

CURRICULUM VITAE  
**David Pensgard**  
2024

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**AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION**

G. W. F. Hegel (esp. Hegel's Logic and Ontological Argument)  
Ontological Arguments and Modal Logical Systems  
German Idealism / Early Continental Philosophy

**AREAS OF COMPETENCE**

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|--|--|
| Interdisciplinary Studies and Research | Formal/Symbolic Logic/Critical Thinking        |
| Late Modern Philosophy                 | Metaphysics / Ontology (Ancient-Contemporary)  |
| Phenomenology (Time Consciousness)     | Philosophy of Religion (Ontological Arguments) |
| Ethics/Biomedical Ethics               |  |

**EDUCATION**

- 2019          PhD    **Philosophy**, The Catholic University of America, School of Philosophy, Washington, DC. Dissertation: *Hegel's Modal Ontological Argument*. Advisor: Antón Barba-Kay, PhD Univ. of Chicago under Robert Pippin.
- 2009          MA    **Religious Studies (Philosophy and Theology)**, Liberty University, School of Philosophy and Religion, Lynchburg, Virginia. Thesis: *Existential Temporality as Fore-Ignorance: Implications for Divine Foreknowledge*
- 1996          BA    Double-Major: **Neurobiology** and **Art Theory**  
Northwestern University, College of Arts and Sciences, Evanston, Illinois.

**ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT**

- 2022-Present    Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia. Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, Adjunct Professor, full time. Classes: *INQR101, RSCH201, INDS 491, PHIL210-Logic,...*
- 2009-Present    Liberty University Online, Lynchburg, Virginia. College of Arts and Sciences, Assistant Professor of Philosophy, full time. Classes: *Intro. to Philosophy, Intro. to Ethics, and Contemporary Worldviews.*
- 2022              Patrick Henry College, Purcellville, Virginia. Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Adjunct Status. Classes: *Introduction to Logic*
- 2018-2022       Northern Virginia Community College, Sterling, Virginia. Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Adjunct Status. Classes: *Intro. to Philosophy, Logic I, Ethics, and Biomedical Ethics.*

2019 Catholic University of America, School of Philosophy. Instructor of Philosophy, Fellow in the *First Year Experience* program. Classes: *The Classical Mind: The Origin and Growth of Western Philosophy*, and *The Modern Mind: Philosophy from Descartes to the Present*.

## **TEACHING AND CLASS DESIGN EXPERIENCE**

### **Classroom Education (Residential)**

2023 Class Design for Liberty's PPE Program: PHIL305, Intro. to Political Philosophy  
Class Design for Liberty's Graduate Interdisciplinary Studies Program: RSCH615, Intro. to Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities

2022-Present Liberty University:  
- INQR 101: Inquiry  
- RSCH 201: Research Methods  
- PHIL 210: Logic  
- INDS 491: Interdisciplinary Theory, Program Capstone  
- PHIL 305: Introduction to Political Philosophy  
- RSCH 615: Interdisciplinary Humanities Research

2022 Patrick Henry College:  
- CLA 213: Logic

2018-2022 Northern Virginia Community College  
- PHI 101: Introduction to Philosophy  
- PHI 227: Biomedical Ethics  
- PHI 111: Logic I  
- PHI 220: Ethics

2019-2020 Catholic University of America  
- PHIL 201 *The Classical Mind: The Origin and Growth of Western Philosophy*  
- PHIL 202 *The Modern Mind: Philosophy from Descartes to the Present*

2004-2009 Liberty University: (29 Guest Lectures)  
- Various topics in Philosophy, Philosophy of Religion, and Religious Studies

### **Online Education**

2009-Present Liberty University: (155 courses taught)  
- PHIL 104: Contemporary Worldviews  
- PHIL 201: Philosophy and Contemporary Ideas (Intro. to Philosophy)  
- PHIL 240: Religion and Evidence  
- PHIL 380: Biomedical Ethics  
- ETHC 101: Introduction to Ethics  
- ETHC 205: Ethical Reflections on Human Life

## **PUBLICATIONS**

- 2024 “Shame and Sexual Freedom: Learning the Lessons of history.” A Response to Kyle Harper’s *From Shame to Sin*. In *Faith and the Academy*, January 2024.
- 2024 “Introduction to the ‘Creation of the World’ in the *Hexaemeron* of Basil the Great,” In Ryken, Leland, Benjamin K. Forrest, Virginia Dow, eds. *The Lexham Anthology of Christian Literature: An Introductory Reader*. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2024).
- 2006 “Yogacara Buddhism: A Sympathetic Description and Suggestion for Use in Western Theology and Philosophy of Religion.” *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 15 (2006): 94-103. <<http://www.jsri.ro>> ISSN 1583-0039.

## **Theses and Dissertations**

- 2018 “Hegel’s Modal Ontological Argument.” Ph.D. Dissertation, School of Philosophy, Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. (available on ProQuest and upon request; summary below). Defended successfully, December 6, 2018.
- 2008 “Existential Temporality as Fore-Ignorance: Implications for Divine Foreknowledge.” MA Thesis, Liberty University, School of Philosophy and Religion, Lynchburg, Virginia, November 2008. <<http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/masters/27/>>.

## **AWARDS AND HONORS**

- 2009 The Bill Bright Excellence in Scholarship Award. Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia, USA (for being first in my class).

## **AREAS OF RESEARCH INTEREST**

Hegel’s Methodology, Deductive Systematics, Ontological Argumentation. Kierkegaard’s interpretation, criticism, and expansion on Hegel’s philosophy.

Ontological Argumentation in S5 Modal logic (cf., Hegel’s implicitly modal argument)  
Analysis, Criticism of Hegel’s philosophy.

Philosophy of Time including Metaphysics of Time, phenomenology of internal-time consciousness, and related topics in the Philosophy of Religion.

## **CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION**

- 2014 “Going Beyond Husserl’s Conception of the Structure of Internal-Time Consciousness.” 8th Annual Duquesne University Graduate Conference in Philosophy: Philosophy of Time, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA. February 2014.
- 2009 “Presentist Time Travel and the Limits of Presentist Causality.” Presented to the *American Philosophical Association Eastern Division, Philosophy of Time Society Group Meeting*, New York City. December 2009.
- 2008 “Existential Temporality as Fore-Ignorance.” Presented at the *Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences 2008* as part of the *Society for Existential and*

*Phenomenological Theory and Culture* (EPTC/TCEP). University of British Columbia, Canada. June 2008. Also served as moderator for another talk.

2006 “Memory Considered as an External Source Of Knowledge Within an Epistemology of Theological Determinism.” Presented at the 2006 Christian Student Philosophy Conference, Covenant College, Lookout Mountain, Georgia, April 2006.

## **RESEARCH ASSISTANCE**

2004-Present Research Assistant to Gary Habermas, Distinguished Professor and Chair of the Department of Philosophy and Theology, Liberty University. I helped grade papers, lectured in his classes, assisted him in preparing for and attending conferences, and consolidated his publications and research for his professional website. Contact information below.

2005-2017 Research Assistant to Craig A. Evans, Payzant Distinguished Professor of New Testament, Acadia Divinity College of Acadia University, in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, Canada. I managed publication materials and published documents for his classes online. NB: He is now at another institution, contact information below in Academic References.

## **SERVICE TO PROFESSION**

2024 Manuscript review for Michael Jones, Professor of Philosophy, Liberty University. Textbook introduction to Philosophy. No publication data available.

2023 Referee for the *Eleutheria* journal.

2019 Referee for the *Review of Metaphysics* journal.

2005 Manuscript review for John Douglas Morrison, Professor of Philosophy and Theology, Liberty University. *Has God Said? Scripture, the Word of God, and the Crisis of Theological Authority*. Volume 5 in the Evangelical Theological Society Monograph Series, David W. Baker, main editor. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Pub., 2006.

## **EXTRACURRICULAR UNIVERSITY ACTIVITIES**

2006-2007 Helped establish a chapter of Phi Sigma Tau: International Honor Society in Philosophy, an undergraduate philosophy club. This was done while I was a graduate student at the Department of Philosophy and Theology, Liberty University. Served as vice president.

## **LANGUAGES**

French: Reading/Translating with dictionary  
German: Reading/Translating with dictionary  
(See “Milestones at CUA” below)

## **PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS & AFFILIATIONS**

Society for Philosophy of Religion. Member since 2024.

American Philosophical Association. Member since 2017.

Philosophy of Time Society. Member since 2007.

Phi Sigma Tau: International Honor Society in Philosophy, Liberty University Chapter, Serving as Vice President, 2006-2007.

## ACADEMIC REFERENCES

**Antón Barba-Kay** ([barbakay@deepsprings.edu](mailto:barbakay@deepsprings.edu))

(My Dissertation Director; University of Chicago Alumnus; His Diss. Director: Robert Pippin)  
Robert Aird Chair of Humanities, Deep Springs College  
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**Michael Rohlf** ([Rohlf@CUA.edu](mailto:Rohlf@CUA.edu))([website](#))

(A Reader on my Dissertation Committee; University of Pennsylvania Alumnus)  
Associate Professor of Philosophy, School of Philosophy, Aquinas Hall 100, The Catholic Univ. of America  
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**Sean Turchin** ([SATurchin@Liberty.edu](mailto:SATurchin@Liberty.edu))

Department Chair and Associate Professor of Philosophy (University of Edinburgh Alumnus)  
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**Timothy Noone** ([NooneT@CUA.edu](mailto:NooneT@CUA.edu))([website](#))

Professor of Philosophy (University of Toronto Alumnus)  
School of Philosophy, Aquinas Hall 100; The Catholic University of America  
620 Michigan Ave NE, Washington, D.C. 20064; (202) 319-5259

**Edward Martin** ([ENMartin@Liberty.edu](mailto:ENMartin@Liberty.edu))([website](#))

Co-Chairman, Department of Philosophy, Director: Master of Arts in Philosophical Studies  
Professor of Philosophy (Purdue University Alumnus); Liberty University, 1971 University Blvd,  
Lynchburg, VA 24515; (434) 582-2592

**Gary Habermas** ([GHabermas@Liberty.edu](mailto:GHabermas@Liberty.edu))([website](#))

Distinguished Research Professor of Apologetics and Philosophy  
Liberty University, 1971 University Blvd, Lynchburg, VA 24515; (434) 582-2577

**Craig A. Evans** ([CEvans@HBU.edu](mailto:CEvans@HBU.edu))([website](#))

John Bisagno Distinguished Professor of Christian Origins; Houston Theological Seminary, Houston  
Baptist University; 7502 Fondren Road, Houston, TX 77074; (281) 649-3383 (Office)

**Craig Hinkson** ([CQHinkso@liberty.edu](mailto:CQHinkso@liberty.edu))([website](#))

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## SUPPLEMENTS

(The following supplements are recommended by the American Philosophical Association  
in its guidelines for CVs.)

## List of Graduate Courses

Total Graduate **Hours: 99**

- In **Philosophy: 75**

- In **Theology: 30** (with 2 classes overlapping)

**PhD Program in Philosophy:** Catholic University of America (2010-2013)

*Class Title* (Instructor)

*Phaedo, Epicureans, and Stoics on Death* (Druart)

*Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas* (Wippel)

*Substantial Unity [Mereology]* (Gorman)

*Aristotle's Categories and On Interpretation* (De Groot)

*Plotinus / Neoplatonism* (Vorwerk)

*The Agent of Truth [Phenomenology of the Human Person]* (Sokolowski)

*Hume's Religion* (McCarthy)

*Modern German Phil: Leibniz – Dilthey* (Zaborowski)

*Thought of William of Ockham* (Noone)

*German Idealism* (Rohlf)

*Aquinas on Divine Ideas [The Platonic Forms in the Mind of God]* (Doolan)

*Husserl's Formal and Transcendental Logic* (Sokolowski)

*Husserl's Cartesian Meditations* (Sokolowski)

*Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (Rohlf)

Milestones at CUA:

First Comprehensive Exam (1/2): Subject Area: Ancient Philosophy (Fall 2011)

Second Comprehensive Exam (2/2): Subject Area: Contemporary Philosophy (Spring 2013)

Admitted to Candidacy on 08-26-2013 (Fall 2013)

German Translation Exam Completed (Fall 2013)

French Translation Exam Completed (Spring 2016)

Dissertation Proposal Approved by Faculty (Spring 2016)

Dissertation Draft 1 Completed (Spring 2017)

Graduation Fall 2018

**Community Scholar Program:** University of Virginia, between MA and PhD (2008-2009)

*Metaphysics* (Merricks)

*Experience* (Philosophy of Perception) (Langsam)

**MA in Religious Studies:** Liberty University (2004-2007)

*Kant Seminar* (Martin)

*Epistemology* (Provenzola)

*Symbolic Logic* (Martin)

*Postmodernism/Existentialism* (Provenzola)

*Eastern Philosophies* (Jones)

*Metaphysics* (Martin)

Kierkegaard Seminar (Hinkson)

*Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (Martin)

*Existence of God* (Beck)

*Modern/Contemporary Christian Thought* (Morrison)

*OT Orientation I* (Fowler)

*NT Orientation I* (Freerkson)

*Introduction to Apologetics* (Habermas)

*Miracles* (Habermas)

*Adv. Bibliology* (Morrison)

*Adv. Christology* (Morrison)

*Research Methods* (Martin/Miller)

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT AND CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Applicant: David Pensgard

Dissertation Title: *Hegel's Modal Ontological Argument*

I have reached two surprising conclusions: first, Hegel's philosophy is thoroughly logical; and second, his ontological argument (not for the existence of God, but for the unity of concepts and their objects) is both the end and the means of his philosophy. These two points are together the key to interpreting Hegel's philosophy, and it allows us to make much better sense of Hegel's bombastic claims about his own success in fulfilling the longstanding "dream of reason." My project engages with original texts and succeeds in showing that these two key points are strongly supported, though they require an admittedly radical reorientation of Hegel interpretation. Put in a more positive light, our understanding of Hegel has been very poor; but this change in our understanding of Hegel clarifies Hegel's philosophy to a surprising degree.

Despite the common belief that Hegel had abandoned the "Logic of the Understanding," I have found overwhelming evidence that Hegel's philosophy is itself logical, in fact, deductive. And contrary to what most Hegel scholars think, this is not a divergent species of "dialectic" logic; it is the very same logical apparatus that was originally discovered by Aristotle. It is syllogistic, deductive, formal, etc. Yet, Hegel avoids the errors that plagued those dogmatic metaphysicians of old.

Rather than replacing traditional logic with something new and negatively dialectic, Hegel rescues logic both from the fatal flaws that he thinks had led generations of logicians into dogmatism and *also* from the criticisms that had become common after Kant's the first *Critique* (details below). And, after finding a way to rescue logic, Hegel uses it to build his system. That is, he bolsters and rescues deduction first, and then Hegel structures his entire philosophy as a system of deductions. These special deductions are labeled sublations, of course, but they are recognizable as deductions. We can see the features of a deductive form in sublations generally. This is sufficient to consider sublation to be deductive in structure.

Taken as a whole, this system of sublations functions as an ontological argument. Please note carefully, however, that this is *not* an argument for a transcendent God, but is quite the opposite; it is an argument whose conclusion is its own independence from any transcendent, alternative check of correspondence. By deducing its own independence, Hegel thinks, the system does not merely demonstrate itself, but earns for itself its status as truthmaker. If we do not see that this is Hegel's overarching strategy, we cannot help but be lost in the jungle of sublations that his system compiles from its seminal algorithm.

Hegel's ontological argument is the key to interpreting his entire philosophy. It is, in fact, the interpretational framework that Hegel himself has provided. Without understanding this argument, Hegel's philosophy is hopelessly inaccessible. The topic at hand is therefore no tangential or minor issue for Hegel scholarship, which after nearly 200 years of interpretative efforts is still attempting to settle what Hegel's philosophy is even about.

This key to Hegel's thought, his version of the ontological argument, is unusual in two ways. To



start, Hegel broadens the category of ontological argumentation beyond the medieval Christian context. His use of such arguments is not even limited to a religious context or to the existence of God, *per se*. Instead, Hegel's expansion of ontological argumentation extends it to include any effort to deductively unify concepts with their objects. It is by means of this unification that Hegel sees logic as grounding itself, first, and then unifying all other concepts subsequently. Therefore, to Hegel, the Ontological Argument is a means of grounding and unifying all concepts holistically rather than proving a theological principle.

In addition, Hegel's own ontological argument is a deductive syllogism. Contrary to the expectations of virtually every Hegel scholar today, I argue that Hegel does not rule out the use of formal logic. Instead, he has worked to repair certain flaws in the practice of formal logic that had led to a dogmatic *application* of this tool. Here is a brief summary of the reasons for thinking that this is correct: Hegel uses traditional terms for his logical argument such as "syllogism," "deduction," "demonstration," and "proof," and he does so without irony or accommodation. Hegel's ontological argument is part of a rich tradition that he respects and profoundly comprehends, and so it must not be understood as something set apart from the logic of Aristotle. Hegel shows evidence of a deep understanding of logic's rich history and even though he gave a thorough critique of traditional, formal logic, his subsequent development of the science of logic was not meant to overwrite or cancel past advancements in this field; they were meant to advance the field of logic. His efforts were meant to rehabilitate the use of formal logic and remove from its practice the avoidable pitfalls that led to dogmatism.

This rehabilitation is pursued through solutions to two specific flaws that Hegel worked to overcome. He refers to them by the familiar terms:

- *Presupposition*, and
- *Finitude*

Presupposition is the undemonstrated acceptance of an axiom or rule of inference with no reasonable support. Dogmatism clearly results from presupposition because it leads to arbitrary starting points and choices of methodologies. Presupposition is overcome, thinks Hegel, when the rules, tools, and contents used by a logician are grounded, connected, and derived within a self-supporting logical system. Hegel calls this system the Absolute. There is nothing external to it, thinks Hegel, so it has no external support, and there are no presuppositions for it either. In a sense, it supposes itself. In what follows I will comment on the circularity that is involved with this perspective.

Finitude is the second criticism, which is Hegel's term for the division and isolation of concepts from one another and from their objects. In a word, this is disconnectedness. Finitude is overcome when concepts are connected to one another and to their objects. This connection is deductive. It is already deductive, and philosophers must discover this structure. Hegel believes that reality itself is rational.

Hegel's philosophy involves an extensive program of discovering the innate logical connections that bind all concepts into a single system, which is to say, the logician's recognition of connections that are already there.

This program of discovering the way all concepts are connected not only remedies the two problems of presupposition and finitude, but it overcomes for itself the source of the dogmatism that he believed had plagued the traditional uses of logic from Aristotle to Leibniz.

Most interpreters of Hegel have made the decision to rule out the possibility that Hegel's philosophy could make use of syllogistic reasoning. However, this presumes an understanding of Hegel's philosophy that remains, even today, unsettled. If this surmise depends on what Hegel's philosophy is seeking to accomplish and if interpreters are still attempting to establish what Hegel's philosophy is about, then, I argue, this common belief ought not to be placed beyond suspicion. Consequently, this common belief that Hegel abandons and replaces traditional logic is not supported well enough to forbid a *new* investigation. The field should be open to new evidence. We must therefore ask anew whether Hegel really meant to reject and replace formal logic. If a good case can be made that he meant to repair the traditional approach to logic instead of trying to abandon it, and if a coherent philosophy can be detected in light of this alternative, or even because of it, then the investigation should be worth the effort.

With this and other arguments, and with much textual exegesis, my project works to establish the legitimacy of reading Hegel as a logician capable of using advanced syllogistics. I then collect evidence from Hegel's writings, primarily the *Encyclopedia Logic*, showing that Hegel's ontological argument both exists and that it can be reconstructed and tested as a modal disjunctive syllogism. In the final chapter, I reconstruct the argument and offer a very long logical proof, showing it to be valid. Only when this is accepted, I conclude, can Hegel scholarship find its proper starting place.

## Chapter Summaries

Chapter (I) has two parts, a listing of factors that might obscure our view of Hegel's ontological argument as a preparation for exegesis, and second, the textual analysis itself.

Regarding the first part, it is difficult to find and analyze Hegel's ontological argument because several factors obscure it from detection: its lack of a formalized presentation; the subtlety of the primary text; and its similarity with another well-known Hegelian argument, known commonly as the *Identity Thesis* or the *Absolute Identity Thesis*.

Regarding the lack of a formalized presentation, Hegel's own ontological argument is not presented with the now-expected signs of formal deduction. I will discuss this at length in the next six paragraphs.

To start, the numbered lines, the explicit stating of standardized rules of inference, the special symbols, and the expected verbal signs of well-worn classes of inferences are all missing. Hegel does his syllogizing without such signposts. Yet, most of these signs were established after Hegel's lifetime. Thus, to expect such indicators would be inappropriate. A reader must be prepared to see deductions without such aids, in ordinary language.

The second reason that Hegel's ontological argument has been difficult to identify is that his most clear and direct text on the subject, the *Lectures on the Proofs of the Existence of God* (VBDG), does not

present his own argument in a straightforward manner. It embodies the argument rather than presenting it. The VBDG seems only to address past versions of the argument. And after this, there is no separate presentation of his own argument as such. For this reason, most conclude that Hegel has no argument of his own. My contention, in response, is that this lecture and its analysis, *taken as a whole*, embodies his argument and that its ability to incorporate past forms of thought into distinct stages, is itself evidence of his intentions to produce his own argument. The lecture itself becomes a sublation; the entire lecture is structured in the form of a disjunctive syllogism!

Consider briefly how a disjunctive syllogism operates: it presents options and then eliminates all the options except one. This is how it works in Hegel's lecture: he first divides past ontological arguments into two historical stages. These historical categories become premises within Hegel's own ontological argument. The first two historical stages are negated (they negate themselves by coming to a self-induced collapse), and the only remaining option, Hegel's own philosophy, is selected by elimination. Thus, it is a disjunctive syllogism. This structure is present—a thing difficult to deny once pointed out—and this is sufficient to make the lecture as a whole into a syllogism.

I then proceed to examine the form more closely, to make myself fit for recognizing this form in other texts. Hegel's presentation and rejection of stage-one ontological arguments (Anselm, for example) and then stage-two ontological arguments (Descartes, for example) align with the negated premises of a disjunctive argument of the following form:

$$\begin{aligned} &\sim(\sim A) \\ &\sim(A \vee \sim A) \\ \therefore &(A) \end{aligned}$$

The variable (A) represents Hegel's own position. The first category of ontological arguments (Anselm) rejects (A). Anselm, therefore, can be understood as positing the negation of this: ( $\sim A$ ). Hegel rejects the rejection by negating it a second time:  $\sim(\sim A)$ . This brings Anselm into line with Hegel's position:  $\sim(\sim A)$  reduces to (A).

The same process repeats for the second category of ontological arguments (Descartes'). This group or stage of philosophers does not reject (A), but it does doubt it, and so it is thus unsure if (A) is true or not. This is represented by  $(A \vee \sim A)$ . Hegel rejects and negates this as well. Or rather, he sees that it collapses and negates itself. So, the second premise, once its self-negation is recognized, becomes:  $\sim(A \vee \sim A)$ . To make this align with (A), however, it must be read in the following way: "It is not the case that it is *merely* possible that (A) or not (A) is the case." It is of the utmost importance that we see that Hegel thinks of his own position as a *necessary* truth. Even the possibility of (A) must therefore be negated. In loose terms, "Maybe (A)" is a rejection of "necessarily (A)." The premise is finally presented as:  $\sim(A \vee \sim A)$ . In this way, the first two historical stages align with the first negated stages of a disjunctive syllogism. Hegel's own position, (A), is the third premise. This is the conclusion of the syllogism. And so, the syllogism delivers Hegel's system on a golden platter. Silver is not good enough for the greatest philosophical achievement, or so Hegel thinks. The conclusion, however, is not made

explicit. It is represented by the entire lecture including its analysis of past forms of the ontological argument. Hegel's form of the argument is ever on display, and he thinks that this is obvious.

In sum, the analysis itself is an argument that takes the following simplified form: not category 1, not category 2, therefore category 3; this matches the form of the disjunctive syllogism that Hegel derives in the *Logics*. The lecture itself, by describing and negating two categories of ontological arguments, represents a third category. Consequently, the lecture is not only Hegel's analysis of past arguments, but it also takes the shape of an ontological argument itself.

The third reason that Hegel's ontological argument is often missed is that it is inappropriately distinguished from his absolute identity thesis. This thesis is understood to be the core engine of his entire philosophy even though a consensus about his philosophy's purpose has not yet been reached. My position is that **Hegel's absolute identity thesis is his ontological argument**. They are the same argument. If this is true, then the goals and methods that are seen in his ontological argument can serve as aids in interpreting his absolute identity thesis, which is to say, his entire philosophy. Not only does this realization allow for his ontological argument to be identified in many other texts, but it drives interpretation of Hegel's entire philosophy toward a formal-logical reading. This may help to overcome a contemporary impasse in Hegel interpretation, and it reveals an unusual degree of contemporary relevance.

The major body of the chapter will then pursue texts that uncover these concepts in Hegel's own words. This will provide the "raw data" for constructing Hegel's argument: the lecture just mentioned (VBDG) and the *Encyclopedia Logic*. This is the bulk of the chapter (though not of this summary).

Chapter (II) attempts to support the conclusion that comes from the raw data in Chapter I. That data seems to indicate, upon first reading, that Hegel means to present his system in the form of a deductive syllogism. Chapter II will support this view, rather than explain it away, by reviewing Hegel's critique of formal logic.

This review will be prefaced by a revelation of the advanced state of formal logic in Hegel's day along with its paradoxical lack of popularity and progressive loss. This is followed by evidence that Hegel had a very advanced understanding of formal logic himself despite a nearly overwhelming trend at that time to discredit and undermine the "logic of the understanding." With this background, Hegel's critique of formal logic is explored in depth. As mentioned above, it will be shown that his primary accusation is that logicians of the past had succumbed to the errors of presupposition and finitude. In other terms, they presuppose the concepts that they use to do logic, and they allow logic to be done in contexts where its forms and contents are held separately. These practices, thinks Hegel, unavoidably result in dogmatism.

**Hegel's solution, however, does not destroy the syllogism; it merely removes the shroud of dogmatism by connecting concepts together and demonstrating *necessarily* that, when systematized, they can be their own ground.** This overcomes presupposition by means of demonstration within the absolute modal system (which we today identify as S5), and it overcomes finitude (isolation) by means of

interconnectedness. The chapter goes on to discuss several implications of this result and interacts with some of the relevant literature.

Chapter (III) gets deeper into the logical form of Hegel's ontological argument and absolute identity thesis, which chapter two identified as the same thing. This form, the Disjunctive Syllogism, is derived at great pains by Hegel in the *Logics*. In this chapter, the derivation of this syllogism is then traced at a sufficient level of detail. Some interaction with helpful resources guides the way.

After its derivation is fully described, the properties, position, and function of the Disjunctive Syllogism are discussed next. It behaves for Hegel as a mediator of concept and being. Yet this syllogism is itself a concept. Consequently, it acts as the mediator of itself with its own object. And its object is itself. It is thus able to unify its contents with its form, the first of the forms of thought to be able to accomplish this feat. Hegel states plainly that the sole activity of thought is to think itself. Therefore, it follows that the Disjunctive Syllogism is the preeminent form of this activity.

One final characteristic of this form of syllogism is then described to close the chapter, its inherent modality. Not only does the Disjunctive Syllogism include within its disjunctive judgment ( $A \vee \sim A$ ) a reference to possibility, but the largest context in which Hegel applies this syllogism is absolute, implying that the concluding premise must possess necessity. Thus, the possibility of the second premise and the necessity of the other two (one negated the other demonstrated) is shown to be implicit. The result is therefore **a modal disjunctive syllogism**:

$$\sim(\Box \sim A); \sim\Diamond (A \vee \sim A); \Box (A)$$

Chapter (IV) delves deeper into the complete modal syllogism as such and describes the universal accessibility it naturally provides to itself. Maximized accessibility, as between possible worlds in today's predominant semantics, is a key definitive feature of the S5 system.

In an appendix, I spend some time exploring similar neo-Hegelian arguments. I use these arguments in chapter IV for comparison as I construct a 49-step proof of the Hegelian ontological argument that I have drawn directly from Hegel's own words (given below). This reconstruction and proof establishes the **validity** of Hegel's ontological argument.

At the end of the chapter, I also consider the argument's soundness and find it, in the end, lacking something important. I then suggest a way forward for the argument as my conclusion. This way forward involves additional "rounds" of sublation added to Hegel's system, additions which seem to indicate that Hegel had stopped prematurely. Once the additional steps are taken, however, the conclusion of Hegel's philosophy, pursued by its own rules, is very different from the conclusion that Hegel recommended. I then comment and briefly muse that this thrusts Hegel and the consequences of his system into contemporary philosophical relevance.

This is the proof of Hegel’s ontological argument:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. $\sim(\Box\sim\exists x \Box Wx)$  | 2, 3, Disjunctive Syllogism   |
| → a. $\sim\sim(\Box\sim\exists x \Box Wx)$  | Assumption, Indirect Proof, (negation of 1)   |
| b. $\Box\sim\exists x \Box Wx$  | 1.a, Double Negation (D.N.)   |
| c. $\exists x \Box Wx$  | 1.a, 1, 2, 3, Def. of $Wx$ ,<br>Intermodal Self-Negation<br>[i.e., 1.a is an $x$ with $W^1$ ] |
|   |   |
| d. $\Diamond\exists x \Box Wx$  | 1.c, $(p \supset \Diamond p)$   |
| e. $\Box\Diamond\exists x \Box Wx$  | 1.d, Axiom (5) <sup>2</sup>   |
| f. $\Box\sim\Box\sim\exists x \Box Wx$  | 1.e, Modal Equivalence ( $\Diamond \equiv \sim\Box\sim$ )                                     |
| g. $\sim\sim\sim\Box\sim\exists x \Box Wx$  | 1.f, $(\Box p \supset \sim\sim p)$  |
|   |   |
| h. $\sim\sim(\Box\sim\exists x \Box Wx) \supset \sim\sim\sim(\Box\sim\exists x \Box Wx)$  | 1.a-1.g, Strengthened Rule of Conditional<br>Proof (C.P.)                                     |
| i. $\sim\sim\sim(\Box\sim\exists x \Box Wx) \vee \sim\sim\sim(\Box\sim\exists x \Box Wx)$ | 1.h, Material Implication (Impl.) <sup>3</sup>  |
| j. $\sim(\Box\sim\exists x \Box Wx) \vee \sim\sim\sim(\Box\sim\exists x \Box Wx)$         | 1.i, D.N.   |
| k. $\sim(\Box\sim\exists x \Box Wx) \vee \sim(\Box\sim\exists x \Box Wx)$                 | 1.j, D.N.   |
| l. $\sim(\Box\sim\exists x \Box Wx)$  | 1.k, Tautology (Taut.)  |

[In sum for 1.a-1.l: Negation of 1 leads to 1, therefore 1.]

|  |  |
|--|--|
| 2. $\sim(\Diamond\exists x \Box Wx \cdot \Diamond\sim\exists x \Box Wx)$       | 1, 3, Disjunctive Syllogism  |
| → a. $\sim\sim(\Diamond\exists x \Box Wx \cdot \Diamond\sim\exists x \Box Wx)$ | Assumption, Ind. Proof, (neg. of 2)                                |
| b. $\Diamond\exists x \Box Wx \cdot \Diamond\sim\exists x \Box Wx$             | 2.a, D.N.  |
| c. $\Diamond\exists x \Box Wx$   | 2.b, Simplification (Simpl.)                                       |
| d. $\exists x \Box \Phi x \supset \Box\exists x \Box \Phi x$                   | S4 Rule <sup>4</sup>   |
| e. $\Diamond\exists x \Box \Phi x \supset \Diamond\Box\exists x \Box \Phi x$   | 2.d, DR3 <sup>5</sup>  |
| f. $\Diamond\exists x \Box Wx \supset \Diamond\Box\exists x \Box Wx$           | 2.e, Filling the $\Phi$ variable                                   |
| g. $\Diamond\Box\exists x \Box Wx$   | 2.c, 2.f, Modus Ponens (M.P.)                                      |
| h. $\Box\exists x \Box Wx$   | 2.g, $(\Diamond\Box p \supset \Box p)$ is valid in S5 <sup>6</sup> |
| i. $\sim\Diamond\sim\exists x \Box Wx$   | 2.h, Modal Equivalence ( $\Box \equiv \sim\Diamond\sim$ )          |
| j. $\sim\Diamond\sim\exists x \Box Wx \vee \sim\Diamond\exists x \Box Wx$      | 2.i, Addition  |
| k. $\sim\Diamond\exists x \Box Wx \vee \sim\Diamond\sim\exists x \Box Wx$      | 2.j, Commutatation (switching order)                               |

<sup>1</sup> Premises that propose, like this one, the “existence” of a concept because that concept has already been part of the proof up to this point, is not new. I have detected it as early as John Buridan in his logic text book, *Summulae de Dialectica*. See, Mikko Yrjönsuuri, “Treatments of the Paradoxes of Self-Reference,” in *Handbook of the History of Logic*, vol. 2, ed. Dov M. Gabbay and John Woods (Boston: Elsevier Press, 2008), 600 (see premise 4). Notice also that this premise sits within the scope of an assumption. Nonetheless, this is likely to be a very controversial step. It is discussed at length in the remainder of chapter IV.

<sup>2</sup> Recall that this is the rule that “delivers” S5—If possibly  $p$ , then necessarily possibly  $p$ . It is also found in the Leibniz/Wolff Metaphysics textbook with which Hegel shows evidence of familiarity. See comment and citation in chapter 2.

<sup>3</sup> For clarification, the Rule of Material Implication states that the following two propositions are logically equivalent:  $p \supset q \equiv \sim p \vee q$ . See Copi, 40.

<sup>4</sup> This rule obtains in modal logic S4 with constant domain. Damschen uses this as step 10 of his own proof. He cites Fitting, M. and Mendelsohn, R. L. (1998). *First-Order Modal Logic*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 137. See the Appendix.

<sup>5</sup> This rule, DR3, used by Damschen in steps 11 and 12 of his proof, states that one can distribute a modal operator (M) to both sides of an implication.  $\vdash a \supset b \Rightarrow Ma \supset Mb$ . Damschen cites G. E. Hughes, and Cresswell, M. J. *A New Introduction to Modal Logic* (London: Routledge, 1996), 35. See the Appendix.

<sup>6</sup> This step is our conclusion, but presented early. However, in this location, it is contained within the scope of an assumption, which remains to be discharged. Therefore, this statement is not proved at this point.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. $\sim(\Diamond \Box x \supset Wx \cdot \Diamond \sim \Box x \supset Wx)$ | 2.k, De Morgan's Theorems <sup>7</sup> |
|---|--|

|   |               |
|---|---------------|
| m. $\sim\sim(\Diamond \Box x \supset Wx \cdot \Diamond \sim \Box x \supset Wx) \supset$<br>$\sim(\Diamond \Box x \supset Wx \cdot \Diamond \sim \Box x \supset Wx)$ | 2.a-2.1, C.P. |
| n. $(\Diamond \Box x \supset Wx \cdot \Diamond \sim \Box x \supset Wx) \supset$<br>$\sim(\Diamond \Box x \supset Wx \cdot \Diamond \sim \Box x \supset Wx)$         | 2.m, D.N.     |
| o. $\sim(\Diamond \Box x \supset Wx \cdot \Diamond \sim \Box x \supset Wx) \vee$<br>$\sim(\Diamond \Box x \supset Wx \cdot \Diamond \sim \Box x \supset Wx)$        | 2.n, Impl.    |
| p. $\sim(\Diamond \Box x \supset Wx \cdot \Diamond \sim \Box x \supset Wx)$   | 2.o, Taut.    |

[In sum for 2.a-2.p: Negation of 2 leads to 2, therefore 2.]

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 3. $\Box \Box x \supset Wx$   | 1, 2, Disjunctive Syllogism                                 |
| -> a. $\sim(\Box \Box x \supset Wx)$  | Assumption, Ind. Proof, (neg. of 3)                         |
| b. $\Diamond \Box x \supset Wx \cdot \Diamond \sim \Box x \supset Wx$           | 3.a, $\sim \Box \equiv (\Diamond \cdot \Diamond \sim)$      |
| c. $\Diamond \Box x \supset Wx$   | 3.b, Simplification (Simpl.)                                |
| d. $\Box x \supset \Phi x \supset \Box \Box x \supset \Phi x$                   | S4 Rule <sup>8</sup>  |
| e. $\Diamond \Box x \supset \Phi x \supset \Diamond \Box \Box x \supset \Phi x$ | 3.d, DR3  |
| f. $\Diamond \Box x \supset Wx \supset \Diamond \Box \Box x \supset Wx$         | 3.e, Filling the $\Phi$ variable                            |
| g. $\Diamond \Box \Box x \supset Wx$  | 3.c, 3.f, Modus Ponens (M.P.)                               |
| h. $\Box \Box x \supset Wx$   | 3.g, $(\Diamond \Box p \supset \Box p)$ is valid in S5      |
| i. $\sim \Diamond \sim \Box x \supset Wx$                                       | 3.h, Modal Equivalence ( $\Box \equiv \sim \Diamond \sim$ ) |
| j. $\sim \Diamond \sim \Box x \supset Wx \vee \sim \Diamond \Box x \supset Wx$  | 3.i, Addition   |
| k. $\sim \Diamond \Box x \supset Wx \vee \sim \Diamond \sim \Box x \supset Wx$  | 3.j, Commutation (switching order)                          |
| l. $\sim(\Diamond \Box x \supset Wx \cdot \Diamond \sim \Box x \supset Wx)$     | 3.k, De Morgan's Theorems                                   |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| m. $\sim(\Box \Box x \supset Wx) \supset$<br>$\sim(\Diamond \Box x \supset Wx \cdot \Diamond \sim \Box x \supset Wx)$ | 3.a-3.1, C.P.  |
| n. $\sim(\Box \Box x \supset Wx) \supset$<br>$\sim\sim(\Box \Box x \supset Wx)$                                       | 3.m, $\sim \Box \equiv (\Diamond \cdot \Diamond \sim)$ |
| o. $\sim(\Box \Box x \supset Wx) \supset (\Box \Box x \supset Wx)$  | 3.n, D.N.  |
| p. $\sim\sim(\Box \Box x \supset Wx) \vee (\Box \Box x \supset Wx)$   | 3.o, Impl.   |
| q. $(\Box \Box x \supset Wx) \vee (\Box \Box x \supset Wx)$   | 3.p, D.N.  |
| r. $\Box \Box x \supset Wx$   | 3.q, Taut.   |

[In sum for 3.a-3.r: Negation of 3 leads to 3, therefore 3.]

[In sum for the entire proof:  $(1 \vee 2 \vee 3); \sim(1); \sim(2); \therefore 3.$ ]

This proof makes no external reference. As a result, Hegel believes that self-containment results in validity and soundness. However, I have detected a mistake in his application of this argument that threatens its soundness, given *his* application. Correcting this mistake returns the argument to soundness, but reverses Hegel's conclusions, altering it from a pantheistic proof to an apophatic monotheistic proof.

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<sup>7</sup> As a historical curiosity, I note here that the theorems widely known today as De Morgan's were already well known to Ockham in 1325.

<sup>8</sup> This rule obtains in modal logic S4 with constant domain. Damschen uses this as step 10 of his own proof. He cites Fitting, M. and Mendelsohn, R. L. (1998). *First-Order Modal Logic*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 137.