

# The Aristotelian *Theos* in Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind*

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## Abstract

Although Hegel does not pass up the opportunity to express his deep admiration for specific aspects of the Aristotelian notion of God, he is not interested in giving a concrete account of its systematic significance for his *Philosophy of Mind* as a whole. In this article, I seek to take an overarching perspective on both the Aristotelian God and the Hegelian mind. By contrast to the common practice of focusing on Hegel's interpretation of Aristotle in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, I first examine the Aristotelian text itself and then focus on Hegel's *Encyclopaedia Philosophy of Mind*, in order to explore the coincidence between the two conceptions from a systematic point of view. With regard to Aristotle, I argue that 'God' represents the conceptual vanishing point of his philosophy at which all philosophical sciences appear to converge. With regard to Hegel, I show that it is precisely such conceptual convergence of all philosophical sciences that constitutes both the starting and ending points of the *Philosophy of Mind*. The result is a novel meta-scientific and non-theistic conception of 'God' that provides the means not only to re-evaluate the systematic relation between Hegel and Aristotle but also to reconsider the character, content and aim of speculative philosophy in general.

## I. Introduction

Hegel praises Aristotle and in particular his concept of *theos* ('God') at various points in his work, most strikingly at the end of the *Encyclopaedia*, where he cites *Met.*: Λ 7, 1072b19–31 in Greek without any comment.<sup>1</sup> While Nicolai Hartmann took this quotation as an expression of Hegel's unconditional approval of Aristotelian theology (Hartmann 1957: 215), Hegel scholars have explored the limits of Hegel's fascination with the ancient Greek thinker (Weiss 1969; Düsing 1976; 1983). Recent research has emphasized the notion of *energeia* as a self-referential activity (Ferrarin 2001) and the concept of ontological truth (Dangel 2013), which are considered central to both Hegel's interpretation of the Aristotelian *theos* and Hegel's own philosophy, though in the latter case with a distinctively Hegelian twist.

However, the vast majority of Hegel scholars who have investigated the relation between Hegel's philosophy and Aristotelian *theos* have focused on Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, in which Hegel discusses *theos* within the framework of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* inasmuch as metaphysics is explicitly distinguished from the philosophy of nature, of mind and of logic, to which Hegel dedicates separate chapters. If, however, the aim is to find out the meaning and function of the Aristotelian *theos* in Hegel's *own* philosophy, i.e., in the specific passage of the *Encyclopaedia* where Hegel cites the Aristotelian *theos*, more is needed than an examination of the *Lectures*. For the philosophical context at the *end* of Hegel's *Encyclopaedia* is obviously very different than the interpretation of the *first* part of Aristotle's philosophy. As I argue in this paper, Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind*, specifically the philosophy of the absolute mind and its very last paragraphs, i.e., the 'conclusion' of Hegel's speculative philosophy and the so-called 'three syllogisms', is crucial for an adequate interpretation of the Aristotelian *theos* as a *Hegelian* concept and a subject matter of the *Encyclopaedia*.

Unfortunately, little work has been done on this question. Alfredo Ferrarin, for instance, does not even include a chapter on the absolute mind in his voluminous study, evidently following Hegel's *Lectures* on the Aristotelian philosophy of mind, which also ends with a discussion on politics. Tobias Dangel, who does briefly discuss absolute mind, does not comment on the last three paragraphs of the *Encyclopaedia Philosophy of Mind*, while Walter Jaeschke (2010: 268–72), who reviews the 'three syllogisms', does not discuss the Aristotle quotation.

In this paper, I take for granted the determinations of the Aristotelian *theos* identified by Ferrarin and Dangel for the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, and search for a further aspect that may explain why the notion of *theos* is used precisely at the end of the *Encyclopaedia*. An important observation in this regard is that, while Hegel already refers to the Aristotelian 'thinking of thinking' (νόησις νοήσεως) in the context of the absolute idea (*Enc.*: §236A), he chooses to close the *Encyclopaedia* with a passage that does not merely stress the 'thinking of thinking' (as such), but rather 'thinking' with respect to 'us', 'life' and 'happiness', which are subjects of Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* and *Philosophy of Mind*. Accordingly, I show that the further aspect of the Aristotelian *theos*, central to Hegel's own philosophy, consists in a *meta-scientific contextualization of all (philosophical) sciences*. The Aristotelian *theos* represents what I will call the 'vanishing point' that somehow unifies all human knowledge. And it is precisely these meta-reflections on the unity of the different parts of Hegelian philosophy (though in a much more developed version) that close Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind* and the *Encyclopaedia* as a whole.

On that account, it is necessary to look closely at various passages in both Aristotle and Hegel. In section II, I outline in what sense *theos* contextualizes or could have contextualized Aristotelian physics, psychology, ethics, logic and ontology. In section III, I highlight the main passages in Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind* that

assert the relevance of a similar meta-scientific contextualization for this part of speculative philosophy. And in section IV, I look at the four concluding paragraphs of the *Encyclopaedia* and show in what Aristotelian sense the end of the *Philosophy of Mind* delivers a meta-determination of speculative philosophy as a whole.

## II. The Aristotelian *theos*

In his early and highly ambitious treatise entitled *Topics*, Aristotle aims to ‘discover a method by which we shall be able to reason from generally accepted opinions about any problem set before us’ (*Top.*: I 1, 100a18–20). He notes that this has to be a meta-scientific method that enables us to coherently reason with regard to all ‘philosophical sciences’ and the ‘ultimate bases of each science’ (*Top.*: I 2, 101a35–38). And he also divides all ‘propositions and problems’ of philosophical interest, i.e., all ‘philosophical sciences’, into ‘three classes’: the ‘ethical’, ‘physical’ and ‘logical’ or ‘ontological’ (*Top.*: I 14, 105b19–29).<sup>2</sup>

At this point, we are already faced with the ambiguity of Aristotle’s thought regarding theology. For it is unclear whether—and if so in what sense—*theos* belongs to one of these classes of philosophical sciences. The passage in Aristotle’s work in which he sets out his ideas on *theos* in the greatest detail is surely book Λ of the *Metaphysics*, though it is not the only one in which he does so. As I shall now show, this passage summarizes how *theos* unifies the three classes of philosophical sciences mentioned above.

### II.i. *Physics and theology*

Aristotle introduces the term ‘*theos*’ only in the second half of chapter 7 (*Met.*: Λ 7, 1072b15–30). Thus, the discussion that precedes this passage may lay the groundwork for theology with regard to another philosophical field, but it does not constitute the core of Aristotelian theology.

Book Λ begins as an extension of the ontological investigations of books Ζ, Η and Θ, in which Aristotle differentiates between three kinds of substance: two ‘sensible’ substances that ‘come within the scope of physics’, namely the ‘eternal’ and the ‘perishable’, i.e., celestial and sublunary bodies, and one non-sensible, the ‘immutable’, which comes within the scope of ‘some other science’ (*Met.*: Λ 1, 1069a30–b8). According to book E, there is no doubt that this ‘other science’ is theology. However, Aristotle appears to be well aware of the problem of theology (as a potential science for investigating *theos*), and so chapters 1–6 of book Λ point towards a philosophical justification of the third kind of substance on the basis of the two ‘sensible’ substances. The investigation as a whole culminates in an

inductive argument for a *prime mover*, which in Aristotle's eyes is the only way to rationally explain movement and time (*Met.*:  $\Lambda$  6, 1071b3–12).

This inductive argument is clearly *not* a cosmological *proof* for the *existence* of God in terms of the first two kinds of sensible substance. Aristotle stresses that the prime mover is by no means an entity, since it has to be 'immaterial', i.e., pure 'actuality' (*Met.*:  $\Lambda$  6, 1071b3–21; cf.  $\Lambda$  7, 1073a3–8). Clearly, Aristotle is not interested in a somewhat 'superior thing' but in the 'principle' (*Met.*:  $\Lambda$  7, 1072a23–b5) that is conceptually needed in order to grasp the physical world coherently. And this is not an efficient cause that physically constitutes the sensible world, but its final cause, i.e., a concept, to which the sensible world points (*Met.*:  $\Lambda$  7, 1072a23–b5). Aristotle expresses this point even more clearly when he says that the prime mover is 'thinking' ( $\nu\acute{o}\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$ ) or 'thought' ('mind', 'intellect', 'reason',  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ ) (*Met.*:  $\Lambda$  7, 1072a23–b5)).

It is important to note that at this point Aristotle initiates not a mere theology but a '*physico-theology*'. He purposely does not start off his theological treatise straightforwardly for *theos*' sake, by just showing what *theos* is. On the contrary, *theos* becomes the subject matter of *Metaphysics*  $\Lambda$  due to physics and the explanatory limitations of ancient cosmology. Incidentally, this is also the way *theos* becomes the subject matter of the last two books of the *Physics* (VII–VIII) and of *On the Heavens* (especially I 9–10). *Theos*, thus, initially appears as the systematic conclusion and theoretical fulfilment of Aristotle's physico-philosophical sciences.

### II.ii. *Psychology, ethics and theology*

It does not seem implausible that Aristotle, after concluding his physico-theology (*Met.*:  $\Lambda$  7, 1072b14–15), might have moved on to a genuinely theological treatise. However, it is striking that he does not show what *theos* is *per se* but rather extrapolates central theological determinations from human life, thinking and pleasure. He claims for instance that 'its [*theos*] life is like the best which we temporarily enjoy' (*Met.*:  $\Lambda$  7, 1072b15–17). And in the immediately following lines, which Hegel quotes in the *Encyclopaedia* (*Met.*:  $\Lambda$  7, 1072b17–31), Aristotle emphasizes once again, by making a comparison with the human being, that divine contemplation is 'the most pleasant and best' and that divine 'actuality of thought' is the 'most good and eternal' life. I will not elaborate on these determinations as such, but it is important to show that they can be traced back to Aristotelian psychology and ethics.<sup>3</sup>

Let me begin with psychology. A close look at *De anima* reveals that Aristotle's inquiry into the soul is not confined to a study of the soul *qua* 'substance', 'form' and 'entelechy' of a 'natural body' (*An.*: II 1, 412a19–22). In book III, chapter 5 (430a10–25) Aristotle argues that, 'just as in the whole of nature', we have to differentiate between 'matter' and 'cause' *within* the soul too, and assumes that there is

both *passive* and *active* ‘thought’ (νοῦς). By observing empirical life and thought, and in order to grasp them coherently, Aristotle concludes that there *must* be a further, not empirically observable active mind without which ‘nothing thinks’ (*An.*: III 5, 430a10–25).<sup>4</sup> I do not argue that the active mind of *De anima* is identical with the divine one of *Metaphysics* Λ 7. But they appear to be notionally related, since they are both ‘essentially an activity’ and ‘eternal’, and since the active (human) mind is ‘separable’ and ‘immortal’ and becomes ‘its true self and nothing more’ ‘[w]hen isolated’ from the passive one (*An.*: III 5, 430a10–25).

In fact, there are several other passages in *De anima* (I 4, 408b18–19; II 2, 413b26–27) that seem to presume that the active mind is an ‘independent substance engendered in us’. *De generatione animalium* (II 3, 736b27–737a17), for example, states that this substance is ‘analogous to the element which belongs to the stars’, namely ether, and should be regarded as ‘something divine’. Such remarks may not constitute an extended theology, but they indicate a hierarchy of substances (mere physical, divine in us and divine as such) that are compatible with the physico-theology sketched above.<sup>5</sup> They further motivate the philosopher to continue searching for a divine mind within the philosophical science that deals with the fulfilment of psychology in terms of the *best* life, *perfect* happiness and the *best* way for soul and thought to actualize themselves. This search is at the heart of Aristotelian ethics.

In the very last chapters of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (X 7 and 8), Aristotle does not just suggest that the contemplative life constitutes the ‘complete human happiness’ (*NE*: X 7, 1177b24). He also reaffirms that ‘thought’ is ‘something divine in man’ and argues that ‘we ought’ ‘so far as possible to achieve immortality’ through contemplation (*NE*: X 7, 1177b27–1178a8; 1177a13–18; *EE*: VIII 3, 1249b9–23). Finally he extrapolates to the ‘actuality of God [*theos*]’, which he considers to be ‘transcendent in blessedness’, since it is the purest and eternal thinking, and notes that the ‘whole of the life of the gods is blessed’ (*NE*: X 8, 1178a22–27).

Thus, even the major ideas of *Metaphysics* Λ 7, 1072b17–31 that are considered to be at the core of Aristotelian theology (‘actuality of thought’ and ‘best and eternal life’) can be traced back to non-theological sciences and have to be regarded as the theoretical fulfilment of the psycho-ethical philosophical sciences. They present a ‘*psycho-ethico-theology*’ rather than a genuine theology.

### II.iii. *Logic, ontology and theology*

Further on in book Λ (chapters 8–10), we find additional clarifications on the basis of puzzles that emerge from the preceding physico- and psycho-ethico-theological reflections. This is worthy of note, because Aristotle usually poses puzzles at the *beginning* of his philosophical investigations. Aristotle’s theological treatise, however, seems to *end* with chapters 8–10, although at that point it has by no means

answered all questions concerning his concept of *theos*. The most pressing questions are those relating to the third class of philosophical sciences, i.e., logic and ontology.

Aristotle dedicates the majority of the chapters of *Metaphysics* Γ to the principle of contradiction. He states that this is ‘the most certain of all principles’ in all i) ontological, ii) logical and iii) psychological respects (*Met.*: Γ 3, 1005b19–20; Γ 6, 1011b13–14; Γ 3, 1005b23–24). However, we have seen that the Aristotelian *theos* too is a *principle* (*Met.*: Λ 7, 1072a23–b5) and the highest *substance* out of the three ones described above (*Met.*: Λ 1, 1069a30–b8). Hence, the principle of contradiction either essentially relates to or competes with i) the prime mover (in an ontological respect), ii) divine thinking (in a logical respect) and iii) human thinking (in a psychological respect). Unfortunately, an ‘*onto-theo-logical*’ treatise that would clarify the relation between the logic and ontology of *Metaphysics* Γ on the one hand and *Metaphysics* Λ on the other is not to be found in the Aristotelian corpus.<sup>6</sup>

The onto-theo-logical complex becomes even more puzzling if we take into consideration the ending of the *Posterior Analytics*. Aristotle speaks there of νοῦς in terms of a ‘cognitive faculty’ (*PA*: II 19, 99b18) and finally states that it has to be seen as the ‘principle of science’ and even the ‘principle of principle’ (100b15–16). A clarification, however, of how νοῦς *qua* ‘principle of principle’ relates to ‘the most certain of all principles’ (the principle of contradiction) as well as to the divine and human mind, is not to be found in the Aristotelian corpus.

Ultimately, Aristotle leaves a crucial onto-theo-logical question open: what does divine thinking actually think? Even though he poses the question and makes some important comments on it, it remains unclarified whether the ‘thinking of thinking’ is pure reflexivity (Oehler 1984), thinking of celestial bodies (Krämer 1969), mediated thinking of all substances in general (Aquinas 1961: 828) or—in a more Hegelian vein—a productive thinking that creates a ‘system of concepts’ (Burnyeat 2008: 40).<sup>7</sup>

#### II.iv. *Theology as first philosophy*

To sum up the function of the Aristotelian *theos* in view of the *Topics*’ systematizing aims, it is striking that this *theos* does not establish a further philosophical science distinguished from physics, psychology and ethics, and logic and ontology. Nonetheless, it signals the *theoretical fulfilment* of each of these sciences, which happens to be common to all of them, and in that sense it unites them by putting them in the same frame.

*Theos*, however, does not constitute a scientific unity, which would reduce (philosophical) sciences to a single science—either in terms of matter or of form or of efficient cause. The Aristotelian *theos* constitutes, rather, the *final cause*

of *philosophical sciences* without a particular ‘theological’ matter, form or agent. It presents the common *vanishing point* of the philosophical sciences, which becomes relevant and ‘visible’ not as such and for its own sake but by virtue of the other philosophical sciences, insofar as they independently perform their own investigations. In fact, mentioning *theos* in a scientific (or philosophical) inquiry can even prove puzzling for those that are not interested in meta-scientific insights, as is the case for instance in *De anima* regarding the active mind.<sup>8</sup>

When Aristotle speaks of *theos* he is not doing theology in a strict sense. Rather, he outlines the *theoretical ideal of a meta-scientific contextualization of different (philosophical) sciences*. He points out the philosophical *desideratum* of a concept that would arrange different fields of knowledge into a coherent whole without exhaustively analysing it.

Aristotelian theology is not a fully articulated ‘first science’ in terms of systematic knowledge about *theos*. Rather, it has to be interpreted as ‘first *philosophy*’ in the literal sense of the Greek word ‘*philosophia*’, namely as ‘love of wisdom’ as opposed to wisdom itself or to science. Aristotelian theology brings to the fore the *guiding disposition* of all philosophical sciences, even though it is not fully and systematically realized within Aristotelian philosophy.

### III. Hegel’s *Philosophy of Mind*

Like Aristotle, Hegel divides the philosophical sciences into three classes and is interested in their meta-scientific, ‘encyclopaedic’ unity.<sup>9</sup> Although the three parts of the *Encyclopaedia* do not correspond perfectly to Aristotle’s treatises, it is still obvious which parts deal respectively with ‘logical’ or ‘ontological’, ‘physical’, as well as ‘psychological’ and ‘ethical’ problems in the Aristotelian sense. However, none of the parts of the *Encyclopaedia* is officially called ‘theology’, which leads to the same initial difficulties as encountered in the Aristotelian classification.

In view of such similarities, it would not be implausible to search in the *Encyclopaedia* (rather than in Hegel’s *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*), and more precisely in the immediate context of Hegel’s Aristotle quotation in the *Philosophy of Mind*, for aspects of the Aristotelian *theos* (rather than the Christian God) that would explain the meaning and function of *theos* within Hegel’s own philosophy. In the following two parts of this paper, I will show the *systematic* coincidence between the Hegelian and the Aristotelian conception in terms of content, which occurs independently of the historical or merely philological question, whether Hegel had mentioned it in his Aristotle interpretation in his *Lectures* or elsewhere.

### III.i. *Two approaches to mind: encyclopaedic and formal*

At the beginning of the *Philosophy of Mind*, in the passage entitled ‘Concept of Mind’ (*Enc.*: §§381–84), Hegel takes two different approaches to determining mind (or spirit, *Geist*). The first (§381) is the approach to mind ‘*from our point of view*’ (or ‘*for us*’).<sup>10</sup> This is not the everyday or scientific perspective,<sup>11</sup> which Hegel has already dealt with in the prefatory *Enc.*: §§377–80. Rather, it is the point of view of the readers of the *Encyclopaedia* insofar as they follow its conceptual development and speculatively comprehend mind: the *genuine encyclopaedic point of view regarding mind*. The second point of view (*Enc.*: §§382–84) observes mind ‘formally’, i.e., gives its ‘formal determination’ (*Enc.*: §382). This second perspective, Hegel notes in the first sentence of §382, is logically dependent on the encyclopaedic point of view. It is not merely empirical, nor does it aim to deepen the content of §381 in an encyclopaedic manner; rather, it seeks to elucidate it from a different point of view.

The importance of the distinction between these two approaches becomes apparent if we consider that §381 determines mind by way of extensive references back to the *Science of Logic* and *Philosophy of Nature*. This demonstrates that mind can be grasped only within the overall philosophical context and that even the dependent ‘formal’ approach to mind (*Enc.*: §§382ff.) seems incomplete without reference to this context. Hence, theology in the Aristotelian sense of a meta-scientific contextualization sketched above seems to stand systematically at the core of the Hegelian concept of mind as such, even though Hegel does not refer to Aristotle at that point.

### III.ii. *The encyclopaedic concept of mind*

In *Enc.*: §381 Hegel determines mind ‘as the Idea that has reached its being-for-self’ after emerging from nature. This ‘being-for-self’ of the idea, Hegel explains, means that the ‘*object of the Idea as well as the subject is the concept*’ or simply that ‘the concept has [...] become identical with itself’ (*Enc.*: §381). It is important to note that these determinations are first to be found in the last chapter of the *Logic*, where the *absolute idea*, i.e., *method* of speculative philosophy is being exposed.<sup>12</sup> For by referring back to that chapter, Hegel makes clear that, from the encyclopaedic perspective, the concept of mind presupposes the *Logic* and presents a further mode of the absolute idea or method. The new element, however, with regard to *Logic* is nature, i.e., the *Philosophy of Nature*, which in the encyclopaedic presentation of speculative philosophy mediates between the *Logic* and the *Philosophy of Mind*. Mind must be thereby conceived of precisely as the absolute idea or method insofar as it has come to actualize itself in nature.<sup>13</sup>

In view of this encyclopaedic approach to mind, we have to adopt a stronger version of the thesis of III.i.: mind cannot just be grasped within the overall



philosophical context; rather, it *is* this context insofar as this context does not remain a ‘mere’ idea, but is concretely actualized and constitutes an object of empirical observation. Accordingly, the task of the *Philosophy of Mind* is to investigate the concrete unity of the *Logic* and the *Philosophy of Nature*. That being so, the *Philosophy of Mind* must pose meta-reflections on the overall context of the philosophical sciences at some point in order to deliver a complete exposition of mind. And that brings the *Philosophy of Mind* even closer to Aristotelian theology than the *Logic*. For, unlike the *Philosophy of Mind*, the *Logic* can only logically *anticipate* the overall encyclopaedic context, and does not yet have an overview of its concrete actualization.

III.iii. *The formal concept of mind*

In §§382–84 Hegel elucidates the actualized absolute idea by means of concepts that may seem more familiar to everyday thinking, such as ‘essence’ and ‘reality’ (*Dasein*), ‘possibility’ and ‘actuality’, and ‘manifestation’ and ‘revelation’. To cut a long story short, Hegel shows in §§382–83 that these determinations coincide if we take the ‘essence of mind’ to be ‘freedom’—an assertion which, according to the first sentence of §382, is nothing more than an alternative expression for ‘the concept’s absolute negativity as identity with itself’ as shown in §381.

The impressive part of this formal determination of mind, though, comes with §384, where Hegel deepens what he calls ‘revelation’. ‘Revelation’ (or ‘manifestation’) is primarily a determination of the *Doctrine of the Essence* and indicates the *self-actualization*, i.e., the positing of itself by which ‘essence [...] is one with its appearance’ (*WL*: 339/11.243; cf. *WL*: 471/11.375). In §384, we then additionally learn that revelation is ‘a determination pertaining to mind in general’ and that at the same time ‘it has three distinct forms’ (*Enc.*: §384A). These are: ‘the unmediated transition, the *becoming*, of nature’, ‘the revelation of mind’ and the ‘[r]evelation in the concept’ (§384). Hegel could surely have elaborated further. But at least he states clearly, in the Addition to §384, that these three forms of revelation correspond to the *Philosophy of Nature*, *Philosophy of Mind* and *Logic*, respectively. This is, however, impressive as it presents an alternative framing of the unity of philosophical sciences to the encyclopaedic sequence of logic–nature–mind (anticipated in *Enc.*: §18 and repeated in §381). Unlike the encyclopaedic sequence the formal concept of mind seems to provide an alternative contextualization of the philosophical sciences, with *mind* being its systematic centre.

In view of this, we have to go even further than the thesis of III.ii.: the *Philosophy of Mind* does not simply need to pose meta-reflections on the overall context of the philosophical sciences (since mind is the concrete actualization of this context). It also needs to pose such meta-reflections *from different points of view* within the same context, namely at least from the encyclopaedic and the formal points of

view. For §381 and §384 mirror a systematic tension between two meta-scientific standpoints that has to be resolved at some point in the *Philosophy of Mind* if this part of speculative philosophy is to give a full account of it, namely of what mind is with regard to the other parts of the *Encyclopaedia*. This occurs in the ‘three syllogisms’ at the very end of the *Philosophy of Mind* (see IV.ii. below).

### III.iv. *In what sense is mind ‘the Absolute’?*

At the end of the ‘Concept of Mind’ (*Enc.*: §384R) Hegel gives what he describes as the ‘highest definition of the absolute’, namely: ‘*The absolute is [the] mind*’. Despite the emphasis of this statement, Hegel also remarks that ‘its meaning and content’ are not obvious at all (*Enc.*: §384R). In the Addition he clarifies, with regard to the *formal* approach to mind, that by this definition he does *not* mean the second revelation (namely mind within the *Philosophy of Mind*): the Absolute ‘is not merely mind in general, it is mind absolutely revealed to itself, self-conscious, infinitely creative mind, which we have just characterized as the third form of [the] revelation’ (*Enc.*: §384A). This is the mind *inasmuch* as it becomes aware of the *Logic* and its own conceptual connection with it. With respect to the *encyclopaedic* approach, this means that mind is the absolute idea or method that actualizes itself in nature, but it constitutes ‘the Absolute’ only when it comes to actively *know* what the absolute idea or method truly is. Such knowledge, however, is presupposed at the beginning of the *Philosophy of Mind*. Consequently, mind is ‘the Absolute’ insofar as it rediscovers and makes explicit what is entailed in its own concept.

On both the formal and encyclopaedic perspectives, mind is not a transcendent Neoplatonic ‘Absolute’ that does not stand in relations to other things. Rather, it is ‘the Absolute’ in the Aristotelian ‘energetic’ sense, meaning that it is complete and perfect actuality. More precisely, the Hegelian ‘Absolute’ represents the concrete unity of all logical and natural ‘things’ *including* the knowledge (meta-reflection) that it represents this unity. Such knowledge is, however, not to be found in what Hegel calls the ‘finite mind’ (*Enc.*: §386) but only in the absolute mind at the end of the *Philosophy of Mind*. In other words: ‘the Absolute’ is the absolute mind.

### III.v. *The absolute mind*

This insight is confirmed in *Enc.*: §§552–55. There Hegel introduces the absolute mind *not* as a new entity, a separate mind or even God, but as a specific kind of knowledge about the unity of the philosophical fields dealt with in the *Encyclopaedia*, a knowledge gained by the finitely existing mind. The turn of phrase with which Hegel introduces the absolute mind (or spirit) in §552 is telling: ‘the thinking spirit of world history’ (i.e., thinkers that contemplate history) ‘grasps

its concrete universality and ascends to [the] *awareness* [*Wissen*] of the absolute spirit, as the eternally actual truth in which [...] nature and history are only servants of its revelation and vessels of its honour'. In §553 Hegel then elaborates further on the notion of the absolute mind, describing it as 'knowledge of the absolute Idea' (das *Wissen* der absoluten Idee) and does not leave any doubt that by 'the eternal actual truth' he is referring once again to the last chapter of the *Logic*.<sup>14</sup>

The absolute mind is, therefore, the empirically determinate insight of real, thinking subjects into their own 'concrete universality'. This universality in turn is the absolute idea insofar as, firstly, it is actualized through nature and (finite) mind and, secondly, it is taken to be the substance of both mind and nature. §554 even uses the term *Urteil* in its double sense of 'judgement' and 'primal division' to ontologically highlight the cognitive determination of the absolute mind.

However, the accuracy of empirically determinate insights varies. And so do the three forms of the absolute mind (art, religion and philosophy), although they essentially share the same object of knowledge (the actualized absolute idea). In view of the different degrees of accuracy of knowledge in each case, it is plausible to indicate the difference between the actualized absolute idea *as such* and the way it is *deficiently* known (through intuition and representation, for instance) by using different *names* and not just generically referring to the (actualized) absolute idea. This is why Hegel, in contrast to §§552ff., in which he lays down the groundwork for his philosophy of absolute mind, varies his wording and uses the term 'God' instead of 'absolute idea'. For the 'word *God* [...] by itself is a senseless sound, a mere name' (*PbG*: 12/20).

In the philosophy of the absolute mind, 'God' denotes the actualized absolute idea *insofar* as it includes additional meanings that originated in different artistic, religious and philosophical contexts.<sup>15</sup> *Enc.*: §§556–73 then deal pointedly with Greek, Christian and other philosophical notions of God, but it is only in *Enc.*: §§574–77 that the actualized absolute idea *as such* comes to the fore. And *this*, the actualized absolute idea as such, and not the merely Greek, Christian, etc., element, is the criterion for the speculative interpretation and evaluation of Greek, Christian, etc., theology. The *speculative* knowledge of the actualized absolute idea as such and not *qua* God is, finally, the subject matter of Hegel's philosophy of philosophy.

#### IV. Philosophy of philosophy

##### *IV.i. Theos and the conclusion of philosophy (Enc.: §574)*

In the last sentence of *Enc.*: §573, Hegel states that the knowledge referred to in §§552ff. is not an infinite approximation. Rather: 'This movement, which philosophy is, finds itself already accomplished, when at the conclusion it grasps its own concept,

i.e. only *looks back* on its knowledge' (*Enc.*: §§552ff.). This is a conclusion in terms of history of philosophy that coincides with the systematic end of speculative philosophy as described in §574.<sup>16</sup> Hegel's striking claim, however, is that speculative philosophy is accomplished not just at that point, but rather 'finds itself *already* accomplished' by just '*looking back*' on its 'own concept'.

By literally 'looking back' on the *Logic* we find out that speculative philosophy—or simply 'science'—has already grasped 'the Concept of itself', namely at the end of the chapter on the absolute idea (*Enc.*: §243; cf. §17). Accordingly, §574 opens with a reference to that chapter, simply stating that '[t]his concept of philosophy is the *self-thinking* Idea, the knowing truth (§236)'.

However, 'to look back' on the absolute idea does not mean to simply reread the last chapter of the *Logic*. By reconsidering the absolute idea at the end of the *Philosophy of Mind*, one automatically takes into account that the logically exposed absolute idea is also found to be actualized as mind (III.ii), to present the content of the knowledge that makes mind into absolute mind or even 'the Absolute' (III.iv.) and to be the concept that substantially unifies mind and nature (III.v.). In the words of *Enc.*: §574: speculative philosophy deals now not with the absolute idea *as such* but with 'the logical' inasmuch as it has 'the meaning that it is the universality *verified* in the concrete content as in its actuality'. Further: 'the logical is its [the science's] *result* as the *spiritual*' (*Enc.*: §574). Even though the logical content of the absolute idea remains the same, the conceptual development of *Realphilosophie* brings to the fore the 'meaning' of that content with regard to *Realphilosophie*. This meaning is the knowledge that the absolute idea is able to establish conceptually the meta-scientific unity of all philosophical sciences, and that it has indeed done so.

The parallels to Aristotelian theology as sketched above are obvious. By claiming that speculative philosophy has concluded the performative verification of the absolute idea as the guarantor of the overall context and the concrete mode of the contextualization of all philosophical sciences, speculative philosophy distinguishes itself as the successor to the Aristotelian *theos*. Meta-scientific contextualization is no longer a desideratum and vanishing point of particular (philosophical) sciences, but concrete philosophical actuality.

Perhaps this affinity explains why Hegel quotes *Met.*:  $\Lambda$  7, 1072b19–31 without translating it. For to conclude with the (German) term 'God' instead of (the Greek) '*theos*' could conceal the Aristotelian meta-scientific concern with Christian connotations.<sup>17</sup> And perhaps this is also why Hegel chooses to skip the 'three syllogisms' in the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia* and only quotes Aristotle after §574: it is already §574 that makes the connection to Aristotelian theology, while the 'further development' (*Enc.*: §575) of the 'three syllogisms', as I argue below, does not substantially affect what is already found to be accomplished here.

Most importantly: the parallels drawn present a sufficient explanation for why Hegel chooses to quote precisely *Met.*:  $\Lambda$  7, 1072b19–31 and not just Aristotle's

famous remarks about the ‘thinking of thinking’. For the subject of this passage is not just a *single* or even the most *fundamental* metaphysical determination but *theos* insofar as it *explicitly* unifies *all* philosophical sciences—namely a thinking that for ‘us’ has the meaning of ‘life’ (cf. Hegel’s *Philosophy of Mind* and *Philosophy of Nature*) and even of ‘the most good’ life and ‘the most pleasant and best’ contemplation (cf. Hegel’s *Philosophy of Mind* and *Logic*).

‘Thinking of thinking’ as such, on the other hand, is a determination that Hegel couples with the absolute idea *in its logical context* (*Enc.*: §236A). Unlike ‘*theos*’, ‘thinking of thinking’ corresponds only to the logical cursive *foundation* of meta-scientific contextualization without any explicit reference to its further function in *Realphilosophie*. To simply quote Aristotle’s ‘thinking of thinking’ at the end of the *Philosophy of Mind* would indicate a reversion to the logical standpoint, yet without its further ‘meaning’. And this would contradict not only §574 but also the following ‘three syllogisms’,<sup>18</sup> as I shall now show.

*IV.ii. Theos and the ‘further development’* (*Enc.*: §§575–77)

Once the unity and contextualization of the philosophical sciences on the basis of the absolute idea has been successfully verified, this contextualization should proceed by also adopting further standpoints, namely non-encyclopaedic ones, within the same context. The overall meta-scientific context may then *appear* differently depending on the systematic point of view from which it is regarded (logic, nature or mind). But *that* there is such a context would not be challenged by those different appearances. Besides, the verification of the absolute idea in the encyclopaedic perspective does not prove that the encyclopaedic perspective is free of ambiguities. Apart from this, the *Philosophy of Mind* also has to fulfil the last desideratum in order to give a full account of what mind is, namely it must pose meta-reflections on the meta-scientific contextualization *from different points of view* within the same context (III.iii.). It is therefore not surprising that the ‘three syllogisms’ at the very end of the *Philosophy of Mind* show the already achieved meta-scientific contextualization from three different perspectives and (re-)frame it in three alternative sequences.<sup>19</sup>

The first syllogism converges with the encyclopaedic sequence of the philosophical sciences indicated by the encyclopaedic approach to mind (*Enc.*: §381; III.ii.): *Logic*, *Philosophy of Nature* and *Philosophy of Mind*. The striking admission of §575, then, is that even this sequence, *taken by itself*, might be misleading. For by having nature as its middle point, ‘the mediation of the concept has the external form of *transition*, and science has the form of the progression of necessity’ (*Enc.*: §575). That is to say: the meta-scientific unity appears as something merely *objective*, not yet *subjective*, and certainly not as ‘the freedom of the concept’ (*Enc.*: §575).

The second syllogism consists in the sequence *Philosophy of Nature, Philosophy of Mind* and *Logic* (*Enc.*: §576) and converges with the ‘formal’ approach to mind and speculative philosophy (*Enc.*: §384; III.iii.). Hegel stresses that this reframing of the philosophical sciences faces the opposite problem to the original framing. By replacing nature with mind as its systematic middle point, ‘science appears as a subjective *cognition*’ (*Enc.*: §576). Consequently, the achieved meta-scientific contextualization appears as a *subjective* claim, only as ‘the way to produce its freedom’ (*Enc.*: §576), not freedom itself.

This is no longer the case in the third syllogism: *Philosophy of Mind, Logic, Philosophy of Nature* (*Enc.*: §577). Here, it is the *Logic* that mediates between the two extremes (subjective and objective): not just ‘*the self-thinking Idea*’ (*Enc.*: §574) but the ‘*self-knowing reason, the absolutely universal*’ (*Enc.*: §577), i.e., the absolute idea as verified and in conceptual unity with its actuality, as described in §574. From this standpoint, speculative philosophy and meta-scientific contextualization show themselves as the freedom and self-actualization of the absolute idea, which no longer has to ‘transit’ or ‘reflect’ but autonomously determines itself and yields the philosophical sciences by simply ‘divid[ing] into *mind* and *nature*’ (*Enc.*: §574).

Moreover, it is significant that Hegel characterizes the third syllogism *as a whole* as ‘the Idea of philosophy’. This syllogism reveals—like §574—not just the ‘concept of philosophy’ but its unity with *Realphilosophie*, and makes clear that the meta-scientific contextualization is the philosophical activity *par excellence* that takes place *throughout* speculative philosophy. ‘The Absolute’ (III.iv.) or the absolute mind (III.v.) are not mere parts or contents of speculative philosophy but rather speculative philosophy *itself* and *as a whole*. The *chapter* on the absolute mind, by contrast, and more precisely §577, is the moment within the encyclopaedic development of philosophy that philosophy becomes aware that *it* is ‘the Absolute’ or the absolute mind. However, once philosophy has become aware of this, philosophy has determined itself as ‘the Absolute’ or the absolute mind regardless of the differences between its parts (*Logic, Philosophy of Nature* and *Philosophy of Mind*) or its appearances (*Enc.*: §§575–76).

This is also the sense of the second half of §577. The different standpoints from which the overall philosophical context can be viewed provide not just ‘appearances’ but different ‘manifestations’ (or ‘revelations’) of this context (*Enc.*: §384). For within speculative philosophy it is always ‘the concept, the nature of the subject-matter, that moves onwards and develops, and this movement is equally the activity of cognition’. The ‘essence’ of speculative philosophy is thereby ‘one with its appearance’ (*WL*: 339/11.243). Finally, the remarkable concluding formulations of this last encyclopaedic paragraph<sup>20</sup> in parallel with the Aristotle quotation suggest that by the third edition of the *Encyclopaedia* at the latest Hegel was convinced that his speculative philosophy presents in its most concrete way

the highest manifestation of the ultimate, so to speak ‘divine’, contextualization of everything, i.e., ‘the point towards which all religion and science pressed on’ (*Enc.*: §384R).

Aristotle surely did not go so far. Yet perhaps this is at the crux of why Hegel quoted *Met.*:  $\Lambda$  7, 1072b19–31 in the third edition after *Enc.*: §577 (rather than after §574): he wanted to express not just due credit to Aristotle but also that he holds his own philosophy as a whole to be the *successor* to the Aristotelian *theos*.

## V. Conclusion

A comparative reading of the conclusions of different major Aristotelian works has revealed that the Aristotelian *theos*—very much contrary to certain religious expectations of ‘God’—epitomizes the theoretical ideal of a non-reductive contextualization of the (philosophical) sciences. Book  $\Lambda$  of the *Metaphysics*, especially *Met.*:  $\Lambda$  7, 1072b19–31, summarizes this ideal by highlighting *theos* as the ultimate final cause—as opposed to formal, material and efficient causes—that sources its determinations from the sciences it contextualizes. Aristotelian theology presents thereby not a science by itself but rather outlines the vanishing point and the philosophical guiding disposition regarding other sciences.

The insight into an overall and non-reductive contextualization was found to be the nub of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Mind* too, which makes mind into absolute mind. The analysis of the last paragraphs of the *Philosophy of Mind*, however, showed that speculative philosophy does indeed offer such an insight but not just at its end, i.e., only in a single part. Rather, it is speculative philosophy *as a whole* (the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences*) that presents in detail the meta-scientific contextualization. The absolute mind, and philosophy of philosophy in particular, is the systematic moment at which speculative philosophy becomes aware that it itself—speculative philosophy as a whole—is this contextualization and thereby *concretely* fulfils the function of the Aristotelian *theos*.

Speculative philosophy, in that sense, is not just ‘first philosophy’ in terms of a mere guiding disposition, but ‘first science’, with regard to the non-philosophical sciences, and ‘first science’, with regard to its own autonomous development in its own (speculative philosophical) form and matter and as its own final and efficient cause. That is to say, speculative philosophy is literally the actuality of *theos*. Or, to conclude with a comparison to the no less controversial wording of the Introduction to the *Science of Logic*: speculative philosophy *as a whole* is ‘the exposition of [*theos*] as [*it*] is in [*its*] eternal [actuality] before [and after] the creation of nature and of a finite spirit’ (*WL*: 29/21.34). This is the successor to Aristotelian theology as the sublation of the Christian one—a *theology*, so to speak, *without* God.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Abbreviations used:

*An.* = Aristotle, *De anima*, trans. W. S. Hett (Cambridge MA: Loeb, 1957).

*EE* = Aristotle, *Eudemean Ethics*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge MA: Loeb, 1952).

*Enc.* = Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, Part I, trans. T. F. Geracts, W. A. Suchting and H. S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991); Part II, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970); Part III, trans. W. Wallace and A. V. Miller, rev. M. Inwood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)/*Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse (1830)*, Vol. 20 of *Gesammelte Werke* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1992).

*Met.* = Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. H. Tredennick (Cambridge MA: Loeb, 1933).

*NE* = Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge MA: Loeb, 1926).

*PA* = Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, trans. H. Tredennick (Cambridge MA: Loeb, 1960).

*PbG* = Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. M. Inwood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018)/*Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Vol. 9 of *Gesammelte Werke* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1980).

*Top.* = Aristotle, *Topics*, trans. E. S. Forster (Cambridge MA: Loeb, 1960).

*WL* = Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. G. di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)/*Wissenschaft der Logik*, Vol. 21, 11 and 12 of *Gesammelte Werke* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1987, 1978 and 1981).

<sup>2</sup> Alfredo Ferrarin follows ‘the order of [Hegel’s] *Lectures*, focusing especially on *Metaphysics*, *Physics*, *De anima*, *Nicomachean Ethics*, and *Politics*’ (Ferrarin 2001: 7) and criticizes this approach since it does not converge with the (later) Aristotelian tripartition of sciences into theoretical, practical and productive (2001: 82–101). Regarding the *Topics*, however, Hegel’s ‘order’ appears not to be arbitrary, but based on a genuinely Aristotelian intuition.

<sup>3</sup> For two thorough analyses of the main Aristotelian theological determinations, see Dangel 2013: 108–54 and Ferrarin 2001: 115–28. On the conceptual connection between Aristotelian theology and psychology, see Dangel 2013: 113–28 and (also with regard to Hegel’s *Science of Logic*) German 2018.

<sup>4</sup> For an informative and enlightening interpretation of active thought as a ‘hypothesis’ with regard to both the tradition of Aristotelianism and Aristotle himself, see Busche 2018.

<sup>5</sup> See Busche 2001: 147–64.

<sup>6</sup> See Anton 1990: 31.

<sup>7</sup> For a very helpful overview, see Liatsi 2016.

<sup>8</sup> See Caston 1999: 224. Allegra de Laurentiis (2018: 115) even argues that it is only Hegel’s own concept that delivers a ‘convincing interpretation’ of it.



<sup>9</sup> On the division and unity of Hegelian philosophy with regard to *Met.*: A 7, 1072b15–31 see Weiss 1969: 51.

<sup>10</sup> See Peperzak 1987: 25, Dangel 2013: 297–98 and Nuzzo 2013: 4–5. Inwood's translation (2007), however, favours another interpretation.

<sup>11</sup> For arguments for this interpretation see Quante 2011: 119.

<sup>12</sup> In *WL*: 737/12.238 and 738/12.239, for instance, Hegel states that the method is essentially identical with the concept as exposed at the beginning of the *Doctrine of the Concept*. Furthermore, in *Enc.*: §243 he emphasizes that it is precisely this method in which the idea attains its 'simple being-for-itself' for the first time, explicitly not by virtue of mere subjects or objects but—according to *Enc.*: §381—'through the dialectic of the Concept'.

<sup>13</sup> On the connection of idea and mind with regard to introductory passages (like *Enc.*: §18) see Quante 2011: 116–39. Karen Ng chooses, instead, to focus on the idea of life (Ng 2018).

<sup>14</sup> See Fulda 2001.

<sup>15</sup> For an investigation into the systematic background and the specific content of 'God' in different passages of the *Logic*, see Plevrakis 2017.

<sup>16</sup> See Fulda 1975: 179–94.

<sup>17</sup> For Hegel's theory on when to use non-German terms in philosophy see *WL*: 82/21.95 and 345/11.249.

<sup>18</sup> See Dangel 2013: 114; 306–8.

<sup>19</sup> For some similar but not identical interpretations of the 'three syllogisms' see Fulda 1975: 284–96 (self-definition of the accomplished science); Peperzak 1987: 118–57 (meta-philosophical reframing of the parts of the *Encyclopaedia*); Ferrarin 2001: 56 (meta-theory of the *Encyclopaedia*); Stein 2018 (Hegel's meta-philosophical argument for absolute idealism).

<sup>20</sup> See Fulda 2004: 501–6.

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