CHAPTER THREE

THE THREE-FOLD CRITICAL THEORY OF RELIGION

According to Hegel, in the Catholic Middle Ages, e.g. with Meister Eckhart and his disciples, humanity had a heaven, decked and fitted out with an endless wealth of thoughts and pictures (Blackney 1941; Quint 1963; Fox 1966; Hegel 1986c: 16-17; 1986r: 190-192; Rosenzweig 1921: 12; Barth 1959: 268-270; Fackenheim 1967). For Hegel, the significance of all of that lay in the thread of light by which it was attached to heaven: instead of dwelling in the present as it is here and now, the eye glanced away over the present to the Divine, away, so to speak, to a present that lay beyond.

*Experience*

According to Hegel, in secular Modernity to the contrary, the mind’s gaze had to be directed under compulsion to what was earthly and kept fixed there (Hegel 1986c: 16-17). It needed a long time to introduce that clearness that only celestial realities had in the Middle Ages, now in Modernity into the crassness and confusion shrouding the sense of things earthly, and to make people pay attention to the immediate present as such, which was called *Experience*, of interest and of value. In Hegel's perspective, now in Modernity people had apparently the very opposite of all that was interesting and of value in the Middle Ages: modern man’s mind and interest were so deeply rooted in the earthly that he required a like power to have them raised again above that level. Modern man’s spirit demonstrated such poverty of nature that it seemed to long for the mere pitiful feeling of the Divine in the abstract, and to get refreshment from that, like a wanderer in the desert craving for the merest mouthful of water. By the little that could thus satisfy the needs of the human spirit, modern man could measure the extent of its loss. As the critical theorists of society felt most intensely this loss of modern man, they longed to move beyond Modernity, but not romantically back into the Middle Ages, but rather forward toward post-Modern alternative Future III—a society, in which the antagonism between the Medieval and the Modern, the Universal and the particular, the Infinite and the finite, the Transcendence and the im-

The Movement of Thought

The Lutheran Hegel saw that thought had begun to move within Christianity—more specifically within the Roman Catholic Paradigm of the Middle Ages—accepting it as its absolute presupposition (Hegel 1986r: 190-192; 1986q: 185-346; Küng 1965; 1993b; 1970; 1976; 1989; 1994a: 336-601; 1994b: Parts III, IV). Later on, when the wings of thought had grown strong, i.e. in the Protestant/Evangelical Constellation of the Reformation and in the Reason and Progress Orientated Paradigm of Modernity, philosophy rose to the sun like a young eagle, a bird of prey, which sooner than later struck religion down altogether: down to atheism and nihilism; to the death of God (Hegel 1986q: 290-292; Kaufmann 1986: 95-96; Küng 1978c; 1978d; 1994a: 742-1039; 1994b: Parts V, VI, VII). However, so Hegel predicted, it would be the last development of speculative thought to do justice to faith, and to make peace with religion in what today we could call the Post-Modern Paradigm of Judaism, Christianity and Islam (Hegel 1984: 11-14; 1986r: 190-192; 1986p: 9-88; 1986q: 521-535; Küng 1978e; 1978f; 1978g; 1991b: 537-561; 1994a: 742-1039; 2004e). According to the great Jewish scholar, Franz Rosenzweig, Hegel saw philosophy as the consummator of what had been promised by Revelation: the Torah (Rosenzweig 1921: 12). Philosophy did not exercise this office only sporadically or at the height of its career, but rather in every moment, with every breath it drew. Philosophy automatically confirmed the truth predicated by Revelation. Thus, to Rosenzweig, the old quarrel between the religious and the secular, revelation and philosophy, seemed to have been composed: heaven and earth seemed to be reconciled (Hegel 1986p: 9-88; Rosenzweig 1921: 12). It is thus not astonishing for the critical theorist of religion that up to the present—January 2010—Jewish friends of Hegel come to his grave in the Dorothean Cemetery in East Berlin and put little pebbles on his grave stone, which constitutes a small replica of the sacrificial altar in the second Temple in Jerusalem (Rosenzweig 1921: 12; Horkheimer 1967b: 302-316).