

## DEMISE AND COHERENCE WITHIN HEGEL'S CONTINGENCY AND EXISTENCE

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**ABSTRAK.** Segala sesuatu yang terbatas akhirnya memiliki ketidakpastian. Namun kontingensi adalah daya tahan di dalam alam dan lebih dari itu, kontingensi merupakan kreativitas dalam keberadaan manusia. Tesis artikel ini, yang diutarakan dalam hubungan Hegel antara kebutuhan dan kontingensi, adalah ini: *dalam kesetiaan aspirasional dan integritas kehendak, kerugian dan keuntungan dalam keberadaan manusia tidak simetris; kerugian dan keuntungan bersifat asimetris dan pada prinsipnya, begitu juga dengan penebusan.* Karena kematian, dengan kreativitas retrospektif, keuntungan dapat mengalahkan kerugian — perspektif Kristologis. Terinspirasi oleh aspirasi manusia, kemungkinan kreatif dihasilkan; gerakan, pertumbuhan, dan perubahan terjadi dalam gerakan dialektika momen-momen yang menunjukkan kontradiksi, mediasi dan perkembangan baru.

**Kata Kunci:** Kontingensi , perkembangan, kreativitas

**ABSTRACT.** Everything finite is finally contingent, yet contingency is durability within nature and more so, creativity within human existence. The thesis of this article, which is cast within Hegel's relationship between necessity and contingency, is this: *within aspirational fidelity and volitional integrity, loss and gain in human existence are not symmetrical; loss and gain are asymmetrical and so in principle, redemptive.* Out of demise, by retrospective creativity, gain can surpass loss—a tacit christological perspective. Inspired by human aspiration, creative possibilities are generated; movement, growth and change occur within a dialectical *movement of moments* exhibiting contradiction, mediation and novel development.

**Keywords:** Contingency, development, creativity

### INTRODUCTION

Life presents a contradictory dynamic—everything diminishes; yet everything coheres. Everything finite is finally contingent, yet contingency is durability within nature and more so, creativity within human existence. Dynamic coherence exhibits negation (demise) and elevation (development) within contingency that is mediated by volitional agency. Human possibility exceeds repetitions of nature; there is not merely recycled demise and renewal but genuine elevation to new levels of engagement and intelligent expression surpassing contingent losses. The capacity to surpass demise with

development within human life resonates with redemptive dynamics within Christian theology. Negations experienced within human existence are surpassed with genuine gain for personal formation, scientific development and social consolidations toward human flourishing in an asymmetrical *loss* and *gain* that resonates with Christian articulation of redemptive possibilities within life.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

By what principle is there asymmetrical gain that surpasses loss with new actualities—social and scientific, within human life? Recycling junk is asymmetrical and redemptive, as subjectivity becomes objective by investment of creative intelligence and social responsibility. If birth and death were merely symmetrical, life would represent a sum zero game; birth and death are asymmetrical, for there is dialectical development within life, and so gain. Life is asymmetrical through human subjectivity, intelligence and sociality as things cohere, grow and develop. There is a redemptive logic to life as *necessity* sought from *contingency*, retrospectively, asymmetrically, after redemptive possibility within Christian perspective.

Cast within Hegel's relationship between necessity and contingency, this article develops the following thesis: *within aspirational fidelity and volitional integrity, loss and gain in human existence are not symmetrical; loss and gain are asymmetrical and so in principle, redemptive*. Out of demise, by retrospective creativity, gain can surpass loss. Inspired by human aspiration, creative possibilities are generated; movement, growth and change occur within a dialectical *movement of moments* exhibiting contradiction, mediation and novel development. This article explores, first, Hegel's relationship between necessity and contingency; second, heuristic recognition amid

contingency; third, subjectivity becoming objective through intelligent interventions; fourth, redemptive impetuses within the loss and gain of *becoming*.

Change is exposure to extrinsic determinations without a means of retrieving what is constantly disappearing within time and flux. Development is dialectical in recognising that change as negation can be further negated and assimilated into a new level of engagement. *Loss and gain* are not cast as imperatives to be pursued; *loss* and *gain* are indicative or descriptive—loss occurs within life by natural contingency and human fallibility, even as human aspiration exhibits subjectivity becoming objective through thinking, creativity, responsibility and development within socially shared contexts of life. The very fabric of positive social existence whereby development adds to human flourishing, resonates with a christological structure of redemptive loss and gain. Christian faith exemplifies by gift—what human aspiration seeks to enact amid variegated sources of demise.

#### **NECESSITY BY CONTINGENCY**

Any human artifact exists within time and is eventually negated by elemental wear or destruction, pragmatic use, neglect or intentional destruction. An artifact of human culture can be negated by any of these contingencies, yet also restored, rebuilt and even extended beyond its original condition suggesting too, a dynamic negation of previous negation within conceptual engagement with contingent artifacts of time. Such conceptual engagement concerns the cultural identity and symbolic value of something that is otherwise contingent within time. This reaffirmation of actual presence and conceptual significance of an artefact invokes a principle of coherence. Coherence is inspired—as an expression of human aspiration and creativity amid contingency that is a premise for development.

Whatever is contingent is passing away, existing while ceasing to exist. A contingent thing lacks necessity and is therefore contingent. Contingency *is* but it *is not*, so a contradiction.<sup>1</sup> If a thing is necessary, it is necessary; if it is contingent, it is contingent and not necessary. Yet contingency and necessity presuppose each other. Something is determined and negated, with negation also negated within a further determination. This movement exhibits contingency; this movement is also necessary. The movement from determination to negation is also the possibility of negation being negated in a new determination. This movement is dialectical within which necessity is contingent and contingency is necessary as *restless* movement of one mediating the other. Contingency is dialectical in its *to and fro* affirmation and negation of what *is*. Necessity is not the binary opposite of contingency, merely projecting what is complete and so necessary from what is less than complete. Necessity is inherent within contingency as a dialectical movement toward what *is* as necessary even within contingency, yet ceasing *to be* because contingent.<sup>2</sup>

Any actuality is both contingent and necessary; it is necessarily contingent and it is free within contingency. Actuality is constant alteration between demise and new expression of potential. Actuality is in constant dialectical movement between negation and growth. This process is necessary and free; it is a necessary process of freely actualising potentiality within demise and growth. What is contingent is not necessary; yet contingency is necessary to becoming—of demise and the emergence of new expression. Anything finite is contingent and without necessity; because it is contingent,

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<sup>1</sup> Georg W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs for the Existence of God*, ed. & trans. Peter C. Hodgson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 131, 159-162; Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline*, Part 1: *Science of Logic*, trans. & ed. Klaus Brinkmann & Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), § 145.

<sup>2</sup> Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. & ed. George Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), §§ 11.389-390; Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, §§ 88-89, 149.

it is necessarily becoming something else. Contingency prefaces free possibilities and is necessary to becoming. Contingency is the possibility of demise and the potential to become something else; by demise and becoming something else than what is immediate actuality, necessity is intrinsic to contingency.<sup>3</sup>

Contingencies might be numerous, irrepressible and unwieldy, yet they exist within necessity—the necessity of singular entities and unique moments in expression of life. Contingency cannot be stripped of necessity. Necessity is wholly present as the possibility of contingency, for necessities such as determination and relation are intrinsic to particular existence and so contingency. Contingency is exhibited by singular instances and unique moments; contingency reflects existence and demise, so non-existence, even in change and becoming something else. Contingency is seemingly contrary to coherence and continuity; yet coherence and continuity are conditions for restless and changing contingency.<sup>4</sup>

Any contingent thing has coherence; yet this coherence can be negated. By change, a new coherence of the same thing, will occur within time. Contingency is a constant process of demise and the emergence of different forms of coherence.<sup>5</sup> An actual thing is a determination. Because it is both immediacy and potentiality, it does not remain a fixed determination but dialectically, necessity becomes contingent. A unity of necessity and contingency is exhibited as *becoming*. Determinations change also in becoming.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, trans. Clark Butler (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008), §§ 142-147; Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, §§ 92, 146-147.

<sup>4</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. & ed. Terry Pinkard & Michael Baur (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), §§ 303-306; Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, §§ 150-151.

<sup>5</sup> With reference to Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, §§ 145, 146.

<sup>6</sup> Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, §§ 11.389-390; Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, §§ 163, 166.

## HEURISTIC RECOGNITION

In its contingency, a particular thing *is* and it *is not*. An actual thing exists; it is veritable. Yet as contingent, it lacks veracity as an unenduring silhouette of permanence. Contingency is a source of paradox as to what is true; what is changing is veritable as changing; what is contingent but presumably permanent is not. Determination of anything contingent as recognisably contingent is veritable.<sup>7</sup>

Existential phenomena invoke a range of responses—from dogmatism, asserting what reality is, to skeptical deference, devolving to indeterminacy. The first stance may seem arrogant; the second, seemingly without anchorage. Within its contingency and necessity, human existence is before a continuum of possibilities that invoke both reticence and definite judgments.

It is very contemporary though nothing new to announce that *change is the only constant* in life. Yet change can only be a permanent factor within continuities and rhythms, without which, there is merely haphazard turbulence. Within assertions of *constant change* there is the unrecognised consistency of *constant* through which *change* is possible.<sup>8</sup> If for Hegel, any determination is also inhabited by its contrary, change requires permanence, even as also imperceptibly changing, to be perceived as change. This distinction is essential to engaging change. Change and constancy are easily cast as opposites, with change assuming a positive role as adaptive and constancy cast in tacit resistance to innovation. Without constancy, so continuities and rhythms,

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<sup>7</sup> Hegel, *System of Ethical Life* and *First Philosophy of Spirit*, trans. & ed. H.S. Harris & T.M. Knox (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979), 147; *Lectures on Logic*, § 118.

<sup>8</sup> Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. I: *Introduction and the Concept of Religion*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 431.

any methods, skills and knowledge we might accumulate would become superfluous, being dissipated within haphazard turbulence.

How then do we perceive continuity from what is contingent concerning our existence? How do we perceive a lack of continuity, if continuity is a premise for ascertaining what is lacking within existence? Aggregation of contingent phenomena could occur infinitely without offering continuity. Focus away from lack to an ideal independent of phenomena and so contingency is seemingly irrelevant to actuality. Sustained continuity is dialectically inferred, as speculatively ascertained from within our experience of limit and relation, so determination. This is heuristic, within a differential between demise and coherence.<sup>9</sup>

Things are diminished because any *thing* that exists, consists of contradiction or demise as necessary to a movement of change. Things change, precisely because they exist within a contradiction of being and ceasing to be, so *becoming*. Contradiction within living existence is intrinsic to dynamic growth; it is also the possibility of demise, as existing things exhibit demise in ceasing to be, even as what comes to be is an expression of life surpassing singular expressions of life. In Hegel's identity and difference, identity is also tacit self-contradiction; this is the possibility of recognising change and transformation, therefore affirming intelligent subjectivity and agency.<sup>10</sup>

#### **CHANGE, FORMATION AND INTERVENTION**

Necessity is what *is* and what *happens*; it is also what *ought to happen*. Something *is* as it *ought to be*—this is necessity. Something *is* and it *ought to be* as a continuing condition of necessity. Yet this is a contradiction; necessity is this

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<sup>9</sup> Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge*, trans. & ed. Walter Cerf & H.S. Harris (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977), 159-165. Compare Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, § 135.

<sup>10</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, §§ 81, 119-121, 232-234.

contradiction. There are always contingencies and there is always necessity. Freedom within contingency is the capacity to see necessary limits within which, volitional traction is gained; a stance of freedom is assumed precisely because there are external contingencies that offer constraints of necessity and so resistance to freedom. Awareness of freedom and its traction are gained within necessity. Contingency is necessary within the scope of human existence—the demise of all finite things is experienced as a necessity; yet the time and place of demise is contingent. To resist the reality of this demise is to encounter the reality of necessity as arbitrary; to accept the inevitability of demise is to encounter arbitrary contingencies as necessary traction for subjective enhancement. Freedom is the subjective capacity to interpret the necessity of arbitrary contingencies.<sup>11</sup>

Contingency is intrinsic to anything becoming something else. In Hegel's dialectic of being and nothing there is becoming through which there are new expressions of coherence emerging from demise. Negation is not a termination point; something new emerges by negation of negation. Things diminish; things cohere through new formations within becoming.<sup>12</sup> Contingency is change—something *coming to be* and so also *ceasing to be*. Thinking is also change—a process of positing and negation through dialectical moments that mediate new thought. Formation or education is an expression of this dialectical movement through thinking. While material things are contingent, human existence is inspirited with intelligence that, while mediated by materiality, can alter material things.<sup>13</sup>

To be human is to experience negation within contingency. Within contingency, something has the capacity to be negated by something else and also of becoming

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<sup>11</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, § 147.

<sup>12</sup> Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, §§ 86, 87; Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, §§ 89-90.

<sup>13</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, § 43.



something else. Something becoming something else is the potential for development. The risk and potential of life—of loss and gain—by which contingent limits are present from natality is also a source of becoming something else through dialectical formation between negation and new levels of determination. Without contingency, there are no negations; without negation, there is no becoming of development and formation.<sup>14</sup>

Asserting that invariably, *things* are in *demise*, is a staple presupposition for an ironic perspective, which can posit negation as sustained skepticism that is without a double negation and so elevation to new coherence and relation (at least for the moment). Life is dynamic as things are defined and redefined. This phenomenon occurs within any change as by education and development, previous determinations that are held concerning a discipline or facet of life are negated, revised and elevated to new awareness and activities. This dialectical movement is assumed in a variety of contexts within which learning, development and so formation occur. While ironic skepticism can remain only with negation and so is potentially abyssal, the dialectic of demise and coherence is a premise for qualitative development through intelligent interventions.

An intervention posits purpose within existence; intervention as an action exhibits intention more tangibly than expressions of speech. Because an action occurs amid life and others, it posits consequences that go beyond intention, purview, control of its effects and interpretation. An action can generate *something else* other than what was intended and supposedly anticipated or even exhibited by its initial execution as nevertheless a consequence of that action. An active intervention exhibits a degree of *autonomy* within life, demonstrating the differentiating capacity of all life—of potential contradiction whereby negation is always present in anything undertaken within

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<sup>14</sup> With reference to Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, §§ 92-93.

contingent existence.<sup>15</sup> Within any intervention, there is loss and gain, yet loss is negation that prefaces gain.

### REDEMPTIVE IMPETUSES

Hegel's dialectic of negation and double negation exhibits differential identity (*identity as also non-identity*), so movement in moments of growth by contradiction, assimilation and change—which is intrinsic to discovery, coherence and purpose.<sup>16</sup> Hegel's double-negation is also a philosophical deployment of Christian sources. This thesis affirms a move akin to double-negating the negation of irony through a redemptive irony—so the *loss-gain, death-life* sublation of negation within a double-ironic move that is central to Christian kerygma.

Hegel speaks of *the wound that heals* through the dynamic movement of spirit within life. The *wound* of particular experience (loss) is redeemed by spirit in *healing* (gain); this experience is a moment in the movement of life, whereby negation is yet negated again to be elevated to new possibility within intelligence and requisite activity. That *loss* is a negation and *gain* is given, is a movement of spirit; the wound is one with the healing, even if time separates these for the moment. Hegel's tacit allusion to Christian sources articulates wounding and healing as a redemptive perspective of life, for engaged intelligently, dialectically, particular loss is gain whereby singular subjectivity, by thinking, recognition and purpose, is also universal spirit.<sup>17</sup> Nothing is

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<sup>15</sup> With reference to Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, § 122. Development is not equated with change, for change merely occurs without retrieval and so development of what has occurred. Change is flux, whereas development negates what is negated through flux. Change can be accepted passively, whereas development is intentional in negating the negations of change whereby adaptation redeems towards purpose and creativity, what is negated by the arbitrary effects of change. With reference to Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit 1827-28*, trans. & intro. Robert R. Williams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 201.

<sup>16</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, §§ 112-116; 158; 204.

<sup>17</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 669; Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, §§ 81; 161; 194; Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind: A Revised Version of the Wallace and Miller Translations*, rev. with intro & commentary Michael Inwood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), §§ 569, 570. Hegel's

therefore *a given* as things are in constant demise; yet everything is given as things cohere—and further, by inspirited intelligence, language and active interventions, incremental elevation or development also occurs.<sup>18</sup>

### CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Life is seamless yet life exhibits incompleteness. Life is seemingly without final coherence; we live with obvious and interminable contingency. For Hegel, every aspect of life can be an increment within a movement toward putative completion through thinking and activity. This is a dialectal to and fro movement that does not lose anything previously gained. Loss and gain occur by relinquishing an assumed grasp of completion, so accepting negation or antithesis toward new gain—a synthesis that always exceeds previous gain in movement toward completion. By dialectical increments—seemingly *crab walking* between affirmation and negation within ratchet movements of new gain—life is more fully encountered, even though complete knowledge of existence is never reached. In Hegel’s continuous dialectical movement there is formation, education and development; there are gains through loss that is necessary for any new gain. Fractional increments of formation and development occur through asymmetrical elevation or negation of previous negation in novel affirmation. This movement does accord with life as dynamic movement; we are always positing and being negated, concluding and relearning; we traverse dialectically a paradoxically coherent incompleteness. Precisely within its dialectical movement, life is inspirited,

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*speculative Good Friday* is a *grief that endures* as negation and sublation—a Christian paradigm and the essence of loss and gain within moments of dialectical movement. Harris, “Hegel’s System of Ethical Life: An Interpretation”, Hegel, *System of Ethical Life and First Philosophy of Spirit*, trans. & ed. H.S. Harris & T.M. Knox (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979), 65-66. Hegel’s *grief that endures* correlates with the apostle Paul’s vision of *creation groaning*, always *awaiting redemption* (Rom. 8), yet being redeemed through human interventions.

<sup>18</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, § 225.

synthesising particularity toward conceptual engagement in intelligent participation and continuous reshaping of actuality in novel expressions. By loss and gain, we are implicated in weaving the fabric of life's seamlessness within its incompleteness. Hegel frequently uses Christian imagery to indicate this inspired process within christological allusions to loss and gain. Through intelligent intervention of subjectivity as volitional and aspirational, generally toward an interpretation of human flourishing, such potential for development can range from technological to social modes of expression.

In relation to artefacts of human culture, pure contingency would induct demise without redemption. Yet by intelligence through language, conceptualisation and intervention, gain is arguably possible within loss. This is a uniquely human potential. Whereas within nature, growth and demise seemingly balance each other in cycles of infinitesimal variation, within human contingency loss and gain are demonstrably asymmetrical, with gain potentially outweighing loss through increments of development and formation. Artefacts of human culture offer artistic, engineering and symbolic potential for gain. We are most familiar with incremental gain through education. It is present in individual character, and with judicious investment and vigilance, it is present in social ethos too. Dialectical development is readily identified in human engagement with life.

Here, Hegel's inexorable dialectical movement within contingency requires further thought. What qualifies dialectical movement as helpful and not harmful and so ethical beyond the apparent advantages of presumptive development? Whose perspective of development is in play? In what way are Hegel's allusions to dialectical redemption specifically Christian beyond the deployment of symbolic language? There is a troubling tone in the determinative, seemingly mechanistic movement exhibited in

Hegel's dialectic whereby, engagement with human contingency is inherently geared toward an inexorable process that is redemptive by ceaseless movement rather than as volitionally and eventfully significant as qualitative points of reference within time and human experience, and therefore redemptive memory as a resource for volitional and eventful engagement with the future. Where too, is the scope for irretrievable loss in human experience—such loss that engenders yearning for and imperatives toward redemptive possibility as an intervening gift rather than inexorable assimilation and gain merely within time? Here, a decisively different tonality is struck by Christian imagery of redemption as specifically volitional and eventful within human experience and relationality, notwithstanding Hegel's useful images of formation as incremental development within intelligent engagement with life that is dynamic and changing in its contingency.

Hegel's dialectical movement within contingency offers a plausible interpretation of demise and coherence within human experience, but whether dialectical movement is particularly redemptive as to Christian perspective, is an aspect that requires further engagement beyond the scope of this article.

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