectivity’s objective social transformation. The universal, in its speculative mediations of the individual and its particular sphere of needs, the principle of their unity, is displaced by the experience of the singular which can only bear ‘witness’ to and negotiate the ‘“breaks’ between them’.¹⁵ This singularity of experience becomes the ‘anchoring’ of speculative negotiation and so usurps the idea

⁹ These are *The Broken Middle*, *Judaism and Modernity*, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, *Love’s Work* and *Paradiso*.

¹⁰ Tony Gorman, “Gillian Rose and the project of a Critical Marxism,” in *Radical Philosophy* 105 (2001): 32.

¹¹ Tony Gorman, “Gillian Rose and the project of a Critical Marxism,” in *Radical Philosophy* 105 (2001):35.

¹² *Ibid*, 32.

¹³ Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, 220.

¹⁴ Tony Gorman, “Gillian Rose and the project of a Critical Marxism,” in *Radical Philosophy* 105 (2001):28.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 35.

of absolute ethical life with merely a ‘form of perspectivism’.¹⁶ There is no longer an objective basis for reconstructing capitalist social relations.

This view is echoed in Peter Osborne’s review of HCS. Rose’s absolute is limited, he argues, because her phenomenological approach gets trapped within ‘the perspective it knows to be false’.¹⁷ Speculative exposition turns out to be the limit of ‘eternal repetition’¹⁸ which ‘remains impotent in the face of contemporary reality’.¹⁹ Rose maintains the subject-object relation which allows her to ‘conceptualize the mediation of the objective within the subjective’, but she

‘rules out the possibility of a theoretical mode in which the subjective is mediated within the objective...the only possible form of a materialist theory of subjectivity, culture and politics, which aims to go beyond the mere recognition of the ‘deformations’ of existing forms of phenomenal knowledge to theorize their real determinations and possible mode of transformation’.²⁰

In consequence, argues Gorman, Rose finds the absolute in the quotidian practices of a ‘form of virtue ethics’.²¹ She becomes the ‘knight of faith’ who, in the name of love’s work, ‘melds the love of eternity with the love of the world’.²²

Both of these critiques highlight some of the difficulties that continue to surround the reception of Rose’s work regarding the nature and meaning of the absolute in and for a radical politics. Her work continues to fuel the division between right-wing religious and left-wing political perspectives on Hegel (and Rose), including political theology. In particular, her exposition of the *lack of identity* between state and religion, which she was later to call ‘the broken middle’, provides what Lloyd has called various ‘politics of the middle’ which attempt to offer an ‘alternative’ ‘political theory which does not privilege the sovereignty of individual or state, and which puts intermediary associations center stage’.²³

¹⁶ Ibid, 35.

¹⁷ Peter Osborne, “Hegelian Phenomenology and the Critique of Reason and Society,” in *Radical Philosophy* 32 (1982): 4.

¹⁸ Ibid, 14.

¹⁹ Peter Osborne, “Hegelian Phenomenology and the Critique of Reason and Society,” in *Radical Philosophy* 32 (1982): 5.

²⁰ Ibid, 14.

²¹ Tony Gorman, “Gillian Rose and the project of a Critical Marxism,” in *Radical Philosophy* 105 (2001):34

²² Ibid, 34.

²³ Vincent Lloyd, “Complex Space or Broken Middle? Milbank, Rose, and the Sharia Controversy,” in *Political Theology* 10.2 (2009):225.

We see this in Andrew Shank's *Against Innocence*, Gillian Rose's *Reception and Gift of Faith*. Here the broken middle is a radical form of mediation in the difficulties of law and social engagement. We learn to live in the brokenness of conflicting ideas and experiences but also to find therein the possibilities for 'true conversation', 'peace as justice', and the 'holding acceptance of inner conflict'.²⁴ The broken middle is a 'peace negotiator'²⁵ and the absolute is to be found in the openness of each participant to the 'perfect Honesty'²⁶ of the conversation. The broken middle is thus the 'impulse' of a politics open to its own pure and 'ideal solidarity'²⁷ and the openness of a religion for which solidarity 'constitutes the proper absolute essence of the sacred'.²⁸ Shanks is clear that this openness works against those readings of Hegel which see absolute knowing as the teleological tyranny of history. Similarly, in Katie Schick's *Gillian Rose: 'A Good Enough Justice'*, the broken middle of our relations with others, the drama of recognition and misrecognition, offers us possibilities for 'mutual transformation'²⁹ because we discover the intersubjective dimension of our difficult negotiations. But, I argue, these interpretations read aporia as a middle and not as a broken middle. When aporia is read as stasis, or as an alternative politics, or as conversation, or as the albeit difficult path of mutual recognition, the middle unwittingly betrays the difficulty of actuality which is being suppressed. This is to sidestep Rose's most significant intervention in Hegelian interpretation which reveals a notion of the absolute in actuality. This suppression is where the question of a different kind of logic in her work is most acute.

A question of logic

Hegel, writes Rose, 'puts a trinity of ideas in place of Kant's transcendental method; the idea of phenomenology, the idea of absolute ethical life (absolute *Sittlichkeit*), and the idea of a logic'.³⁰ In chapter one of HCS Rose demonstrates the Kantian and neo-Kantian transcendental reasoning that all social and political theorizing, including Marxism, falls into and how the sociological tradition therein

²⁴ Andrew Shanks, *Against Innocence, Gillians Rose's Reception and Gift of Faith*, (London: SCM Press, 2008), 33.

²⁵ Ibid, 32.

²⁶ Ibid, 43.

²⁷ Ibid, 44.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Katie Schick, *Gillian Rose: 'A Good Enough Justice'*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012),101.

³⁰ Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, 45.

reproduces dualistic ways of thinking. As such, the antinomies of sociological reason rest on the Kantian separation of validity and values.

A transcendental account is characterized by the logic of the in-itself. Philosophy has always, in various ways, defined truth according to this ancient logic. Truth is defined as unity and lack of relation, whilst that which is merely for-another is mediation and thus error. This idea of truth is carried in Aristotle's notion of the Prime Mover which is its own condition of possibility. Necessity - that it must be itself - is the principle of non-contradiction and the all-too-easily taken for granted judgement of the absurdity of infinite regression. Metaphysics has traditionally rested on this logic of the in-itself which is free from opposition, contradiction and change. In the Kantian separation of the transcendental from the object the same ancient and perennial separation of the in-itself from mediation is betrayed. This is because a transcendental account must "necessarily presuppose[] the actuality or existence of its object and seek[] to discover the conditions of its possibility".³¹

One might argue that Kant's critical philosophy holds within it the relativity of the in-itself in its observation of mutual negation wherein 'concepts without intuitions are empty; intuitions without concepts, blind'.³² Nevertheless, against such a view, the contradictions experienced by reason when it tries to think itself are seen as error and ultimately overcome in a transcendental account of experience and the synthetic *a priori* judgement which holds to the pure in-itself free from mediation. Presupposing the distinction between finite, 'knowable appearances'³³ and the infinite (the unconditioned, things-in-themselves), Kant ultimately serves to 'justify infinite ignorance'³⁴ because in seeking to justify the true in-itself it is only available in the way that it appears to us. This leaves 'the social, political and historical determinants of all knowledge and all action...unknown and unknowable'.³⁵

What Kant fails to do, unlike Hegel, is to make the experience of the logic of the in-itself the content of reason's self-examination which would be rather the phenomenological 'exposition of the course of [its] experience'.³⁶ Phenomenological consciousness observes the contradictions between thought and truth

³¹ Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, 1.

³² Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Meiklejohn (London: Everyman, 1993), B74.

³³ Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, 45.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 44.

³⁵ *Ibid*.

³⁶ G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 55.

in-itself and so truth and experience to be ‘the occasion for a change in that consciousness and in its definition of its object’.³⁷ Consciousness in Hegel has two experiences of the in-itself. The first is of the object as ‘the moment of truth’.³⁸ But the object turns out to be not merely in-itself but also *for* consciousness. The distinction from, and relation to, the object is the determining aspect of thought or is what knowing is, and this relation between the two is the ‘dialectical movement which consciousness exercises on itself and which affects both its knowledge and its object’.³⁹ The second experience here is the one that we, the philosophical observer, have of this natural relation to the object. Our inquiry into the truth of knowledge concerns the object ‘knowledge’ whose essence will also be being-in-itself and being-for-another. Both experiences are ones of loss because consciousness loses the object (in both cases) to the insight that what is known in-itself is mediation. Philosophical consciousness is the thinking which comes to know itself not only in the experience of negation but as the activity of negation itself, that is, what it observes it knows to be its own doing. Philosophical consciousness sees that natural consciousness is ‘always already’ a shape of relation to and determination of substance and thereby the misapprehension of substance. But it sees that only in this way is the relation between substance and subject ‘the precondition of immanent change’⁴⁰ wherein a different understanding of, and relation to, truth in-itself arises.

The Adornian strain in Rose’s reading of Hegel finds a different dynamic here. For Adorno, like Hegel, the relation between thought and the in-itself, what Adorno calls the ‘logic of the excluded middle’, is the ‘hypostasized concept’, the abstract in-itself of the object which the concept reduces to ‘a mere sample of its kind or species’.⁴¹ But ‘objects do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder’.⁴² This remainder is the object’s potential, or ‘what it would like to be’.⁴³ Adorno called this potential between concept and object, rational identity thinking. Non-identity thinking is the awareness of the gap between concept and object which collapses the logic of non-contradiction. Negative dialectics shows that it is the object itself and not the ‘organizing drive of thought’⁴⁴ which yields non-

³⁷ Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, 46.

³⁸ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 53.

³⁹ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 55.

⁴⁰ Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, 150.

⁴¹ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (London: Continuum, 2007), 46.

⁴² *Ibid*, 5.

⁴³ Gillian Rose, “How is Critical Theory Possible?” in *Political Studies* 24, no. 1 (1976): 71.

⁴⁴ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 144.

identity thinking and so how the object as a specific mode of cognition in capitalist social relations appears to itself as illusion. The immanent method is not a method in the ordinary sense of the term because ‘it does not begin by taking a standpoint’⁴⁵ over and against an object. But consciousness, in working on itself, sees the immanently dialectical experience of subject and object to be its own work and so to be already the medium for its thinking about the nonidentity of concept and object. This is to see the social form that nonidentity takes.

But, for Rose, Adorno’s immanent method, ‘the consciousness of antinomies which makes the necessities of the antinomies it discovers transparent’, is an ‘inherently paradoxical attempt to state a non-systematic objectivism objectivistically and without a system’.⁴⁶ It can only ‘present the awareness of the limitations of the attempt – ‘the mind tearing at its bonds’’.⁴⁷ Negative dialectics conforms to the logic of the in-itself because negative dialectics itself is not allowed to be mediated. Adorno does not yield the dialectic to its own immanent movement of positivity whereby it would come to know itself differently, and so he merely observes it. It is only in Hegel, if we do not protect the negative from itself, from its own contradictions, that we find ‘a different kind of identity’.⁴⁸ It is in the relation between Adorno, Hegel and Rose that a different resonance is found for the rhythms and negations of this logic of the in-itself.

Mis(re)cognition

Rose’s interpretation of Hegel’s early Jena texts shows why this is the case. It is here that she offers her idea of mis(re)cognition. Hegel needed a more adequate term for the motility of the relation between concept and intuition than the idea of ‘intellectual intuition’ in Fichte and Schelling. For Kant, concepts referred to intuition, to objects as they appear in themselves. Concepts cannot be legitimated without intuition. This is why intuition is not justified from concepts alone. Fichte and Schelling recognized, however, that the primacy of practical reason in Kant did precisely this. It presupposed the act of an *a priori* intuition which makes possible the framework within which theoretical and practical reason

⁴⁵ Ibid, 5.

⁴⁶ Gillian Rose, “How is Critical Theory Possible?” in *Political Studies* 24, no. 1 (1976):85.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, 63.

operates. But Hegel shows that intellectual intuition also produces new dominations of the concept over intuition. The problem was that intellectual intuition could not express adequately enough the triune nature of the reflective consciousness which rests on the dichotomy of concept and intuition.

Summarizing Rose's view here, she sees that if the object in-itself is the result of the movement of immediacy and mediation, then *we* can see that consciousness is the thinking which presupposes its object and posits itself in relation to it, making consciousness a reflection-into-self. In this way consciousness sees itself in the object but the seeing is a one-sided reflection because the object does not see itself in consciousness. This makes the object merely the 'reflection of individual domination'.⁴⁹ Intuition as a term is thus 'too immediate, too pre-critical' whereas the prefix 're' of recognition tells us that there is an inescapable 'miss-seeing' in the experience which implies that something has been re-experienced in order that it is 'well-known'.⁵⁰ Re-cognition presupposes the gaps represented by the relation between concept and object/intuition. Intellectual intuition or reflection cannot acknowledge that the concept is never united with intuition. The failure to do so is also the failure to see how difficulty actually arises in the experience of the concept and in what sense it constitutes the form and content of our knowing. Recognition then or the relation between immediacy and mediation has a triune structure. It implies unity (immediacy), lack of unity (mediation, contingency) and also, crucially, the *third* partner of the relation, the *work* of the gap between them that consciousness performs on itself. Here is where the object is able 'to look back, without, in its turn, subsuming or denying the difference of that at which it looks back'.⁵¹ Recognition, which refers to lack of identity, is therefore, 'mis(re)cognition',⁵² the movement of, and the relation to, immediacy and mediation within which consciousness is changed. In this *educational* culture of experience 'the relata are able to see each other without suppressing one another'.⁵³ This triune structure is also the Hegelian 'concept or absolute'.⁵⁴ I will explain what this notion of education means in a moment.

On this reading the pitfalls associated with the concept of recognition in Hegel can be seen. Recognition and thereby mutual recognition imply formal recognition. The independent self-consciousness in Hegel

⁴⁹ Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, 71.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, 65.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 71.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 63.

‘who exists only in being acknowledged’⁵⁵ presupposes the reflection of individual domination. Recognition is already misrecognition, ‘the failure of mutual recognition on the part of two self-consciousnesses who encounter each other and refuse to recognize the other as itself a self-relation’.⁵⁶ Consciousness appears to itself in and as the illusion of independence which is the template in Hegel for the experience of positing in the master and slave dialectic. Recognition is thus a relation to actuality which means it can only appear to us abstractly. But the relation to actuality is what ‘determines the relation to self and relation to other’.⁵⁷ This is why ‘if actuality is not thought...thinking has no social import’.⁵⁸ The experience of self and other is the illusion of independence, equality or mutuality which in fact masks the reality of loss or the other as present in the self. Awareness of this is awareness of the ways in which the self exports otherness and difficulty, the very conditions within which selfhood is configured. Mis(re)cognition then, in acknowledging actuality, expresses the return of the self to the negative and educational beginning within which it is determined.

Mis(re)cognition as education

To explain the educational logic of mis(re)cognition further I want now to turn to the work of Nigel Tubbs whose reading of Rose takes up the challenge of interpreting her Hegelianism as a philosophy of education, and again, as the education of philosophy.⁵⁹ He writes that the ancient logic of truth in-itself bequeathed to the tradition a political logic of overcoming within the relation of master and slave. The master as the pure and independent mind is deemed to be ‘logically true’⁶⁰ when he ‘overcomes’ that which threatens independence i.e. the dependence of the slave. Overcoming here is ownership of what is other, of that which would relativize the master’s freedom ‘all the way down’.⁶¹ The logic of truth in-

⁵⁵ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 111.

⁵⁶ Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, 74.

⁵⁷ Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, 204.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 214.

⁵⁹ Tubbs’ theory of education in Hegel has its roots in Rose’s retrieval of Hegelian speculative experience. It is developed and expanded in a series of books, most notably, Nigel Tubbs, *Philosophy’s Higher Education*, (Netherlands, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004); Nigel Tubbs, *Education in Hegel* (London: Continuum, 2008); Nigel Tubbs *History of Western Philosophy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Nigel Tubbs *Philosophy and Modern Liberal Arts Education* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). It is also to be found in a trajectory of Hegelian educational theory and practice in two undergraduate programmes in Education Studies and Modern Liberal Arts at the University of Winchester, UK

⁶⁰ Nigel Tubbs, “Gillian Rose and Education,” in *Telos* 173 (2015):128.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 131.

itself is thus a 'propertied logic'.⁶² It 'owns error by ensuring that the chaos of infinite regression is overcome in being owned'.⁶³ The implications of this are far reaching. 'Truth is property',⁶⁴ he argues. Posited in the form of a general logic truth in-itself eschews all that is not itself and thereby suppresses the education between and within the relation of master and slave that is self-relation. But mis(re)cognition expresses the truth that lives suppressed in and by propertied logic. It thus *commends* educational logic from within propertied logic. Rose's work, he writes, demonstrates the logic of overcoming as it constitutes the antinomies and contradictions of modern and post-modern thought. In it she finds the educational logic within which the experience of the relation of the in-itself to mediation, 'is its own truth, its own form and content'.⁶⁵

In addition, argues Tubbs, the logic of mis(re)cognition has its truth in the notion of the *Aufhebung* in Hegel. Despite the fact that there is little reference by Rose to its structure and meaning Tubbs sees its work at the heart of her re-reading of Hegel's philosophy. *Aufhebung* tends to get translated as sublation. In the *Science of Logic* Hegel writes that it has two meanings. The first is 'to preserve, to maintain' but it is just as much 'to cause, to cease, to put an end to'.⁶⁶ In the recent book *Hegel's Preface to the Phenomenology of Spirit*, Yirmiyahu Yovel describes the *Aufhebung* as the principle of the Hegelian system whereby every moment of the dialectic in 'transcending its limits'⁶⁷ reconstitutes or rebuilds itself. 'The new form negates its predecessor's inadequate form but incorporates its essence within itself'⁶⁸ and so is a new shape of relation to self and object. Most common readings of the term tend to describe it as the higher element of the dialectical process. But it is also the term which expresses speculative experience and as such it carries a much more difficult idea of where we actually end up in the process.

This is why Tubbs argues that the term sublation does not quite do justice to the educational nature of the *Aufhebung* in Hegel making it a mostly misunderstood term. If it is read according to the thesis-antithesis-synthesis triad then we might well recognize the formative nature of the movement but not the

⁶² Ibid, 128.

⁶³ Ibid, 129.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 128.

⁶⁵ Nigel Tubbs, "Gillian Rose and Education," in *Telos* 173 (2015):130.

⁶⁶ G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, (New York: Humanity Books, 1969),107.

⁶⁷ Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Hegel's Preface to the Phenomenology of Spirit*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005),95.

⁶⁸ Yovel, *Hegel's Preface*, 95.

most important feature of that education; the fact that the consciousness experiencing the movement of negation and the negation of negation is also changed. To remain a voyeur of the movement is to see or look for the result or synthesis as merely identity. It is easy, on this reading, to criticize the dialectic as overcoming and so as the domination of reason over difference, diversity, openness and critique (and thereby to repeat the logic of identity in that critique). But, he argues, the *Aufhebung*, in accordance with the logic of mis(re)cognition, is the experience in and by which consciousness can ‘realize a determinate self-(re)formation’.⁶⁹ This is what is most suppressed about philosophical experience in Hegel, that it is always this relation to the object (natural consciousness) and the relation to that relation (philosophical consciousness). Mis(re)cognition is the term which acknowledges actuality because it acknowledges the prevailing social and political relations which reproduce and reinforce the Kantian and neo-Kantian dichotomies and their corresponding property relations. The *Aufhebung* is the work of consciousness sustaining itself in the relation between natural and philosophical consciousness, the mind learning about itself in and as the truth of them both. This is why, asserts Tubbs, the ‘change of perspective’ in Rose and Hegel, is not ‘left as a tool of general logic. They pursue it as a different logic, an educational logic of form and content as learning’.⁷⁰

Thinking the absolute

When Rose writes that ‘Absolute ethical life according to its Relation’ means ‘relative ethical life’,⁷¹ she is drawing attention to the ways in which the absolute is present but hidden in actuality. By ‘deriving the social relations and institutions which correspond to the domination of the concept over intuition and of intuition over concept, and of demonstrating the relativity of those institutions’,⁷² Hegel shows that a different identity emerges for the absolute from within the aporias and anxieties of those relations from which he begins. In this way he establishes the logic of mis(re)cognition as the logic within which the absolute is comprehended in the totality of property forms and their social and political relations. This new educational logic has its truth in recollection or rather it is known to itself in and as the recollective activity of Spirit which does not deny the difference of that at which it looks back but which achieves an

⁶⁹ Nigel Tubbs, *Education in Hegel*, (London: Continuum, 2008), 48.

⁷⁰ Tubbs, “Gillian Rose and Education,” in *Telos* 173 (2015):132.

⁷¹ Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, 62.

⁷² Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, 64.

absolute perspective on itself because it is learning. In recollection thinking knows that the learning life is the substance and subject of what it is and does.

But to know how recollection is really educational we must be mindful that its activity as something positive is more than mere remembering. To do this we must be asking a particular question, asks Tubbs. How is it possible to ‘know the truth of something in what it is not’⁷³ without suppressing its negativity in its being known. Tubbs argues that remembering is the overcoming of forgetfulness by memory, that it is identity. But remembering cannot sustain the negativity of that which *is* what it *is not*. Read speculatively, remembering is recollection. It is the thinking which knows it gets caught in the contradictions of recollecting itself as something in-itself, because as an object to itself it falls within the logic of non-contradiction. That is, it loses itself in a way that merely remembering does not. But it makes that contradiction its content because it remembers what is lost but loses what it remembers to mediation. What is known in recollection is not a negativity overcome but preserved in and as the ‘the groundlessness’ of that which is retrieved. Whilst this is a rather difficult formulation by Tubbs it does offer us a way of reading Rose that can see the aporetic movement of the absolute in negation and in and as the negation of negation as the ‘presence’ of the absolute but not as something to be achieved.

If we return now to the speculative proposition of the identity of state and religion we can see the challenge that Rose’s absolute poses to a political theology. Speculative propositions in Hegel demonstrate that ‘the identity which is affirmed between subject and predicate’ in an ordinary proposition ‘is seen equally to affirm a lack of identity between subject and predicate’.⁷⁴ At first, we experience the proposition as a contradiction. It is clearly not the case and nor could it be the case that subjective disposition is the objective and universal legal principle of freedom realized in the state. They are irreconcilable entities. Speculatively, however, we experience the historical and political contingencies which determine the separation. We see that the history of Christianity is the continued representation of the relation between substance and subject. But, in addition, we also see that our own relation to the contradiction presupposes historical and political contingencies not immediately intelligible. The speculative proposition reveals the continued domination of the concept in Kantian and neo Kantian logic which makes the distinction between finite and infinite, ‘between knowable

⁷³ Tubbs, *Education in Hegel*, 51.

⁷⁴ Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, 48-49.

appearances and unknowable things-in-themselves'.⁷⁵ This is the fate of substantial freedom and subjectivity, namely that 'our concept of the infinite is our concept of ourselves and our possibilities'.⁷⁶ In modernity the separation presupposes 'the autonomous moral subject as free within the order of representations and unfree within its preconditions and outcomes'.⁷⁷ But speculatively it is 'the working out of that combination' for the contradiction which 'any, natural consciousness falls into when it considers the object to be external, can itself provide the occasion for a change in that consciousness'.⁷⁸ Thinking the absolute in Hegel acknowledges actuality as the foundation for 'the critique of different kinds of property relations'.⁷⁹

Rose writes that Marx could not conceive of the social import of Hegel's absolute. By reading the identity of religion and the state non-speculatively, he failed to see the lack of identity in Hegel's thought which re-cognizes the social, political and historical conditions between state and religion which the ordinary proposition suppresses. It means he is unable to develop a notion of actuality which would acknowledge the 'culture' of a political vocation formed and deformed in and by prevailing bourgeois domination. This is to avoid actuality's 'educative...political intent'.⁸⁰ Marxism is fated to become methodological in its approach because it can only impose a *Sollen* making it historically redundant. When actuality is masked by bourgeois freedom the critical potential of actuality to reveal illusion is undermined. This is not to 'point to a flaw'⁸¹ in Marx's critique of capital, Rose writes, but to draw attention to the element of a *Sollen* in a theory which is unable to see how it is a re-presentation of substance and subject. Only the speculative exposition of state and religion acknowledges the ways in which substance and subject are lived as mis(re)cognition for philosophy has to 'continue to rediscover 'the passage of the concept [of the Absolute] into consciousness', into misrepresentation'.⁸²

Perhaps we can see now that the logic of mis(re)cognition does not avoid the relativity of concept and object/intuition *ad infinitum*, that the absolute in Hegel is 'also 'relative''⁸³ because 'it has a

⁷⁵ Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, 45.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, 57.

⁷⁸ Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, 45-6.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 204.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 217.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 219.

⁸² Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, 181.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 206.

presupposition from which it begins.⁸⁴ But this means that now, in educational logic, the absolute in-itself as the form of non-contradiction is related to its negativity ‘as content’ or ‘as realized’.⁸⁵ This logic is avoided by a politics which seeks only answers or solutions to the world’s problems because it abstracts the questions from the law and culture of its determination. But doesn’t education which deepens understanding appear weak in contrast to calls for radical social action? Maybe. But the limits of education in Rose are to be risked in order that they can be comprehended in and as the work of truth. Rose insists that we see the neo-Kantian logic which suppresses this difficult truth as spiritual and political education. ‘We live in the contradiction’,⁸⁶ between our idea of God and our idea of freedom and so our thinking and our failing to think the absolute lives in us as our own learning.

Conclusion

This essay has argued that the broadly Marxist critique of Rose as well as the more liberal and religious interpretations of her work, including political theology, suppress what is most at stake in comprehending the broken middle of state and religion, that is, the ‘culture’ or the re-formation of the relation between subjective freedom (religion) and objective unfreedom (formal freedom) lived as the learning life.

In drawing attention to the two logics at work in Rose and Hegel, I have taken the idea of mis(re)cognition to be the educational ‘code-breaker’ of any theorising of a political theology in Rose. In other words, we have to work within educational logic if we are to reach an understanding of the modern relation between state and religion, or between God and man. This is to say that the absolute in Rose is both the comedy of recognition and misrecognition in its various ‘misadventures’ and the comic and tragic life of reason making the experience of contradiction substantial. ‘Comedy, as much as tragedy, is always divine comedy’.⁸⁷ This is the ‘inner self-perficient’⁸⁸ logic of education lived, not in spectatorship, which is to reduce the work of self-relation to one side of its opposition-to theory or practice, openness or closure, resignation or faith, success or failure-but love’s work. Neo-Kantian logic

⁸⁴ Hegel cited in Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, 206.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁸⁷ Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, 64.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

suppresses the way in which this logic opposes itself and therein fails to sustain its own learning. This is why philosophy in HCS demonstrates such ‘a ferociously sincere record of its own opposition with all that is stationary and which resolves life as knowledge’.⁸⁹

Despite the interest in Rose’s contribution to social and political thought, including political theology, too many interpretations of Rose refuse to engage with this speculative work. If, as Tubbs argues, it is really the case that to understand Rose we have to read her backwards, like any good Hegelian would, then we are required to read the relation between the form and drama of her thinking as well as its results, as the work of the broken middle, the work that is ‘always already ancient’ but ‘prepared and ready for comprehension’.⁹⁰ (1992: xi). Here the logic of negation and negation of negation is known to itself as learning, for it is the work and the life which is changed by that learning. In and as the ‘labour of the notion’ in HCS Rose is giving us this *experience* of learning, not just its results. This means that we begin with Rose always in the anxiety of beginning. But if ‘the only honest beginning is with difficulty’,⁹¹ then we are, perhaps, compelled, like Rose, to be fiercely critical, and self-critical, of anything that fails to do justice to difficulty’s educational work.

⁸⁹ Nigel Tubbs, “What is Love’s Work,” in *Women: A Cultural Review*, 9, no.1 (1998): 34-46

⁹⁰ Gillian Rose, *The Broken Middle*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), xi.

⁹¹ Rowan Williams, *Wresting with Angels*, (London: SCM Press, 2007), 62.

Bibliography

Adorno, T. *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton. London: Continuum, 2007.

Gorman, T. "Gillian Rose and the project of a Critical Marxism." In *Radical Philosophy* 105 (2001):25-36.

Hegel, G.W.F. *Science of Logic*. New York: Humanity Books, 1969.

Hegel, G.W.F. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. trans. Miller, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977,

Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Meiklejohn, London: Everyman, 1993.

Lloyd, V. "Complex Space or Broken Middle? Milbank, Rose, and the Sharia Controversy." In *Political Theology* 10.2 (2009):225-245.

Osborne, P. "Hegelian Phenomenology and the Critique of Reason and Society." In *Radical Philosophy* 32 (1982):8-15.

- Rose, G. *The Melancholy Style, An Introduction to the Thought of Theodor W. Adorno*. London: Verso, 2014.
- Rose, G. *Hegel Contra Sociology*. London: Athlone Press, 1981.
- Rose, G. *The Broken Middle*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992
- Rose, G. *Mourning Becomes the Law*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Shanks, A. *Against Innocence, Gillian Rose's Reception and Gift of Faith*. London: SCM Press, 2008.
- Schick, K. *Gillian Rose: 'A Good Enough Justice'*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012.
- Tubbs, T. "What is Love's Work." In *Women: A Cultural Review*, 9, no.1 (1998): 34-46
- Tubbs, N. 'Gillian Rose and Education.' In *Telos* 173 (2015):125-143.
- Tubbs, N. *Education in Hegel*. London: Continuum, 2008.
- Williams, R. *Wresting with Angels, Conversations in Modern Theology*. London: SCM Press, 2007.
- Yovel, Y. *Hegel's Preface to the Phenomenology of Spirit*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005.