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FROM THE POSTMODERN TO THE METAMODERN: THE HEGELIAN DIALECTICAL PROCESS AND ITS CONTEMPORIZATION

ABSTRACT

This article posits that postmodernism and its focus on disenchantment, subjective experience(s), and the argument for the incoherency between modernist conceptions of truth, reason, universality, progress, logic, and knowledge are exhausted and have been transcended by a flexible successor. Named "metamodernism," this new modality addresses the polemics left in the wake of postmodernism like alienation, hyperindividualism, and the breakdown of collectivity and unity. As such, metamodernism represents a more awakened sense of the modernist search for meaning and progress, albeit supplemented with self-conscious awareness of the goal's seemingly unattainability. However, this renewed interest in reestablishing truth, certainty, assurances of identity, self-realization progress, and reinstatement of usable modes of I/We integrality is hardly new at all. Instead, this burgeoning "metamodern" development represents the rekindling of the "negative dialectic" as previously outlined by G. F. Hegel, but now with a heightened focus on its "positive" development, that is speculative philosophy and the pursuit of sublated individuality-in-unity. In this article, I will explore this argument in four sections. I will outline Hegel's process of alienation to reunification as elaborated in "The Phenomenology of Spirit," the "Science of Logic," and the "Encyclopedia of Logic." Next, I will explore how postmodernism buckled under its contradictions, introduce the philosophy of "metamodernism," and argue for a Hegelian reading by focusing on three elements: Ironic Sincerity, Becoming, and Self-Renewal. While only looking at three aspects of a much broader fabric, metamodernism as a cultural shift is not estranged from postmodernism but is instead given life *through* it.

KEYWORDS

metamodernism,
postmodernism, Hegel,
dialectic, negative
dialectic, negation of
the negation,
metamodern

Introduction

If one craves to be an individual, where does one start? Does one start defining themselves from a total break from the world, or does one create themselves *through* the world? Or, perhaps, one looks towards the world to reject that which is not seen as themselves, and in this rejection a self is created? The worldview and ideology performed by postmodernism, that being a strange paradoxical blend of hyperindividualism and self-flagellating attempts at exposure therapy to the modalities of servitude and entrapment, could not see that its goal was both insufficient and unoriginal. The goal of modernism, universal individuality, was the goal of postmodernism, albeit rendered self-consciously skeptical and wary of repeating the mistakes of the past. Yet, the goal of the postmodernist worldview forms the basis upon which its successor is built. Dubbed “metamodernism” by some, or variants like “pseudo-modernism” (Kirby 2006), “hypermodernism” (Retsova 2022), and even more clunkily, “postpostmodernity,” it is no understatement to say that a new epoch has begun, built upon a sublated variation of modernist optimism and postmodernist skepticism. In this article, I argue that this burgeoning “metamodern” development represents the rekindling of the “negative dialectic” as outlined by G. F. Hegel, but now with a heightened focus on its “positive” third (fourth) development, that is the speculative emphasis on processual becoming and the pursuit of sublated individuality-in-unity, or unity-in-difference. To substantiate my thesis, I will first explore Hegel’s “dialectic,” a misnomer for a three (four)-step process from abstraction to sublation to abstraction once again in a cyclical process of self-exploration. Next, I will explain the internal polemics within postmodernism that necessitated its overcoming, followed by a description of metamodernism, concluding with a tripartite schematization of metamodernism in light of the Hegelian dialectical process. I will focus on three elements: Ironic Sincerity, Becoming, and Self-Renewal. Others have used Hegelianism in their analytical work on metamodernism, Storm (2021) argues, “metamodernism must negate postmodernism in turn without merely returning to the previous system” (18). In this way, I seek to further such an argument and argue that postmodernism is not dead but sublated, subsumed in the Hegelian dialectic, forming the basis of a new order.

Literature Review

The tentative slowdown of philosophical endorsement of postmodernism is generally attached to the mid to late-1970s to 1980s (Abramson 2015) with its “codification” occurring by the 1990s (Clare 2017), and coinciding with the dissolution of the USSR (Afanasov 2022). While postmodernism’s pluralism had its benefits, notably Lyotard’s “language games,” a central tenet of its ineffective, or incompatible, nature was its moroseness which mistook skepticism for nihilism, the exposure of power politics without helpful remedies, argument of the dissonance between structured meaning with emancipation, and

inevitability of enslavement by some kind of hijacked mode of inexpressible discontentment. By the early 2010s, the zeitgeist had transformed and “pseudo-modernism” signaled the fruition of a syncretic alternative. As such, the imbricated next chapter had begun, built from the weaving of eclectic theories like “multiple modernities” (Eisenstadt 1999) and reformulated versions of Artaud’s concept of “body without organs” like the work of Nick Land. Additionally, a nascent desire for new stability emerged, which could not be satiated with the continued usage of postmodernism’s allowance for subjective world building and socially-dependent truth creation. However, rather than deflate entirely, postmodernism underwent a period of reinvention, with the “postmodernist sensibility” (Jay 1988) not only fully interrogated but utterly pathologized into a “syndrome” (Morawski 1996).

While epistemologically, some called for scientific “anarchy” as to liberate oneself from codified methodological thinking and attachment to Aristotelian empiricism which undermined innovation (Feyerabend 1975), others sought to destabilize the boundaries between fact and fiction itself (Zavarzadeh 1975). Closer to the turn of the 20th century, the future of the postmodernist project was not a reinstatement of battle lines by the “building of a complex, self-reflexive whole” which took postmodernism’s deconstructionist and skeptical antagonism for universals and love of universal plurality and created an introspective alternative (Epstein 1996). As such, the philosophical zeitgeist created after postmodernism has turned into itself, in Hegelian terminology made itself an observed object and the experiencing object (i.e., Hegel’s very articulation of actualized spirit), is an era which the *negative* dialectic of postmodernism’s love of skepticism and radical cynicism is replaced with an illuminated rediscovery of what postmodernism rejected. Within the post-post-modernist epoch, criss-crossing theories like (post/de)-colonialism, “post-secular” philosophizing, and performatism, among others, and concepts like metaxy, oscillation, anomie, and aporia alienate the self from the self insofar as one is then able to see the framework by which the “I” operates within (Sim 2011). The Gordian moment of postmodernist disillusionment was a necessary return into itself but through different means, on different terms. In this way, post-post-modernism became the rearticulation of freedom and selfhood from the deconstructed self and the reconvening of the thinking I in the form of the conscious object which thinks of itself and thus creates itself but does not take itself for truth just yet. This type of self-aware autonomy encourages a marriage between the awareness of influence, influencer, and influenced. In effect, there is no author, influence, or text distinctions to be had, but rather temporary simulations of their forms (Kirby 2006).

Hegel’s dialectic and its positive and negative aspects have been assessed from multiple perspectives in light of postmodernism (Achella et al. 2021, Vaughn 2015). For Salermijn (1971), the negative is exemplified in the contradictory nature of the independent subject from its surroundings, as the conditions for independence only arise out of dependence on said surroundings (19). Conversely, the positive can be understood as the third side of “the logical”

which leads one out of contradiction and into the light of knowing, where the contradiction leads to a higher state of knowing which accounts for the discontinuities and yet leads again to unification and reunification. However, framing Hegel's "dialectical" (i.e., negative) and "speculative" (i.e., positive) stages as quasi-premeditations of postmodernism and its successor, metamodernism, is hardly rare and practically ubiquitous, some of the first to merge Hegel's dialecticism with postmodernism put Hegel into dialogue with meta-thinkers like Heidegger (Malabou 2005). Geoff Boucher's argues that the "enigma of postmodernism" coalesces with Hegelian "discursive totality" or "totalisation," and results in a dialethic striving for truth and structure through multiplicity, totality, and ambiguity (2000). Thus, postmodernism, framed as radical "deconstructionism," is likened to an equally radical embrace of Hegelian differentiation (Singh 1995).

Others have framed Hegel's dialectic within a frame of postmodernist dissonance between collective service and community development with individual freedom and personal liberty (Luther 2009) while Hegel's theses of "clash and conflict, of truth as relative, of reason as limited and constructed, and of collectivism" have been directly associated with postmodernism (Hicks 2004: 51). For Sartre, Hegel's dialecticism-cum-sublative re/unification of the subject and the object and the fundamental unity between individuals is undermined and frustrated by the subjugation of the I against the We and the power imbalance therein as a result of the lording I over the We who creates truth based on the other lording I's (Rose 2019: 162). Moreover, turn-of-the-century ponderings on postmodernism in light of Hegel from the East European and post-Soviet standpoint reveal the metamodernist "becoming" and oscillating metaxy which does not deny skepticism but instead utilizes it for self-conscious sublation revealing the very "exposition" of conscious living itself (Boym 1999). Postmodernist readings of Hegel tend to reject his community-oriented perspective on "totalization," arguing for the supremacy of "language games" and the "meta-subject" (Lyotard 1984). But such critiques have been themselves critiqued for being myopic (Browning 2003) while others have framed Hegel's new seminality as one linked with the "turn to religion" (Žižek et al. 2011). Echoing late-20th century discourses on postmodernism's dogmatism (Ivanova 1998), overcoming the "negative" has been framed through a post-post-modern sense, resulting in a more sympathetic rearticulation of Hegelian sublative reunification which allows for post-structuralist subjectivity and discursive fluidity (Rutzou 2015). Specific infusion of Hegel's dialecticalism from "abstract" to "negative" to the sublative "positive" is expressed in a burgeoning vein of post-post-modernism called "metamodernism" (Dempsey 2023). Process philosophy's focus on becoming already unified post-post-modernism with Hegel, but it is now being furthered in light of the focus on the double negation, or "negation of the negation" (Storm 2021: 6).

From Negative To Positive

In the “Phenomenology of Spirit,” one encounters the avatars of the reiterative, three(four)-step, process come to be colloquially known as the “dialectic.” Insofar as postmodernism(s) and meta- developments are concerned, this process encapsulates other homologous terms and concepts like the notions of “becoming,” “negation,” “skepticism,” and “sublation,” and creates an intricate network of modalities conducive towards a proactive involvement of Hegel in the dying/dead light of postmodernity and its successor. As Forster (1993) articulated, the Hegelian “dialectic” which, it can be said, is hardly a dialectic in the strict sense and more a misnomer for a tripartite cyclicism, is a process of negatively identifying difference, positively reunifying them, and then sublating above such artificial distinctions in the first place. Thus, the “dialectic” as “a method of exposition in which each category in turn is shown to be implicitly self-contradictory and to develop necessarily into the next” (132) is not estranged from postmodernism and its sublated variant but rather a rearticulation of the same process. This will be explored soon enough, but first, I wish to more closely examine this process and its three-qua-four steps as to more specifically demonstrate the advantageousness of applying Hegelian ouroboric processes to explications on contemporary conditions. The use of four, the “fourth term,” in Hegelian dialecticism-qua-speculative philosophy, as opposed to three, is an attempt to internalize the “negative unity” or “absolute negativity” which underlines the very process of the spirit’s coming-to-consciousness of itself as thinking/thought being and thinking/thought object. Thus, the true face of the Hegelian dialectic is not three but four steps out of and back into the initiator of the process itself, at the point where the third becomes the first negation, “the paradoxical moment which is third since it is already the first moment which ‘passes over’ into its own other” (Zizek 1991: 3). Hegel himself identifies this shift from “triplicity” to “quadruplicity” and, unlike Theodore Adorno’s “negative dialectics” which stops just short of sublation and any promise of reconciliation, Hegel’s process encourages sublation *and* its frustrated continuation, thereby encouraging an immortal cyclicism. What can be surmised is that the sublative overcoming of difference is not a state to be permanently achieved. Rather, it is a state to be recognized and then continued *through* lest one fall back into determinant comfortability, with blind individuality breeding the conditions for complacency and ignorance to a natural desire for actualization. But this is what the postmodern sensibility encourages, a stagnation in the quest for sublative actualizing of identity via a desire to overcome skepticism. Instead, skepticism is arbitrarily and superficially embraced and maintained. As Hegel writes, “Skepticism which ends with the abstraction of nothingness or emptiness cannot progress any further from this point” and “must instead wait to see whether something new will present itself and what it will be, in order that it can also toss it into the same empty abyss” (PS: 79). But, Hegel also identifies the nature of his process towards actualization *is* skepticism, or “negative movement,” and makes up a subpart of “pure consciousness” and its two modalities, “restless movement” and “unity at rest.”

Yet, “pure consciousness” can be likened to a pre-modernist thought style, a natural simplicity in the ways of thinking itself and the construction of the world which concerns itself not with individuality but the ways of the generalized whole. The incipient desire for individuation has not yet occurred, although a negation which is useful towards sustaining itself is there. As noted by Hegel, this first part of the process is the abstraction of everything, “every term or product of thought preserves a stereotyped distinction from every other. Each of these limited abstractions the Understanding [*Verstehen*] believes to be and exist on its own account” (EL: 6.80a). Yet, the second part of this tripartite (not yet quadripartite) process is the push towards individualism and the examination of the self from the abstracted universality which was not yet individualized *as* individual. The first true face of the dialectic is brought about at this stage, with abstracted knowledge being denied and a more genuine desire for truth foregrounded. But, as he warns, unregulated dialecticism can quickly fall into skepticism which, while undergoing a negation, has not concerned itself with negation for sublative purposes. Instead, naive dialecticism “introduces confusion and a mere semblance of contradiction into definite notions” and results in “a subjective see-saw of arguments pro and con, where the absence of sterling thought is disguised by the subtlety which gives birth to such arguments” (EL: 6.81.2). In effect, a dialectical approach is only advantageous when seen as a step in a far larger meta-structure whereupon the skepticism is utilized only insofar as to achieve a sublation from abstract universality but not as to escape it but develop it. Speaking on the skepticism, many have observed the internal lackings *and* contradictions of skepticism, Chiereghin (2009) noting that “The disappearance of whatever has a determinate existence is the universal working of Skepticism. It is able to demonstrate to consciousness the effective nullity and inconsistency of every existing reality” (61). Thus, while holding the power of deconstruction, disproving, critique, and disjunction, if skepticism is not seen as the step towards the sublation of itself, then one is reduced to viewing skepticism as nothing more than deconstruction of universality, however abstract, and understanding, however superficial. Instead, skepticism is a two-form modality, something which exposes nothingness, but in its exposure, its nothingness is then revealed as its positive form. As Hegel writes, “Throughout the changing flux of everything which would secure itself for it, skeptical self-consciousness thus experiences its own freedom, both as given to itself by itself and as sustained by itself to itself” (PS: 4.205). He clarifies in numerous ways, one such being its correlation with “empty idealism” which “only grasps reason in the way reason is initially to itself” (PS: V.238). He later reworks this to argue for skepticism’s determinant nature, “the shine of skepticism and the appearance of idealism do immediately have a manifold of determination...the shine exists for it immediately, whatever content it might have” (SL: 11.247). As Heidemann (2011) notes, the differences between skepticism’s “destructive” and “constructive” forces are great, the latter vying for “a new [dialectical] positive content” (95).

Acting as the “third term” (or “middle term”), that is the realm of appearances which has designed the simple determinateness of objectified being but equally has denounced its actualization as self-sufficiency of its inner and outer manifestation, once skepticism has initiated its positive ascension, sublation seems within arms reach. Yet, it must be observed that sublation does not equal minimization of the negative differentiation, but rather a systematic incorporation of its processes. As Krahn (2014) observes, sublation (or *Aufhebung*) is not *just* a movement through dialectical opposition but rather a dynamic process which incorporates everything to the service of its actualization. But, as a dynamic process and an aspect of the “movement of knowing” (PS: IV.166), something conceptualized as fulfilling the inner logic of the Hegelian “concept” (*Begriff*), sublation is not something to be so easily achieved, if achieved at all. Further still is its enigmatic character unified by a central prerogative, “*Aufhebung* is not unrecognizably *Aufhebung* from one moment to the next, lest the term lose the coherence afforded by a certain continuity” (87). That central purpose, then, is the desire to overcome the limitations exposed by skepticism and renew oneself in light of the negated variant which, while never in full dissolving, remains as an internal discourse conducive towards further iterations of sublative overcoming. It is notable that Žižek (2011) reconfigures sublation as equal to the “negation of the negation” when referencing its inner *raison d’être*. As he writes, “In it [sublation], radical change (negation) overlaps with the pure repetition of the same. This means that the inertia of the Old and the rise of the New also coincide in the dialectical notion of repetition” (483), and in this modality what is new is also what is old. But, what is old is what was once new and was sublated to a higher state. As I will address later, arguments against postmodernism’s charade of the new is itself sublated when, in reflection, its internal discourses seem to struggle towards a sublated variant of what it attempts to negate, that is modernism. In a way, the process of sublation towards a self-annihilating yet self-discovering unification of being and not-being, a totalistic embrace of cyclical becoming, reflects the third step of the Hegelian dialectical shift from constructive forms of skepticism towards proactive forms of searching for self-in/as-unity. The emphasis on processual becoming, if one accepts that the “negation of the negation” and other forms of “absolute negation” are simply (re)articulations of sublation, helps clarify what occurs within the process of sublation itself. As Hegel writes, “In one determination [of Being], nothing is the immediate, that is, the determination begins with nothing and this refers to being” while “the [second] determination [of Becoming] begins with being and this passes over into nothing – coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be.” However, he concludes the thought by saying, “but each rather sublates itself in itself and is within it the opposite of itself” (SL: 21.93). Here, the true nature of sublation seems reflected not in the annihilation of something but the very opposite. “Negation is what allows us to return anew” (Haas 2014: 7), thereby reintroducing the self to the self.

But the journey continues past sublation, “the third term through which it mediates itself with the other, namely, with itself” (PS: C.BB.568), and continues

onto what Žižek (1991) called the “fourth movement.” That is, “the void of self-relating negativity which becomes invisible once we look at the process ‘backwards’, from its Result” (8). Reconfigured, the extended variation of the traditional tripartite modality of the Hegelian dialectic is reflective of the double sublation-cum-double negation of the very contingent existence which is the actant of the sublative process in the first place. If such a continuance seems arcane, that is because it is. To dwell upon the negation of the doubled negation as a sublative process itself is to retroactively seek the very process of simple universalism—skepticism—sublation as within itself from the very beginning and whose very process must itself be sublated. But to what is such a sublation occurring? What realm lies beyond? Returning to Hegel, this mythical “fourth term” is, “the unity of the first and the second moment, of the immediate and the mediated” (SL: 12.247). However, a difference should be noted between the “third” and the “fourth” given the latter could be construed, in light of Hegel’s words, as the higher-order variant of sublation itself. Hegel himself suggests this when he breaks down the three base movements of his dialectic process towards actualization. As he writes, “the third is the immediate, but the immediate through sublation of mediation, the simple through the sublating of difference, the positive through the sublating of the negative.” Moreover, “the two first moments of triplicity are abstract...but this third is the conclusion in which the concept mediates itself with itself through its negativity and is thereby posited for itself as the universal and the identity of its moments” (SL: 12.248). An authority on the process’s continuation and the fourth extension, Kristeva (1984) argues that negativity *is* the fourth aspect of the Hegelian dialectic, that negativity-as-sublation is always present right from the beginning of the process. “A negativity inseparable from the Hegelian notion of Being is thus precisely what splits and prevents the closing up of Being within an abstract and superstitious understanding [*Verstehen*]” (113), and with this one finds themselves back where they started. Of course, it is not so simple. Negativity as the arcane “fourth term” is not simply the third in a sublated variant but rather the underpinnings of the whole structure itself, and that force which “disturbs the unity of Self and Being, and therefore of language itself” (Haas 2014: 116). As such an all-pervasive force, the quest to skeptically differentiate is already subsumed within the very process of sublation and higher-order becoming in the first place, and any arbitrary, or simple, universalism or determinateness cannot break down such a force. What Haas calls “a negation that keeps on giving itself with creative abundance” (119) Kristeva calls “heterogeneous contradiction” whose “signifying thesis” jumpstarts the very process of constructive (de/re) construction in the first place. In other words, “The text introduces into rejection a reversal of rejection, which constitutes signifying binding” (1984: 187). Through the process of radicalized (or meta-sublative) becoming. As Hegel notes, “The truth of Being and of Nothing is accordingly the unity of the two: and this unity is Becoming” (EL: VII.88). As one avoids recognizing this inherent unity, the truth of it all still remains, “Being is the passage into Nought, and Nought the passage into Being” (EL: VII.88.5).

Postmodernism's Crisis

When speaking about postmodernism, one must avoid the assimilation of idiosyncratic, albeit imbricated, lines of theorizing which collectively fall within the postmodern zeitgeist. The “postmodern turn” prioritized subjectivity, the dialectic which ruptured the modernist search for transcendence through self-expression with the polemic view of hijacked discourse overtaking and defining the parameters of self-discovery. As a result, poststructuralist theorization came to regard meaning making as socially constructed, where the modernist belief in the emancipatory potentiality of human feeling, affect, and the grosser project of Enlightenment rationalism was now seen as fallible due to the specter of assumed truths, foundationalism, and the irretrievability of organizational unity in truth and futurity. An essential component, however, of postmodernism is its inheriting and reschematizing of modernism, the post-being regarded as dual natured, containing both a destructive (or negating) and a rehabilitating (or affirming) nature. Best and Kellner (1991) note that postmodernist theorists such as Foucault, Lyotard, Toynbee, and Vattimo embody such a Hegelian (read: *Aufhebung*) like sentiment. The main element is its embodiment of “a dramatic rupture or break in Western history...a sense of an ending, the advent of something new” (29-30). But what postmodernism did not realize so readily, or at least prior to late-stage developments, was that within the multiplicity the unity remained and was not dismantled but rather ignored. In other words, what Morawski (1996) called “the sense of exhaustion” (12) became the resolute expression of disbelief in progress itself, replaced, ironically, with a negation. But, as the Hegelian process demonstrates, postmodernism failed to see how modernism defined its very becoming.

The eschewing of postmodernism's fundamental relationship to modernism can be observed in the attempt to schematize the ideology into empty qualifiers like irregularity/chaos, performance/imitation, and uncertainty/indecision. These became the frame of postmodernist negations of modernism. Yet, I posit that it becomes clear, viewing said division through a Hegelian view, that what is seemed as the unmasking of modernist illusion becomes the launching off point for a new set of postulates which do not undermine the dialectic which has unfolded but rather reasserts the discovery of self through the dialectic rather than a submission to it. As Best and Kellner note, “The discourses of the postmodern therefore presuppose a sense of an ending, the advent of something new” (3), but it is not within postmodernism per se that such newness is to be found. The birth of a new paradigm was noted in Lyotard's late-postmodernist writings, “the nascent state” defines the postmodern sensibility, where the aesthetic of modernism, characterized as a nostalgic subliminality for an earlier monistic harmony between man and nature which became severed at the hands of industrialization and its denaturing progeny, is scrapped for the attempted conveying of the inconveyable through the purposeful rejection of the “solace of good forms.” But the point is here, “A work can become modern only if it is first postmodern.” That is to say, “the increase of being

and the jubilation which result from the invention of new rules of the game” (1984: 80). The euphoria now revolves around the realization that one has not to salivate over potentially reliving the past pursuit of Enlightenment, but rather salivate over the emancipation from it entirely. But rather than disproving Kantian transcendentalism or the idea of the “sublime,” postmodernism took them and attempted to disprove them by arguing through various means like anti-foundationalism that the mere idea of sublimality, unity, and liberation through the overcoming of the pain/pleasure binary tantamount to enslavement to fickle notions of the human desire for order.

To Lyotard, postmodernism reflected a prolonged stage of infantile knowledge development, a leaning into the obscurity through disinterest in clarity, and epistemological impressionism which allowed for beginnings on beginnings thereby denying the attainment of any kind of teleological finality. This rumination in endless possibilities without having the requirement to realize any of them led to a prolonged state of anomy which, as it can be argued more than forty years after Lyotard’s magnum opus, “The Differend,” has never been fully shaken off. However, seeing as history does not stop and with the breakdown of everything including the ontology of even the most fundamental of concepts like subjectivity and reality, from the chaos comes a desire for coherency. If one accepts the Lyotardian definition of postmodernism as “the decline of universalist discourses” and the apathetic rejection of the previously endorsed idealism of the modernist “narratives of progress” (1988: xiii) as the generalized benchmarks of its postmodern zeitgeist, then “the time has come to philosophize” uttered in Lyotard’s next breath seems to invoke an era which grows from postmodernism and yet transcends it at the same time. Later Lyotardian writings invoked similar post-post-modernist ideations as those like Epstein (1996). In Lyotard’s words, postmodernism and its cacophony of subjectivities leads to their own demise in “consensus” which, hidden behind its hegemonic nature, endorses the idea of a “universal, rational language” (1997: 125). Such fallibility in epistemic descriptions of our world is referred to by Hegel when speaking about sense-certainty, “a simple ensemble of many Heres” and the true universal which lies above the deictic limitations of mediating knowing, becoming practically impossible to convey through speech means (Pinkard 2018: 67). However, early-1990s arguments exposing the postmodern worldview’s reliance upon its predecessor more simply expose the Hegelian core of postmodernism. As Pippin (1991) noted, describing the “modernity problem,” extreme individualism and liberation from nature led to another extreme, “anomie, consumerism, alienation, disaffection” (7). But, most importantly, a false sense of self-reliance and liberation from pre-modern notions of self-in-world-as-self through. Effectively, postmodernism was actualized modernism and, in the words of Jameson (1991), a coalition of “facile repudiation” and “facile celebration” (61).

As a result of blind sublation, “only subdued diversity is permitted to be publicly expressed” (Sonderling 2013: 16), that which is collectively believed and endorsed. Therefore, postmodernism seems to be both the ticket towards

Hegelian “absolute knowledge” and simultaneously, the obstacle to said sub-lative stage of being and knowing. To Epstein, the “overcoming of contingent sign systems” marked the fruition of a desire for a state of cogitation which balanced being with becoming with its antithesis, leaving room for the possibility of being wrong, a state which postmodernism fails to allow for, the destruction of the sign/signifier relationship never being the object of self-critique but always taken as the logical continuation of the idealist’s conception of emancipatory epistemology. As Epstein continues, postmodernism is played without any logical conclusion and whose beginning has been entirely wiped from view. All there is play and nothing but play, play without an end and play without a beginning despite the desire to understand where one is and how one got there. But there is a limit as “play becomes impossible in a space where there is nothing but play; for this reason play creates another sphere, which it differentiates and protects from itself” (329). Both Epstein and Lyotard recognized the fraught nature of postmodernism’s late-stage character, leading its worshippers towards denatured asphyxiation which leads not to promised emancipation but to a seemingly permanent state of slavery to the Wittgensteinian game, desiring stability and receiving nothing but epistemic husks with its heuristic-flavored meat removed. But Epstein argued that the postmodern “principle of difference” also promised a “new wholeness beyond variety in styles, genres, and cultures,” a “new, non-totalitarian whole” which embraces its totality but realizes the multiplicity therein (329). Akin to post-structuralist “anti-essentialism,” A may be the A, but it unites with its alternates to become a simulacra, becoming wholly true and wholly false. Thus, postmodernism argued incommensurability yet reflected commensurability but found no balm in Gilead there.

In many respects, postmodernism is a false-friend to itself. One apt example is Lyotard’s anti-reason, paralogical theory, a Trojan horse for a new move towards rebuking the constraints of postmodernism for a metaxic liberation from stability without becoming stuck in skepticism or rejectionism which, ironically, collapses into modernist principles upon further inspection. From “the [paralogical] failure of reaching consensus on a given question” (Lipovetsky 1999), a subluted form of knowing and truth is constructed which does not design the existence of multiplicity but focuses instead on the larger resonances between the subjectivities which connect them and ultimately form the architectonics of knowledge itself. This dissonance between the quixotic belief in futurity and the derelict state of the present which renders the present, the quixotic futurity previous generations believed in, renders postmodernism such derelict present which leads to the conception in a new present in the future. As Epstein writes, “the purity of the future amid its failed projections” becomes the leading beacon which casts postmodernism as banal and not the end of advancement but a new beginning. “Before us opens an image of the future as a great irony that will never allow itself to be objectified and subjected to analysis” (330), and thus postmodernism’s post-ontology is revealed for the hungry believer in a future which comes regardless one desires it or not.

Such a point is succinctly noted by Lyotard himself, “in front of the canvas or the page, consensus is null and void” (216) and the authoritarian desire for consensus is rebuked for a fallible honesty which cannot know itself except as an idea which will become reality only by embracing hope.

It is this central paradoxicality of which Lyotard references when speaking about music’s ontology which contains its constructed itself yet contains the conditions for the spontaneous despite its constructed nature, of the planned future and the seemingly unplannable future which collide as to render postmodernism practically antiquarian if not useless. To chase away the fear, the decrepit alienation of nothing by which postmodernism argues for, the breakdown of meaning and the embrace of the arbitrary, self-expression seeks to give understanding to that which cannot be fully understood through the use of language comprised of phonemes, allophones, and the boundaries of linguistic morphology. Chasing away the beast of the terrible nothing, art works allow true transcendence to arise, the sensuous precarity of the “lament” of corporality and ultimate annihilation. Postmodernism cannot provide the individual with anything other than fear and a stagnating sense of what Afansov (2022) calls the “sense of the end.” As a result of this despondency over the perceived finality of all things, including social structures, economic models, cultural epochs, international diplomacy, geopolitical dynamics, the historical record, and global power relations, it seeks to reprobate any ideation on the possibility of resolution, instead abiding in unresolved animosity towards the realization of futurity. And yet, as Afansov alludes, philosophizing on new roads emerged, chief among them being reschematizing modernity itself and the ideas of one’s relationship with the past and the future, embracing rather than falling into a “sense of the end” as more self-awareness of inevitable futurity. Dwelling upon late-stage postmodernism as conceptualized in Nicholas Zurbrugg’s writings on multimedia art, Warren Burt noted how the estrangement from modernist sublimality and the skeptical deromanticization of the quest for emancipation at the teleological heart of postmodernism was turning over itself for a redirected goal. Namely, a never quite solved dialectic between theory and practice, the obeisance towards regulations and prescriptions of bordering and limitations which can be useful towards the pursuit of (post) modernist emancipation and the overcoming of desire for regulation. As Burt writes, “there is an essential dissonance between the activities and natures of those who make things in a boundary-challenging way, and those who seek to classify them” (2000: 189). Again, the taut dependence upon modernism to sustain postmodernism’s very being cannot be overlooked even for a minute.

For those like Stravinsky, Berg, Prokofiev, Scriabin, Obukhov, Shostakovich, and the entire “Second Viennese School,” even pre-Rosenkavlier Strauss and the philosophies of theosophy, there was strength in pursuing the sublime through limitation and the use of the human capacities for revelatory emancipation. The goal of transcendence through suffering and laborious denial, embracing the pleasure of pain which was to harness the power of the more than beautiful, was worth it as through the raw strife there would be glorious unity

awaiting the martyr for the cause. The beautiful was traded in for the sublime, and the pursuit of that which can only be inadequately captured in the expressive mediums available to the human being was the ticket for an awakening of epic proportions. The “unpresentable” was the goal, and while deromanticized it was never unromanticized, meaning that the goal was worth the strife, for the potential for permanent sublation, even if only in solitary fantasizing, was more real than life itself. Where did this go? The Nietzschean “God is dead” argumentation, secularization of ethics and morals, and the post-Enlightenment withdrawal from belief in unity, laid the foundations for a world which killed history and yet required history to do so. “His death was the life of the world” which birthed a “world of diversity” (Mainländer 1876: 38). As Trilling (1996) ferociously put it, “Universalism demands objectivity; destroys objectivity and universalism crumbles too” (370).

The Fabric of Metamodernism

Having argued for metamodernism’s role as the “positive” side of Hegel’s dialectical process, that is to say the speculative continuation of the spirit’s quest to know itself, it is still insufficient to state that postmodernism’s fixation on demystifying the self from the self, viewing self as an object without a desire to rectify its deconstructed state, is the true nature of the Hegelian dialectic. Therefore, I argue that postmodernism represents an incomplete form of raising spirit to the level of self-consciousness of self and the universal space by which self inhabits and is formed and deformed within and through. As a result, the metamodernist “sensibility” (or *Weltanschauung*, *Weltgeist*, *Zeitgeist*), that which lies after the disenchantment from knee-jerk deconstruction, destructuralism, and apathetic skepticism runs its course and the reconstruction of self and object seeks an alternative form which neither lies within self or object but an upwards spiraling which negates fixity and limited being for higher becoming, is the rational continuation. The notions of finality repeating itself rather than futurity being realized, sprawling conceptions of the true and the real, and euphoric embrace of atomized, subjective experientiality over concrete, realistic, and practical approaches towards building knowledge of self and self-in-the-world, as Lyotard, Zavarzadeh, and many others observed, were running stale by the 1990s. As Clare notes, postmodernism “as a means of upsetting the establishment” (92) no longer carries the same meaning as it once did, and if treated to summation in light of Hegel, “simple seeing” does not carry the same fervency. Thus, a renewed desire for a sublated variant of realism, what Jameson (1991) deemed the Hegelian “third term,” or “a kind of ascesis of the diachronic” pursuit of chronological pleasure-through-progress (65), is the ticket. A promise of becoming, “the subsistence of being and of non-being” (SL: 21.80), metamodernism is the kiss of the future self looking backwards to look forwards. Without A, B cannot be, and C is the child of A.

A desire for newness in the form of fresh perspectives on the forcibly broken constructs of truth and fiction, of which fictive art and superfiction are

apt examples of, a reconceptualization in constructive ideas of the world and self-in-the-world, and the pursuit of higher-order cognition around themes of self-knowledge, consciousness, and life's purpose (a point which Paul Feyerabend argued benefited from the adoption of a cosmological perspective), now govern our world. As a result, postmodernism and the dialectic (or the "negatively rational") are no longer sufficient in answering the call of our contemporary *Weltgeist* which longs for "Aufhebung." In other words, an upwards transcendence between negation and affirmation which does not associate with either but utilizes both for the *becoming* synthesis of both concepts which forms something greater. In Hegel's words, "What sublates itself, does not, on that account, become nothing." Rather, it has been "preserved" albeit in a more complex and transcendent manner which fulfills the necessity for actualization (Stirling 1898: 243). Concepts like sublation, the negation of the negation or the "sublation of the negative" (Palm 2009: 106), transcendence, self-reflexivity (Dempsey 2023), and "new Holism" (Khrushcheva 2019), are among the tenets in the discourse on realizing Hegel's three-part conception of everything "true" on the one part and the sublation of spirit into absolute knowing on the other as outlined in the *Phenomenology*.

I argue that following postmodernism's deidealization after the (attempted) reconstruction of the world order following WWII, the *zeitgeist* has now entered into a period where the fruition of the spirit's actualization has begun and the third (fourth) part of the phenomenological sublimation of "everything is subjective" is turning over into a new era. Consequently, a process of (be)coming intimately more comfortable with self-conscious, and potentially self-defeating, optimism now sits opposite to what Kant called "transcendental idealism" with an interior view of object as subject converging with the external view of the self as object, resulting in greater levels of self-awareness and appreciation for the unconquerable desirability of grand-scale systems which, while not diminishing the chance for individuality, absorb and conceive of it as part of a larger whole. Contextualization of metamodernism's development from the ruins of postmodernism during the final decade of the 1990s into the 2000s reveals that the proliferation of global/glocal dynamics regarding digitalization, the rise of market capitalism as the seemingly autochthonous system of operations, the fall of the Soviet Union yet continuation of international warfare and unending conflicts when peace was naively thought possible, deserved, and desired led to a state of perpetual anxiety. Such post-Cold War anxiety is systematized into two acronyms, VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity) and BANI (brittleness or fragility, anxiety, nonlinearity, incomprehensibility). If one detects the fragrance of skepticism and first-order negation, that is because an intrinsic part of metamodernism is an *allowance* of postmodernity, not a capitulation to it.

One of the reasons for the development of post-post-modernism, of which metamodernism is but one, was the unrealized (read: sublative) promises of modernism and its ineffective antithesis. As a result, a new path was needed where enantiodromic inevitability leads to transcendent good which ushers

in a subliminal stage of holistic monism which does not negate individuality but nurtures a more profound unity between nature and man, mind and body, truth and fiction, and the opposites which sublimate to form a larger unity previously eschewed in the name of dialectical subjectivity (Pipere and Martinson 2022). The “end” of postmodernism is both contentiously fictional and reductively identifiable, the gradual decline in postmodernism’s effectiveness as an anti-establishment device for hegemonic frustrations and decline into kitschiness leading it to turn over itself. The 1990s gave rise to “a kind of post-humorous postmodernism” (Clare 2017: 93), such a position echoed by other pro-metamodernist thinkers like Mikhail Epstein who noted that the splintering of postmodernism led to a desirable overcoming. As he wrote, “new unities are constructed from the sphere of difference itself, postmodernism crosses over to the next phase of cultural movement” (1996, 328). Such movement initiated a return back into the self, away from the self-destructive entropy within the idealism postmodernity set for itself.

To compensate for playful pluralism, post-post-modernism created itself with the *raison d’être* of “building of a complex, self-reflexive whole” which could withstand heavy critique of its existence without succumbing to skeptical subjectivities (1995, 328). The obstacle of postmodernism was that in the process of critiquing the pillars of assumed systems of thought, truth, and objective reality it began critiquing itself without knowing, a blind critique of its own existence led to chronic feelings of dissatisfaction which lacked the self-awareness to realize what it had become disillusioned by in the first place. As Epstein writes, the “parodic unmasking of centuries of logocentrism” led to a situation where “profound parody parodies itself” to such an extent that what is pursued is not an orgiastic rehashing of subjectivities but rather its antithesis, or more accurately a sublative unification of that which is the object of negation and negation itself. Postmodernism failed to see that it craved “a possibility of wholeness” (329). It could not sublimate, there was no possibility of *Aufhebung*, and the third element of the “concept” could not be initiated. Thus, an endless cycle of dialectical differentiation overtook the transcendent futurist philosophical-artistic movements like Futurism, Suprematism, Constructivism, Symbolism, and early-20th century movements like Russian Cosmism were concerned with.

Put into dialogue with another inherited concept from Hegel and seminal in metamodernist philosophy, namely the “negation of the negation” (i.e., the “positive mode of cognition”), and metamodernism is less a philosophy than a mode of cognitive movement into a motile state of awareness of self, self-in-other, self-in-self, self-in-world, world-in-self, and other-in-self. If the goal of the “positive dialectic” is summarized as “what is objectively given results from the necessary synthesis of pure determinations” (Sarlemijn 1971: 22), determinations synonymize with dialectical assertions of understanding which pass into concept after being dialectically negated and sublimate to “a unity of distinct determinations” resulting from previously lapsed moments of determination which ultimately fall into negation, then metamodernist “holism” is

synonymize with “positive reason.” The “negation of definite determinations” becomes the factor upon which a new epistemic order is created which, while benefiting from the advantageous aspects of enantiodromia, is the pursuit of a dialectical monistic view of cosmic order, the individual playing a supportive role part, which frees the alienated from dialectical contradictions, the first two stages of Begriff. Through this, connections to Hegel’s “negation of the negation” are present, namely the sublimation available through the process of leaning into the exposed contradiction and unanswerable of the dialectical process, the *reductio ad absurdum* resulting from the disparaging of the previously abstracted formations of objective reality which is reconvened with the pursuit of unity educated (not limited) by the awareness of nothing and yet everything, the I and not-I, the subject and the object, the sign and the signifier, and the collective we and the individual as mutually necessary elements to maintain each other. In other words, metamodernism is founded upon the very principle of the double negation.

When the requirements for ontological, epistemological, and phenomenological balance of internal and external being are illuminated, what is realized is that there is no individual I with the collective we, no deconstruction of concepts without first establishing a form. Likewise, there cannot be the we without the I nor the form before the concepts. As Jason Storm notes, the very foundations of metamodernism rely upon Hegelian *Aufheben* to aid in its own upward becoming which, within the halls of the postmodernist-gorged academic establishment, means an escape(e/ade) into standpoint epistemological finality which leads to “antidisciplinarity and new forms of theoretical abstraction” (19), the first stage of the Hegelian “concept.” Metamodernist “holism” leans heavily into what Dempsey calls “decentration,” or the rising above one’s immanent positionality towards a more comprehensive perspective which, while pursuing transcendent absoluteness, is not yet there as to inhabit an pleromic state of uninterrupted transcendence, what Aristotle called the “unmoved mover” who holds the ability for “primary cause” and whose essence gestates all other secondary causes, and yet has risen above as to see itself as itself from a vantage point of the illuminated self. In Dempsey’s words, “The new perspective sees things the old one could not and is thus newly aware of its deficiencies” (7). Yet, these ‘deficiencies’ are the “negative” in which the negation of the negation finds root. Just like Hegel notes, in differentiation, the false and the true are phenomenologically distinct, but when brought into harmony, they unify under new conditions. In this way, Dempsey, Haas, and Khrushcheva unite in the search for “determinate simplicity,” the true phenomenology of spirit which knows itself, fulfilling the scientificity of the search for self through and back into oneself through itself. The failure of postmodernism to live up to its own goal was not, in a way, the fault of postmodernism per se but a blindness to the seductiveness of individualism. In this deception, postmodernism inevitably split skepticism, with many going back to the dialectical beginning.

In the Platonic theorizing on forms, it is argued that the “sensible world,” equivalent to Hegel’s concepts of “sense-certainty” and the “circle of reciprocity”

which argues for the domination of the sensuous-based experience of our world which drives itself from sensible intuition rather than knowledge, is independent of the “intelligible world” which does not derive its existence from beliefs, doxa, or opinion which oscillates between being and non-being. Instead, the latter is the result of the sublation of the dialectic which questions until it comes to “absolute knowledge,” gained only through “unmediated insight” of the form in question as to liberate the mind from the tainting influence of bias and the epistemological material world which can only provide a shadow of the real knowledge attainable through transcending towards the right side of the Platonic divided line. Such a theory concatenates Heraclitusean *becoming* with Parmenidean *being*, exemplifying the unmoved mover who gestates movement but does not move, the original cause of the movement of the cosmos, our bodies, atoms, the celestial bodies, the winds, and everything which is, was, and will be. As Thomas McFarlane writes, “being and becoming are both implicit in the nature of the form” (2004). With this very axiom, metamodernism is revealed as having been present right from the beginning of classical epistemology and proto-phenomenological inquiry into the unity of the complexity of our world and its elements. Rather than succumb to the notion of irretrievable difference, it is through difference that all is once again connected, the rupture between the subject and its predicate connected once again and unity is created which produces a harmonious sublation leading us back and into the “universality of spirit.” Later in the *Phenomenology*, Hegel tacitly writes metamodernism’s thesis, namely the “movement” of consciousness from immediate “now” to “negative This” to “plurality of nows” to “universal Here” to the “Genuine Also” to the core of the “concept.” The new worldview proposed by metamodernism is nothing short of a self-conscious Master/Slave Ouroboric unity.

Schematizing Metamodernism

Within the metamodernist “sensibility” (Dempsey 2023: 14), many elements exist, albeit in different forms depending on the philosopher and the interpretation. Much like (post)modernism, whose internal strains can be teased out in distinct veins like post-structuralism, post-colonialism, deconstructionism, and what has been called “post-secular philosophy” (Sim 2011: 73), so too can metamodernism be combed for fundamental elements which coincide with Hegel’s “positive mode of cognition,” or the third and final element within Hegel’s schematization of a “concept.” From the vanguard postulations of Zavarzadeh, late-20th theorizing by Epstein, new-school variations by Vermeulen and Akker, and later expansions by those like Khrushcheva, Storm, Dempsey, and Hanzi, emphasis on accessibility, existential optimism, and more complex forms of self-interrogation and deidealized romanticism-qua-realism without reductions into affective sensitivity and excessive nihilism form the crux of metamodernism and its Hegelian potentiality for sublative transcendence. To draw the connection between Hegel’s positive overcoming of the dialectical

separation of subject and object and the ‘becoming’ internality of metamodernism’s oscillatory relationship between contradiction and unity, I will explore two elements of my syncretic formulation of metamodernism in light of Hegel’s “positively rational” synthesis, or the “determinate negative,” to demonstrate how the pillars on which metamodernism stands come from Hegel and should be seen as a larger fruition of the Hegelian dialectic to establish a more comprehensive and ouroboric “absolute knowledge.” Reframed as “appropriation” or a “recycling” of previously constructed systems of meaning into newer forms as to serve as the basis for an imitative commonality” (Engstrom 2022), metamodernism’s emphasis on “projective/proactive thinking” encourages a hands-on relationship with selfhood and world-building, neither negating or endorsing but rather providing and letting fate decide.

I seek to establish that belief that metamodernism, unlike Dempsey who leans into the “negation of the negation” without acknowledging its “positive” orientation but does embrace the synthetic transcendence at its core, is inherently Hegelian by exploring three concepts, Ironic Sincerity, Becoming, and Self-Renewal. I further contend that metamodernism cannot be understood without starting with Hegel as through his taxonomy of the “concept,” or the eternally true which result from the synthesis of a general idea, one’s subjective form, and the “real” form (i.e., abstract, dialectic, speculative), one sees the entirety of the path towards metamodernism beginning with modernism *and* postmodernism. Effectively, metamodernism’s emphasis on the unification of distrust in structured forms of knowledge yet acquiescent admittance of their usefulness and dependence on post-ironic forms of “new directness” (Khrushcheva 2020: 21) which look for desired alleviations of chronic epistemic fatigue behind humor, satire, and parody yet simultaneously educated by humanities many failed attempts, define the very foundations of sublative “becoming.” In Hegel’s words, “to preserve, maintain, and again as much as to cause to cease, to make an end of” (Sterling 1898: 243) typifies the metamodernist zeitgeist and humankind’s attempt at futurity. It is this sense that metamodernism is the realization of *Aufhebung* as the synthesis of ending(s), preserving(s), and maintaining(s), with layers of reinvention(s). All that has come before is synthesized as “abstract negativity,” the antithetical potency between being and non-being. In this way, when Velmeulen and Akker articulate metamodernism as traversing both/and into a “both-neither” (2010), what is tacitly invoked is Hegelian sublation, the reunification of self by/from/in/for self.

An essential element of metamodernism is post-ironic sincerity (or sincere irony), stated by theorists as “Ironic self-awareness” (Kirby 2006) or a “simulation of [a] simulation” which parodies irony to such an extent that it becomes itself a serious affair. Such a concept has been dubbed “New Sincerity,” where the rose-colored glasses have been eschewed yet the fondness for naïve warmth remains (Lai 2019: 29). Speaking on the subject, Rich (2020) argues that the discovery of self through the usage of postmodernist skepticism cannot provide the individual anything more than contradictions which obfuscate from postmodernism’s more intrinsic polemic, namely the embrace of dialecticism

and unmasking but without the continued interest in reconstitution and restoration. As she writes, collapsing “self and world, self and Earth, and self and our animal kin, meaningfully, ironically, and sincerely” (69) cannot be undertaken when using the I-focused, individualistic, and self-centered strategies of postmodernism which, paraphrasing Hegel, reflect a totalistic deconstruction which seeks construction on its own terms without acknowledgment of larger truths conveniently replaced with “convincingness” rather than desires for the “ecstasy” of truth which dissolve the I into the “absolute” We.

From the postmodernist’s perspective, irony represent(ed/s) a rejection of realistic affirmations and the adept acknowledgment of modernist incongruencies which may or may not be axiomatic already. However, techniques like “double-coding” and the pessimistic sliding into a “derealization of social reality” (Sim 2011: 18) obfuscated from irony’s post-post-modern potential as a mediator between the real and the fiction without having to decry reality for alternatives but rather abide simultaneously in the play of reality construction itself. Concepts like “hyperreality” and “superfiction” epitomize metamodernism’s attempted rediscovery of the Hegelian *concept* and the quest for “determinate simplicity” through a reestablishment of grand-scale formulas, without sacrificing the awakened realization of their fickle ontology. As Hegel notes, the *concept* must not be understood as being anything in an absolute sense but rather a culmination of everything, including what the concept is not and is at the same time. In his words, “for in the absolute, everything is one” (Pinkard 2018: 14). It can be argued that metamodernism’s utilization of self-aware irony, what Nigel Watson calls “a knowing irony” although it is connected to late-stage postmodernism (Sim 2011: 71), is representative of the attempt to grapple with the forgotten subliminality of a belief in abstracted truisms, assumed constructions of the world, and the now awakened mind fed on the dialectic which destroys the abstraction but is still hesitant to reunify. Speaking on the teleological motivations of the Hegelian negation, Haas (2014) reminds that the (postmodern) negative is not a benign or banal act but rather a conscious choice which leads the cogitator through negation but is not content with staying in such a place. As he writes, “[negation] supplies the energy by which some form of kinesis takes place... it is originary, providing the origins for something to come to be, a becoming, even if a becoming by means of a nought” (7). Such an orientation of the negative (i.e., dialectical) was lost during postmodernism’s zeitgeist domination, only found in the late formations, consonant with post-WW2 pessimism-qua-optimism-qua-“negative futurity” as the second post-war future seems mired by unescapable hedonism, McDonaldization, and anti-human consumptionism yet simultaneously creating blueprints for its own futurity (Elliot 2022). As a result, irony turned to post-irony as negation turned to itself and laughed.

Another element, which *becoming* is inherent in the “speculative” third element of the Hegelian concept finds resonance with, is continual self-reflective introspectiveness which does not allow itself to be content with “negative” dialecticism insofar as it means the postmodernist sense of stalwart rejection of

supposed universals and entrenched skepticism towards organized frames of knowledge. An integral part of other metamodernist concepts like “New Euphoria” and “New Intellectualism” (Khrushcheva 2020), engaging in metamodern thinking requires an attachment to what Hegel calls “phenomenal knowledge,” and a denial of ossified binaries which dialectical thinking has convinced are advantageous tools of liberation. Metamodernist reiterative self-reflectivity, or Becoming, takes its form from the true nature of the Hegelian “negative,” the “positive” state where all is collapsed into and onto and for itself as a framework which allows for individuality to be realized. As Haas notes, the journey of consciousness from unrealized “actual” to realized “actual” which combines the “sensuous consciousness” of itself, that “familiar,” and the larger “structure of the whole” can be understood as the notion of “Erfahrung.” To actualize such a journey, the negative cannot operate on its own terms nor on its own in a void comprised of itself but in tandem with the positive, affirmative, and regenerative companion. Thus, “the act requires something opposite against which to act...negation therefore becomes reliant upon that object for its effective enactment” (2014: 9). Even Hegel seems to herald metamodernism, “It [Being Determinate] is Becoming expressly put in the form of one of its elements, viz. Being” (EL: 7.89).

With the emergence of dialectical negativity and the break between subject and object, in that very act the seeds of a positive transformation have been set, yet such seeds were there as were negativity as were their eventual reunification. As a result, a return to oneself signals a return to grand scale meta-theorizing where the universal “I” is not sequestered from the individualistic “not I” but linked and, to borrow the Blavatskian philosophizing of Alexander Scriabin, one must fully exchange “the individual Will for the Cosmic Will” (Morrison 2001: 188). Both Haas’ and Scriabin’s comments bear similarity with what Vermeulean and Akker regarded as metamodernism’s intrinsic elements, namely the “both-neither” dynamic” which finds resolution in itself and not itself as well as “metaxy” and “atopy,” a chronic sense of in-betweenness and sense of “being simultaneously here, there, and nowhere” (2010). As Haas writes, negation is not a fixed condition but an “act of self-opposition” which, in its very condition, acts as its own antithesis and which counters itself with itself towards a higher form of self taking “mediation in immediacy” (2013: 11). Finding no solace in immanence, the “negative” craves for transcendence. Metamodernism solves this craving, albeit momentarily, and the upward spiraling ouroboros, while consuming its own tail, consumes a transformed version of itself having shed its pre-sublated skin. This foregrounding of the “positive” continuation within the “negative” prior to “determinate being” is readable into concepts like Nietzsche’s “eternal recurrence” and “amor fati” negating suffering by rendering it “innocent” on the one hand and embracing its liberating potentiality (Kain 2007). Metamodernism’s *raison d’être* can be summarized as the reintroduction to self by itself for itself, thereby shaking off “negative” habits of alienation through meta-observations formed by “negative” separations of self, a process Dempsey refers to as “decentration” (2023:

6). In this way, metamodernism is the fulfillment of modernism *through* the skeptical disproving and speculative substantiation of itself in an act of transcendence through negative unity.

As proto-metamodernist Mas'ud Zavarazadeh wrote, “the metafictionist demonstrates the confusing multiplicity of reality...the naivete involved in attempting to reach a single synthesis of reality in a narrative” (1975: 78). Whether metamodernism is definable as a “zero degree of interpretation” (69) or rather the compliment to a “participatory worldview” which ontologically reduces the distance between “self, society, and nature” (Rich 2020: 8), the point becomes *that which is called metamodernism* emphasizes equal parts reduction with equal parts restoration insofar as both become sublated to higher forms of each other which reduces the distance between them to begin with and shows each to be part of the other. What is described here is the very phenomenology of the Hegelian spirit, or “mediated being...a substantial content which is equally immediately the possession of the I” which “unfold themselves into the form of simplicity which knows its object to be itself” (Pinkard 2018: 23). Metamodern can be synonymized with the Hegelian development of knowledge of the self as both object and subject which has given rise to the realization of truth which finds its plurality within the unity which forms the conditions for the multiplicity itself. At the core of our disenchantment with postmodern fragmentation, the freedom believed to be had in the rewriting of rules concerning the fabric of reality, the dialectical deconstruction of structure, language, and epistemic coherency, was an awareness that something has gone array. Yet, for many this condition is but one element of a more capitulatory “amor fati” and an intrinsic part of post-industrial, neoliberal, late-capitalist existence, the atomization of I from the We.

To this, metamodernism promises something which Hegel had argued for in the 1830s, namely freedom through continuously sublating pursuit of knowledge. The keys are in our hand now but such keys were never ours to begin with, “You are free: you are the text: the text is superseded” (Kirby 2006). While this push and pull of consciousness may be the dialectical stage by which the contending with the precariousness of our knowledge of what we thought we knew, this does not imply we ought to be removed from or apathetic towards the idea of reunification and the modernist ideal, but be aware of its symbiotic relationship with inevitable failure. Instead, Hegelian sublation can be initiated by allowing ourselves not to be pushed back into individualisms but rather find contentment in the discontent of dissatisfaction, disillusionment, yet fervid joy of one’s search for ‘simple immediacy’ and the neoromantic search for truth. The “sense of the end” as Afansov wrote is just the beginning of a return to higher state(s) of knowing and in (re)unity of self with self, fear turns to joy, nihilism to ecstasy, and the river of blood turns back into water, but it was never really blood.

Conclusion

In this article, I have argued that the project of postmodernism has effectively ended, having been superseded by its sublated successor, post-post-modernism, with one of its many veins being metamodernism. Moreover, the very nature of metamodernism, that is a metaxy, or oscillation, between thesis and antithesis without the disillusionment and unresolved defeatism of postmodernist skepticism although absorbing essential aspects, is more cognizable when filtered through the relationship between Hegel's "negative" dialecticism and "positive" speculative stages. In other words, the search for universal meaning, purpose, unity, truth, and clarity through a more self-conscious perspective, one which acknowledges the futility of the goal and instead leans into the search without sacrificing the goal per se, forms the conceptual basis for a reschematization of emancipation, liberation, freedom, individuality, knowledge, purpose, and even happiness. Through a negotiation between the pursuit, the critique, and the dream of such things, metamodernism is Hegelian in its core. As such, the "negative" dialectic which sees itself as itself for what it truly is and sublative, "positive" evolution which does not *become* anything new per se but rather folds back into self through itself but this time with the knowledge and awareness gained through the sublative process, can be seen as the movement through postmodernism from modernism to metamodernism. However, metamodernism does not negate what has come before and absorbs it, finding body through its sublation. A quintessential expression of Nietzschean "eternal recurrence," the cycle of unity, separation, and reunification gives new meaning to being human, being an individual, and being free. The estrangement from, attempt at, and disbelief in I/We unity define the metamodernist future.

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