

Agree to Disagree: The Hidden Cancer

We must not wonder things away into nonentity.

-George MacDonald, UNSPOKEN SERMONS, Third Series, *The Creation in Christ*

Without a doubt, in all the history of the Earth, the most influential man no one knows about is Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. I would actually compare his influence to that of Jesus and Mohammad, and in many ways he is their spiritual and theological nemesis. Sadly, his influence is making deep inroads into Christianity. It is not surprising that Christians are falling prey to his poison, as no other atheistic philosopher came as close as Hegel did to proving the existence of God and yet still denying (or, perhaps more accurately, disregarding) God. Hegel's thought process went all the way back to the very moment of creation, when "real" came out of the "not real." It was here, when God was the obvious answer to how such a moment could be, that Hegel finally and irreconcilably wrote God out of the equation. Rather than to look for God and ask how real and not real could be, Hegel concluded that real and not real were the same thing.

But if Hegel has created such a divergent theory that is so influential in the world, why do we know so little of him? I propose that his very anonymity is the most important factor as to why his poison could spread so well. If one does not know who Hegel is or what he taught, one is not likely to recognize examples of his theory in practice, or be aware of the danger. One of his most well-known followers, Karl Marx, is now a pariah to most of civilization. When the theories of Marx were tried and found wanting, people identified certain aspects of what Marxism was about. Whenever those aspects are seen by enough people in public, an alarm is sounded and the movement usually loses support simply because most people don't want to be associated with Marx. But Marx's theories were only a single variation of Hegel's theories, and Hegelism can have an infinite number of variations. So while the Marx variation is more or less held in check, the theory behind it continues to spread unobserved. We see this today when Socialists adamantly deny being Marxist, even though the two theories are virtually inseparable. But since Hegel is mostly unknown, there is no one to call another out for being a Hegelist.

But this answer still leaves us with the questions of who spreads Hegelism, how they do it, and why? The short answer is that all of us do so unconsciously. It happens whenever we accept "not real" (or untruth) in lieu of the "real" (or truth). I will spend the rest of this paper giving common examples of this. It is by no means an exhaustive list, nor can it ever be. Hegelism is limited only by man's ability to deceive himself. As can be seen by Marxism, one cannot simply create a list of things to avoid. It takes a mindset to demand the truth. As Christians, we should be doing this anyway, as to forsake truth is to forsake Jesus -- "I am the way, the truth and the life." (John 14:6) Hegelism *is* an excellent way to understand how two real things are connected to each other through a deeper truth. It is only when such understandings refuse to accept that something is not real, when any concept one can imagine is just as "real" as the ground one stands on, that Hegelism goes astray. There are lines that cannot be crossed. What I intend to do is give some common, everyday examples of Hegelism with the hope that the gentle reader will learn to identify other such examples. And our youth desperately need to have the ability to call Hegelism out when they see it. But before I go on to the case studies, I do have a few more points to make to help explain why Hegelism is so readily accepted.

While claiming that real and not real are the same may sound absurd *prima facie* (at first glance), it is *not* so absurd when it is explained in the context of finding "common ground" between

two different things. For example, take an apple and a lemon. A philosopher will say they are the same thing because they are both fruit. A practical man will not fully accept this theory because he will not give someone lemonade who asked for apple juice. But the practical man will partially accept this theory because this theory helps him find both of them in the grocery store at the fruit stand. But if the philosopher goes on to claim that a drum, a football helmet and a car are all the same because they are man-made things, the practical man should completely reject this idea because it does not help him find anything when he needs to shop. Immanuel Kant (who was agnostic yet had a fear of God) first proposed this idea of the practical man justifying the philosopher's work. He found he could go no farther without turning to God (which was alluded to quite often in his works), and this was his secular-based solution. Hegel, who was arguably a theist, yet whose concept of God had almost nothing in common with the Judeo/Christian God, decided he need not stop there, and so Hegel placed himself on the throne of God.

Science, as it deals with the material, supports Hegel since all material things can be broken down into subatomic particles (quanta). The ring on my finger is made of quanta just as a supernova is. To a Hegelist, there is no difference between my ring and the supernova. So science is a major reason why Hegelism is so invisible, as no empirical evidence can be shown to disprove Hegel.

But humans have reason, and this is where Hegelism breaks down if it is pushed too far. Reason is not a material thing; it is a transcendental thing. Humans, as demonstrated by Ludwig Wittgenstein, learn by association. Unless one is aware that Hegelism does not necessarily work with transcendental concepts, one is likely to accept Hegel's concepts without specifically being taught them. Many transcendental concepts *appear* to have common ground if one is not careful. For example, truth and deceit appear to be opposites, and yet one can be deceitful and still speak nothing but truth. According to Wittgenstein's theories, one might therefore subconsciously associate truth and lies to be the same as well, a true Hegelian idea. But closer examination will show the fallacy of this, as telling an untruth is only one of three kinds of deceit (the others being to manipulate truth and to withhold truth). While one may be a truthful deceiver, one may not be a truthful liar. Understanding these types of subtle differences is the first step in recognizing Hegelism.

Unfortunately, many Christian teachings promote Hegelism. As God created everything that exists, everything that exists does indeed find common ground in God. We are called to love one another, and love is a force that unifies. Therefore, love makes common ground where none existed before. We are all called to be one body in Christ, yet another idea of being separate but same. But, as Christians, we do not believe that truth (or goodness) and untruth (or evil) are the same. And as this is perhaps the most difficult part of the paper to understand, I beg the gentle reader to bear with me.

When one goes into a dark room and wants to see things, one turns on a light. But when one is in a lit room and wants to sleep, one does not turn on a dark. This is because light is a material reality (photons) whereas darkness is an absence of photons. If one wants the room dark, one must stop the light source. However, we often describe darkness *as if* it had properties material things do (it is associated with a color, is often times described as "wrapping" itself around something, etc.), but it is not a material thing. Darkness is a transcendental concept, whereas light is a material thing. So, too, when talking about good versus evil. God created reality (truth), and reality (truth) is good. The evil that "exists" is not a truth that God made; it is the denial of truth by angels and man. Life is real; death is the rejection of the real. While my "truthful deceiver" example may seem like a parlor game, let's see how much easier (and how much more dangerous) it is to fall for claiming that life and death are the same in my first case study, the circle of life.

To the Hegelian mind, life and death are the same thing. The Hegelian mind will point to the circle of life to show how death is necessary for life and how they flow one into another. Life and death must therefore be the same. But the Jewish and Christian teachings say otherwise, claiming God did create life, but not death. Therefore, not only are they different, but life is good and death evil by their very nature. God created life out of His will once, and there is no reason to expect He cannot create more life later. And as the architect of reality, there is nothing to stop Him from putting creation on autopilot (so to speak). This is commonly called co-creation. This may seem strange, so let us use an everyday example. A woman may paint a wall in her house. Her child may come in later and ruin it with crayon markings, and the woman may respond by cleaning or even re-painting the walls. Clean walls did not *need* the crayon markings to exist, but neither did the crayon markings prevent the woman from having clean walls. Clean walls are good, marked up walls are the corruption of good.

Next, let us go to the phrase that inspired this work. We see in it a classic Hegelian premise, that we can find common ground by not having common ground between us. To agree or disagree are opposites. To agree suggests some action has taken place; to disagree suggests a failure of an action to take place. Now, I accept that not every debate will end with the ideal situation of both parties finding common ground, but there are only two possible alternatives: common ground does exist between the two but they did not find it yet, or no common ground exists at all. In the first case, to agree to disagree denies both parties the chance to find that common ground because finality on the matter has been decided. And if we realize that debates are searches for truth, and that Jesus is truth, then to agree to disagree means both parties have decided to stop looking for Jesus. The second case is perhaps even worse as, if common ground cannot be found, then at least one of the two parties is without truth (and therefore without Jesus). Furthermore, this person without the truth has been told they found a version of the truth. Could Satan want anything more than to have someone without Jesus thinking they had Jesus? If one spouse wants red lights on the Christmas tree and the other wants blue, what does agreeing to disagree mean -- no lights on the tree? When someone is pro-abortion and the other anti-abortion, does agreeing to disagree save any lives? I believe one can go through any number of such examples and see that Satan always finds victory in it.

I am sure that skeptics of my work here might think I'm taking this too far, as this expression only means that meaningful debate is at an end. But they miss my point. I don't care that a meaningful debate had to end; there are many reasons to end one and most of them are valid. What bothers me is the false sense of accomplishment this phrase implies. There are much better ways to do this, which I will get to at the end of the paper.

Another phrase, "You have your truth and I have my truth" is virtually identical to "agree to disagree," and it is used in the same context. But consider the case when at least one party *is* wrong. While "agree to disagree" gives a false sense of accomplishment, this phrase is a literal endorsement of untruth as truth.

I will tone things down a bit with my third case study, "It is what it is." This phrase actually perfectly encapsulates Hegel's idea that real and not real are the same, but ironically it has a flaw. This phrase, when used, is almost always used in the context of dealing with an unfortunate, but temporary, twist of fate. As such, there is almost always passion involved. This concept is the fundamental basis for nihilism (which, along with Marxism, is a specific version of Hegelism). The most famous nihilist, Friedrich Nietzsche, tells us that nihilism is a lack of passion, but to embrace nihilism is itself a passionate act (I hope the gentle reader caught the real/not real dynamic in this statement). As long as one is feeling emotion when one says "It is what it is," one is subconsciously rebelling against Hegel just as the two previous case studies were subconscious acceptances of Hegel. It's only when "It is what it is"

is used to describe one's whole life that one actually falls into Hegel's trap.

For my final case study, I want to address one of the dozens of Hegelisms that came out of Covid: "stronger together by being apart." I don't care whether one believes the "social distancing" worked or not; it is not really necessary for this paper. We see almost no example in history or science where this idea is true (even nuclear fusion is more powerful than fission). As Christians, we believe that Satan seeks to separate us from God and from our fellow man. I find it hard to think of any Hegelism that is more obvious an attack on Christianity than this. Yet it was accepted by many without further thought. And it is the lack of thought that bothers me. By embracing this Hegelism, the mindset was "Who cares if social distancing works or not; we will be stronger either way." Not only were countless voices silenced on the social distancing matter through outright censorship, but the common person was encouraged to look at any who dared question social distancing as a pariah. And now we have a generation of children that are noticeably disadvantaged in social skills, untold thousands of people who died without being able to see their loved ones one last time, and a massive spike in child and young adult suicides. Perhaps the costs of lockdown was worth it, but we will never know because no discussion was encouraged or allowed.

Now that I have described the problem and how to recognize the problem, I want to talk briefly on how to respond to it. First of all, Hegelism is fundamentally a "snuck premise." A snuck premise is when one takes a controversial idea as the truth. Hegel never gave a reason for ignoring the existence of God when he decided to take God's throne; he just took God's absence as a given (in the controversy as to Hegel's religious beliefs, this is the fact that suggests he was not a true atheist). As a result, one can always discover a true Hegelian fallacy by asking oneself if what is said is indeed the case. If the answer is no, then it is almost certainly a Hegelianism. For example, with "agree to disagree," why do we have to agree? Can we not go home and think about what each other said and/or do some more research? Can we not just say, "I'm not interested in this topic?" There are many more possible responses that end the debate and yet respect the truth that agreement has not been made.

I want to address another fundamental flaw all Fathers of Atheism (not just Hegel) fell for, and that is the idea that the empirical (or physical) is a lesser form of truth. As I alluded to above, Kant warned against it, as did Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi and many Christian philosophers at the time. And it should be no surprise that it was Christian philosophers who favored empirical proof; they had Matthew 7:15-20 to guide them. Without printing the whole selection, I would like to summarize it with "*Beware of false prophets ... by their fruits you will know them. ... every good tree bears good fruit, and a rotten tree bears bad fruit.*" (italics mine) I could write an entire paper on this concept alone and only talk about what was in the news the last few months. We know how supply and demand works; we should not be surprised when cutting off oil production raises gas prices, nor should we be surprised that by paying people to not go to work and make new products results in inflation for everything else. Defunding the police, letting criminals out on low bail and suspended sentences, allowing men to play female sports, not enforcing our borders, etc., are not things that were tried for the first time these last couple years, nor are the results any different from what was tried before. We cannot agree to disagree with those who still seek to promote these and countless other toxic ideas. For those who seek Jesus, there never will be common ground here. To pretend there is common ground is literally making a deal with the devil. This brings me to my next point: How do we know if an unresolved debate has common ground or not?

Certainly, not every debate where the possibility of common ground exists will be so clear cut as the ones above. But this is where a Christian actually has an advantage over non-Christians. Whether one is debating which team will win a championship, which route to take on the way to a

vacation, which politician to vote for, or any other effort to find a truth, one is trying to find Jesus. A Christian with a solid foundation in the teachings of Christ should sense when things seem "wrong," and they should trust their feelings. This is not proof that the other was necessarily wrong, but at the very least one should research and contemplate the matter.

I will end this paper with some final thoughts on how to respond to Hegelian concepts once they are recognized. As Christians, we ought to respond in a manner consistent with the three theological and four cardinal virtues. Justice calls for our response to be, ideally, a constructive one or, failing that, a non-destructive one. Prudence has us consider long-term realities, including if we will ever meet this person again or, if we do, if we will still be interested in talking about it. Prudence should also be used in deciding if common ground is even possible. Temperance calls for how much effort is warranted in the topic and our goal concerning the topic. We should hope for a future common ground, give charity to the others failings, have faith that truth will prevail and fortitude to say what needs to be said. And note that reflecting on these virtues does not need to make one agreeable. I recently told a person I was debating, "If my friend is drunk at a bar, I will neither stop being his friend nor give him the car keys back no matter how much he screams at me." Tough love is still love.

Another indicator of a Hegelist is if they debate with emotion instead of reason and logic. Remember, I am not saying that all Hegelian arguments are emotional. I'm specifically referring to those that take place when man follows Hegel in daring to sit on God's throne. By accepting that real and not real are the same, they cannot use logic. By not being able to use logic, they are unable to think rationally. When one cannot think rationally, emotion is all that is left. I was recently told by a pro-abortionist that abortions should be based on viability, and used that as a platform for even more allowances in abortion practices. I pointed out that science constantly pushes the envelope; what is viable now was not viable at the time of Roe vs. Wade, and what is not viable today may very well be viable this time next year. I warned her that to use science to justify abortion seems counterproductive to her stated goals. Actually, science is on the side of defining the zygote as "human," which is an even better reason not to rely on science to justify abortions. I believe the gentle reader can imagine the result. There was never much logic in her pro-abortion argument; she embraced an idea and was too emotional to let go.

My final piece of advice is that, in search of Jesus, one must accept that one is not always right. If it were otherwise, one would not need to seek Jesus. If the interlocutor, no matter how emotional at the moment, is actually one that can be reasoned with, then tell them what it would take to change your mind. And ask the same of them. A Hegelist that is sitting in God's throne (even if they do not recognize themselves as doing such) will deny that it is possible to change their mind. If they have the view of God, why would they? This alone is proof that they are embracing the not real, and one need not feel guilty about ending this conversation. The scary part is giving them the key to unraveling one's own beliefs. But if one really wants to find Jesus, one needs to take that risk. Most recently, I told a pro-abortionist that for them to convince me against my pro-life stance as was practiced in this country these last 50 years, they needed to convince me that life does not exist at conception. While I am risking heresy, the fact that the pro-abortion lawyers and scientists could not present a convincing argument for this after 50 years since Roe vs. Wade weighs heavily on my side. So far, this has helped expose just how empty pro-abortion arguments really are. Indeed, there is a disturbing movement within the pro-abortion community now that accepts the fact that they are indeed petitioning to end a life.

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