**Life and Infinity**

Does the progression to the true infinite reflect the notion of *life* itself? To begin with, it is crucial to explore Hegel’s concept of infinity: according to Hegel’s *Science of Logic*, the idea of infinity can be divided into three distinct but associated concepts of finite, infinite and true infinite. Then, a translation from these three key concepts originated of infinity to the three central events in life will be made: Finite, infinite and true infinite to birth, experience and death.

As said in the paragraph above, Hegel’s notion of infinity contains three fundamental ideas of finite, infinite and true infinite. On the concept of finite, Hegel asserts that “the very nature of the finite” is to “transcends itself” to become infinite (*Science of Logic* 109: 21.125). As a note, Hegel defines *transcendence* as finite’s negation of its negation to become infinite.

On the other hand, what is the nature of infinite? As said by Hegel, infinite or the *bad infinite* tends to believe that “it has attained satisfaction in the reconciliation of truth while it is in fact entangled in unreconciled, unresolved, absolute contradictions” (*Science of Logic* 111: 21.127). In essence, Hegel is saying that the infinite or the bad infinite has a tendency to misperceive that it has achieved the level of true infinite. Moreover, he defines the *bad infinite* simply as the “finite infinite” (*Science of Logic* 111: 21.127).

What then is the quality of the other infinite, *true infinite*? Hegel affirms in *Science of Logic*, “As true infinite, bent back upon itself, its image becomes the circle, the line that has reached itself, closed and wholly present, without beginning and end” (*Science of Logic* 119: 21.137). This affirmation *directly* denotes that the true infinite holds aspects of both infinite and finite: The circle is the finite and the endless circular movement is the infinite.

The exploration and defining of Hegel’s concepts of infinity is now accomplished. The next stage is to make an adequate translation from those concepts of infinity to the three significant particulars in life. As a start, life begins at birth and ends at death, and in between the birth and death are the *life experiences*. These particular events in life that occur chronologically are commonly accepted by many people. Comparing to Hegel’s notion of infinity, it is similar to “the image of the progression in infinity” which can be depicted as a “straight *line*” (*Science of Logic* 119: 21.137). That is to say, life can be viewed simply as a straight line with birth as the initial point, death as the ending point and life experiences as the physical line between the two points. However, it is important to note that Hegel’s opinion above is on the nature of the *bad* or *false* infinite. The depiction of the true infinite is, in fact, a *circle*, not a straight line according to Hegel. Using Hegel’s depiction of the true infinite, I can hypothesize that the image of life is a circle rather than a straight line. From this point, the rest of the essay will focus on making detailed analyses of the translations from the concept of infinity to the three specific events in life.

Initially, birth in life is equal to the creation of the finite. Explicitly, assuming that life *itself* is the progression to the true infinite*,* the birth in life is the starting point of the circle of true infinite. As said in the paragraph earlier, the tendency of finite is to become the infinite transcending itself by negation. This propensity of finite can be interpreted as the actual experiences and critical events in life. Hegel’s nature of finite, in a way, reveals the *purpose* of life: People constantly seek higher knowledge and awareness throughout their lives.

Next, the transitions from finite to bad or false infinite and the other way around can be translated as the steady progressions in life through experiences. Throughout life, people intermittently believe that they have attained the absolute knowledge in life. However, on most occasions, people later realize that they were mistaken. In the case of Hegel’s concept of infinity, “the infinite has vanished and the other, the finite, has stepped in” creating a new limit once again (*Science of Logic* 112: 21.129). By a new limit being set after the realization of their misconceptions, people are in a higher state of awareness than before. Then again, earlier in this essay, it is said that Hegel’s concept of the true infinite is not asymptotic. From this, a postulation can be made: People may be in a higher level of awareness, but they certainly did not move any *closer* to the absolute knowledge or true infinite. Thus, in my opinion, it is erroneous to believe that people will *eventually* achieve the absolute knowledge through numerous life experiences.

At this point, it is essential to ask the question, is it *appropriate* to portray life as a circle? By studying both abstractions in infinity and particulars in life, I have come to a conclusion that life is too complex to be depicted merely as a circle. In addition, if the depiction of life was a circle, death would be irrelevant since the point of death is equal to the point of birth. In other words, everyone in this world should be immortal or capable of reincarnation if life was described as a circle. In view of the fact that humans are not immortal and are not capable of reincarnation, I can suppose that life cannot be considered as a circle. In my thoughts, a solution for this problem can be found by expanding on Hegel’s figurative description of the true infinite: portrayal of life as a *spiral* rather than a circle. This thought of life as a spiral is a combination of abstractions and particulars. Moreover, it is a combination of translations and expansions on Hegel’s concept of infinity. Then again, it is important to note that I am positing that human can *never* reach the absolute knowledge and that life itself is the *bad infinite* rather than the true infinite.

There is no doubt that this new spiral that represents life as the bad infinite is fundamentally derived from Hegel’s visualization of the true infinite which is a circle. The shape of the spiral is created simply by adding a second component to the visualized circle: a scale of awareness level. To be more precise, the scale starts from the center of the spiral and the level of awareness increases as the spiral moves further away from the center. Earlier in this essay, it is stated that people go through numerous experiences that have limits in life and after the realization of the limit, people are in a higher level of awareness and a new limit is set. Combining this assertion with the introduction of the scale of awareness level, a better picture of the spiral can be obtained: instead of going through a circular motion, life goes through a spiral motion due to every experience elevating an individual’s level of awareness and setting up new limits.

Assuming that the life itself is the bad infinite and takes the shape of a spiral, it can be said that the termination point in life, death does not directly link to the initial point in life, birth. In other words, a break or a gap forms in the end of the circle, which transforms the circle into a spiral, by reason of a difference in awareness level between birth and death. People may believe that they are constantly moving closer to the absolute knowledge throughout their lives and will eventually attain the absolute knowledge upon death. Nonetheless, the spiral movement of life, which creates a gap between birth and death, forbids people from acquiring the absolute knowledge. My belief is that no human will ever obtain the absolute knowledge during his or her life. Yet, according to religious scripts, divine figures are said to have obtained absolute knowledge, and this proves the very existence of life as the true infinite that is represented as a circle. Hence, it is crucial to pinpoint the specific time in life when the break in the circle gets mended. As said earlier, a major opening is seen between death and birth, so I can assert that the mending process or the realization of absolute knowledge takes place between death and birth.

What then actually happens between death and birth? Unfortunately, no one has a perfect answer. This is due to the fact that there is no way of acquiring factual knowledge from the deceased. In my opinion, the gap is what people call the domain of the *unknown unknowns*. Nevertheless, Hegel’s concept of the absolute spirit, which is itself the true infinite, gives a rough explanation on what goes on between death and birth. In *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel states that in the state of the absolute knowing, the Spirit does not merely recognize itself, “but also the negative of itself, or its limit” (*Phen.* 121 §807). As a note, Hegel’s notion of the *Spirit* is translated as the human soul after death. Additionally, Hegel asserts that identifying one’s limit is equivalent to realizing “how to sacrifice oneself” (*Phen*. 121 §807). The *sacrifice*, which corresponds to death in my case, “displays the process of its becoming Spirit in the form of *free contingent happening*” (*Phen*. 121 §807). In other words, after the sacrifice, the Spirit shifts to the state of omnipresence. On the word of Hegel, sacrifice leads to the Spirit perceiving “its pure Self as *Time* outside of it” and “its being as *Space*” (*Phen*. 121 §807). Moreover, he asserts that *Nature* “is its living immediate becoming” (*Phen*. 121 §807). Thus, the phase of absolute knowing or true infinite results in two crucial phenomena: the ubiquitous existence and the infinite expansion of itself as Time, Space and Nature, and the observation of itself existing and developing in Time, Space and Nature.

From the paragraph above, Hegel’s idea of *sacrifice* is the real key to the absolute knowledge. Thus, I have come to a conclusion that the absolute knowledge is obtained at the very moment of death. It can be said that divine figures like Jesus clearly understood when to sacrifice and what for. On the other hand, mundane people would merely leave behind this mending process and move on to be born again as a different person in a different place with the same soul expanding the spiral of life. Interestingly, this whole notion of life made from translations, expansions and adaptations of Hegel’s concept of infinity closely relates to s*aṃsāra* which is the recurring cycle of birth, life and death mainly within Hinduism and Buddhism. The ultimate goal for religious people of Hinduism and Buddhism is the attainment of *nirvana* which is done so by becoming free from saṃsāra. Correspondingly, the ultimate goal of life for people is to obtain the absolute knowledge which is done so by preventing the spiral movement from expanding. Thus, the concepts of saṃsāraand nirvana from various religions additionally support my notion of life derived from Hegel’s concept of infinity.