

BEING THOUGHT AND THINKING BEING IN HEGEL'S SCIENCE OF LOGIC

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A Dissertation  
Submitted to  
the Temple University Graduate Board

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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May 2018

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## ABSTRACT

My aim in this dissertation is to explain Hegel's motivation for, and the doctrine of, the identity of the identity and difference of thought and being and argue that while thought and being differ, their nature is identical. This identity is used to explain Hegel's claim that what is real is rational and what is rational is real. The aim of this dissertation is squarely placed within ontology, and my interest is in the structure of being as opposed to metaphysical contents. Within this structure, I argue, Hegel shows us the irrevisable method of that which comes to be and ceases to be. This method (or nature) is a rational process of being itself, which, while its contents are forever changing, they do so from the same invariant identity of thought and being.

As a matter of method, there is an increasing difficulty in assessing the merit of Hegel's account of thought and being – obscuring what merit my interpretation may offer. The difficulty is a growing trend in combining Hegel's work with specific Kantian ambitions where Hegel is forced into cognitive restrictions he does not have. As indebted as Hegel is to Kant, I argue that Hegel's value lies in his break with Kant's critical program. This break affords a new understanding of category theory apart from our subjective acts of understanding. With this new understanding, we can grasp the identity of thought and being through what I take to be a more promising account of cognition than what much of contemporary Hegel scholarship has offered by interpreting Hegel's work as a completion of Kant's.

I sequence the chapters of this dissertation to trace Hegel's increasing philosophic distance from Kant on those issues that interfere with understanding Hegel's identity of thought and being. However, to demonstrate this distance and still progress to Hegel's position apart from Kant, I limit my discussion of Kant to Hegel's interpretation of Kant's work and motivation. This limitation comes with the weakness that Kantian responses to Hegel exist but are not presented. However, this dissertation does not aim at

defending Hegel's interpretation of Kant but explains what Hegel has made of Kant's texts to further Hegel's arguments.

Lastly, for what philosophic utility may be gained from this dissertation, Hegel offers the freedom for critical investigation regarding ontological and metaphysical matters without the presupposition of metaphysical commitments. This topic is treated at length in the last chapter of this dissertation. What is presented in this dissertation is a method by which no more is assumed than the inability to deny that thought exists, as such a denial presupposes thought, and then to trace the implications of the existence of thought according to what its occurrence signifies. Employing this method allows us to be metaphysically neutral and approach being as philosophically accessible.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would first like to thank my committee members for their time, insight, and patience, and particularly Espen Hammer for years of guidance and encouragement in pursuing my interest in Hegel studies and German Idealism in general. I would also like to thank Mark Morelli, Jeffrey Wilson, and Brian Treanor, who have served as tremendous resources and mentors in my philosophic development. I'm grateful to my mother and father for their persistent support, interest, and love. Lastly, I would like to thank my wife, Martha. Without her encouragement, good faith, sacrifices, and love, this dissertation would never have been completed.

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND TRANSLATIONS

The following abbreviations are used for texts by Kant and Hegel. The translations listed are those I have used for the English quotations in this dissertation. All citations in text begin with the German abbreviation, its corresponding page(s) and are followed by the English abbreviation and its correspond page(s). The exceptions are those text that share a single letter abbreviation. Kant citations correspond to the Akademieausgabe in the case of the *KdU*. Citations from the *KrV* correspond to the A and B abbreviations for the 1781 and 1787 editions. All dates given refer to the published editions used for this dissertation.

- D* Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. "Differenz des Fichte'schen und Schelling'schen System der Philosophie." *Jenaer Schriften 1801–1807*. Werke in 20 Bänden mit Registerband - 2. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986). English edition: *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*. eds. & trans. H.S. Harris & Walter Cerf. (New York: SUNY Press, 1988)
- E* ---. *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse 1830*. *Erster Teil. Die Wissenschaft der Logik*. Werke in 20 Bänden mit Registerband - 8. eds. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986). English edition: "Part I: Science of Logic." *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline*. eds. & trans. Klaus Brinkmann & Daniel O. Dahlstrom. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)
- GW/FK* ---. "Glauben und Wissen oder die Reflexionsphilosophie der Subjektivität, in der Vollständigkeit ihrer Formen, als Kantische, Jacobische und Fichtesche Philosophie." *Jenaer Schriften 1801–1807*. Werke in 20 Bänden mit Registerband - 2. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986). English edition: *Faith and Knowledge*. eds. & trans. H.S. Harris & Walter Cerf. (New York: SUNY Press, 1988)
- PG/PS* ---. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. Werke in 20 Bänden mit Registerband - 3. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986). English edition: *Phenomenology of Spirit*. trans A.V. Miller. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977)
- PR* *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts oder Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft im Grundrisse*. Werke in 20 Bänden mit Registerband - 7. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986). English edition: *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. ed. Allen W. Wood. trans. H.B. Nesbit. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)
- VGP3/LHP3* ---. *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie III*. Werke in 20 Bänden mit Registerband - 20. eds. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986). English edition: "Kant." *Lectures on*

*the History of Philosophy, Volume 3: Medieval and Modern Philosophy.* eds. & trans. E.S. Haldane & Francis H. Simson. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995)

- WL1/SL* ---. *Wissenschaft der Logik I.* Werke in 20 Bänden mit Registerband - 5. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, Verlag, 1986). English edition: *The Science of Logic.* ed. & trans. George di Giovanni. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)
- WL2/SL* ---. *Wissenschaft der Logik II.* Werke in 20 Bänden mit Registerband - 6. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, Verlag, 1986). English edition: *The Science of Logic.* ed. & trans. George di Giovanni. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)
- KrV* Kant, Immanuel. *Kritik der reinen Vernunft.* Ed. Benno Erdmann (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010). English edition: *Critique of Pure Reason.* eds. & trans. Paul Guyer & Allen Wood. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)
- KdU* ---. *Kritik Der Urteilskraft.* Akademieausgabe. English edition: *The Critique of Aesthetic Judgment.* eds. & trans. Eric Matthews & Paul Guyer. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

## CHAPTER 1

### HEGEL ON KANT'S CONCEPT OF THINGHOOD: CONCRETE EXISTENCE AND NOUMENTALITY

The first chapter of this dissertation is concerned with the concept of thinghood in the notion of a thing in itself [*das Ding an sich*]. Hegel presents his concept of thinghood as an opposition to, and overcoming of Kant's, dichotomy between things as they appear to us and things as they are in themselves. Hegel's account of thinghood (the conditions for something to be a thing in itself) aims to overcome what he takes to be Kant's restriction of our cognitive access to things in themselves. The purpose of this chapter is to show the reasons and consequences of Hegel's opposition to Kant's restriction and provide Hegel's alternative account of thinghood. This alternative is the claim that the undetermined realm of being (the universal) contains the possibility of a plurality of determinate things (the particulars of concrete existence [*die Existenz*]), with the actual determinate things as instances of that possibility becoming determined (individual concrete existents).

In Kant's approach to thinghood in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Hegel follows Kant's distinction between the phenomenal objects of our experience (objects as we understand them) and noumenal objects (things in themselves apart from our understanding of them). The noumenal object, for Kant, is a necessary boundary concept to make sense of the presence of the phenomenal object (*KrV*, B311). For Kant, we must understand what appears in our experience (phenomena) as an appearance of something (*ibid.*). However, we cannot understand those aspects of the object we do not experience,

and so we must limit our knowledge to phenomena (objects as they appear to us), and understand the thing in itself as a cognitive boundary our knowledge cannot cross. That we cannot know what the object is apart from our experience of it is Kant's alleged *restriction thesis*.

Hegel finds this approach to thinghood problematic, as he believes Kant's method costs us the metaphysical content that philosophy should strive to make intelligible – what being is. Hegel believes what Kant provides us with in his account of thinghood leaves us with an account of our subjective role in the constitution of objects as the new metaphysical domain of inquiry. One may read Kant's phenomenal-noumenal distinction as either a metaphysical assertion about objects or an epistemological assertion about our experience of objects. We will see that Hegel expects the distinction between phenomena and noumena to capture both objects as they are (ontologically or metaphysically) and our relationship to those objects. Dissatisfied with the idea of the thing in itself as a mere subjective necessity to make sense of experience, Hegel provides an alternative that he believes will take us from the concept of being to concrete existents as things in themselves.

Hegel's alternative account of thinghood should require an inquiry, which is often absent in Anglophonic literature, other than a handful of commentaries on the whole of the *Science of Logic*<sup>1</sup>, in his discussion of concrete existence. In the *Science's* "The Thing and Its Properties" section, Hegel makes it clear that we should understand his discussion

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<sup>1</sup> Those commentators and their works are as follows: Carlson, David Gray. *A Commentary to Hegel's Science of Logic*. (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Mure, G.R.G. *Introduction to Hegel*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940); Burbidge, John W. *The Logic of Hegel's 'Logic': An Introduction*. (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2006); Houlgate, Stephen. *The Opening of Hegel's Logic: From Being to Infinity*. (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2005).

of concrete existence as his official doctrine of thinghood (WL2, 129/SL, 429).<sup>2</sup> In the *Science*'s "Concrete Existence," Hegel explains in detail how Kant's concept of thinghood fails to move from the abstract notion of the thing in itself to what Hegel understands as concrete existents, and it is in Hegel's critique of Kant's concept of thinghood that Hegel's alternative manifests itself. Because Hegel is explicit in associating the thing and its properties in the context of a large section titled "Appearance," my interpretation of Hegel treats the chapter on concrete existence as the canonical expression of his alternative to Kant's noumenal in itself in relation the phenomenal world of appearances.

In searching for Hegel's alternative to Kant's noumenal account, we find that Hegel adopts the pre-critical<sup>3</sup> project of an investigation into things in themselves as an inquiry into a particular modality of being (E, 120/58). I will discuss how he arrives at this conclusion by first examining why he thinks Kant's account of things in themselves is methodologically unsound and its results untenable. Having made clear Hegel's

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<sup>2</sup> Placing Hegel's notion of thinghood within this section of the *Science* is valuable because some influential critics of Hegel's commentary on Kant seem baffled over what Hegel expects Kant should have accomplished as opposed to merely what Hegel finds objectionable in Kant. In those instances, we are often led to inappropriate texts that never explain Hegel's notion of concrete existence as his intended alternative. A prime example of this is Karl Ameriks' "'Hegel's Critique of Kant's Theoretical Philosophy.'" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*. Vol. 46, No. 1 (1985)." He fails to mention Hegel's expectations along any lines that consider the latter part of the *Science*, and sees Hegel's discomfort with Kant's phenomenon-noumenon distinction as a complaint about Kant failing to justify the primitive axioms of his system. Under Ameriks view, what we're to take away from Hegel's critique is that Kant cannot solve the problem of criterion. Once we dismiss this as a reasonable request of any philosophic system, we thereby dismiss Hegel's criticism. Hegel is clear in the Introduction of the *Science*, that we should be fine with the fact that all starting points will be arbitrary as any point will eventually work towards total comprehensiveness (WL1, 65/SL, 45). Hegel's comfort with the impossibility to provide a satisfactory explanation of one's origin of investigation strongly suggests to me that the problem of criterion matters very little to him. Kant's reduction of our investigation into thinghood to things as they appear to us, however, is something he does find unwarranted because it is an incomplete view – not because it is born from an arbitrary approach.

<sup>3</sup> The term "pre-critical" refers to philosophic examination prior to Kant's critical enterprise in his three *Critiques*.

intended departure from Kant's method of philosophic inquiry, we will consider what Hegel sees as a critical point of unity between himself and Kant regarding things in themselves – that even as we treat the noumenon as an empty abstraction, there is something concrete from which it is abstracted. The noumenal object is not solely an empty abstraction and has a concrete origin we can pursue. Kant and Hegel's principle difference on this matter is how far reaching this analysis of the concrete may go given our epistemic conditions. Hegel's more ambitious cognitional theory aims to rehabilitate the concept of the thing in itself as an ontological matter as opposed to the Kantian context of what is possible to experience (WL2, 126/SL, 425). The rehabilitation of the thing in itself then paves the way for Hegel to stave off an undo subjectivism he attributes to Kant, where Kant trades our analysis of what applies to reality with what is universal about our experiences.

Showing how Hegel intends to reverse Kant's trade introduces several difficulties from how unpalatable Hegel's alternative will seem to how to best present Hegel's case, Hegel's alternative is obscure, awkward in its method, and scattered among several brief and sometimes cryptic remarks. Given the scattered nature of his view, my method of presenting Hegel's texts is topical as opposed to chronological. Hegel's criticisms do not substantially differ over time, and there is little to call a significant evolution in the way he understands Kant. I have tried to compile a sustained and sequenced series of arguments that lead from what Hegel takes to be premises of Kant's restriction thesis to what Hegel concludes must follow from those premises.

In the sequence of this dissertation, I begin with a chapter on thinghood because the encounter with the objects of our experience is the most common experience from

which we can start to understand what leads Hegel to claim that thought and being share an identity. The first chapter of this dissertation marks the beginning of Hegel's attack on the metaphysics of subjectivity [*Metaphysik der Subjektivität*] as it manifests itself under the banner of transcendental idealism (a philosophy that adheres to only what we establish from the conditions of the possibility of experience). As a whole, the project of this dissertation aims at making sense of Hegel's method to situate our subjectivity in a metaphysical (or ontological) context, whereby the objective structure that forms our subjectivity becomes apparent and freed of the idea that our subjectivity alone is the foundation for objectivity. In fairness to many of Hegel's critics, Hegel's account comes with its price, as we will see in Chapters Three and Four, which requires us to understand our subjectivity in a way that many will find more problematic than the errors Hegel wishes to avoid in Kant. It is my hope that as Chapter One convinces us that a metaphysics of subjectivity is problematic, Chapter Five will alleviate the potential discomfort in Hegel's final steps to overcoming such metaphysics in our relation to what he calls Absolute Knowledge [*das Absolute Wissen*].<sup>4</sup>

Lastly, it is important to note what this chapter (and those following) will not accomplish. It is not my intention to explain what I understand Kant's theoretical philosophy to mean nor to situate this dissertation within Kantian scholarship. My comments on Kant reflect Hegel's interpretation. When Kant's texts are presented they are done so for one of three reasons: (1) the text is a passage Hegel quotes, (2) the passage is a reference paraphrased by Hegel, or (3) it is likely the text that Hegel has in mind when he makes no specific reference. Unfortunately, (3) is the most frequent case,

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<sup>4</sup> For the moment, Absolute Knowledge can be understood as comprehensive or complete knowledge.

as Hegel rarely quotes Kant. It is right to ask about the faithfulness of Hegel's interpretation of Kant, and Karl Ameriks is right to note that, "Hegel tends to evade the specific problems of Kant's arguments and to substitute for them matters of interest for his system."<sup>5</sup> Hegel's interest in Kant's utility is a fair criticism, but we should also note that Hegel does not intend for us to understand his works as Kantian scholarship.<sup>6</sup> The interest of this dissertation is not what Kant has accomplished, but what Hegel has achieved from his encounter with Kant's theoretical philosophy.

### Hegel's Understanding of Kant's Phenomena/Noumena Distinction

While some, such as Robert Pippin<sup>7</sup>, understand Hegel as a rehabilitator of Kant's theoretical philosophy, I do not share this view. I will show that Hegel's remarks on Kant neither bear this assertion out nor do we understand Hegel's goals better by imposing Kantian ambitions on Hegel. It is helpful to understand the extent to which Hegel sees Kant's transcendental program as a series of failures because Hegel constructs several key arguments in the context of specific failures he finds in Kant. While Hegel claims that Kant never solved the problem of thought's relation to being (VGP3, 382/LHP3, 472), one should not assume Hegel intends to fix this issue as an aid to Kant's transcendental idealism. Hegel believes he resolves Kant's difficulties, but not through transcendental method.

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<sup>5</sup> Ameriks, Karl. *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 29.

<sup>6</sup> On this topic, see Daniel Breazeale's "Two Cheers for Post-Kantianism: A Response to Karl Ameriks." *Inquiry*. Vol. 46, No. 2 (2003).

<sup>7</sup> See Robert Pippin's *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfaction of Self-Consciousness*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) and "Hegel and Category Theory." *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (1990).

To Hegel, these shortcomings have led Kant to fail metaphysics in its ambition to account for what constitutes what is real. Understanding that Hegel sees Kant failing a tradition Hegel sees in need a preservation, we can better grasp what motivates much of Hegel's general theoretical philosophy. Hegel sees Kant's departure from what is most valuable in metaphysics (the attempt to account for reality apart from only what we experience) in the earliest part of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In the *Critique*, Kant describes metaphysics as "a critique of the faculty of reason," with its content as "all the cognitions after which reason might strive independently of all experience" to discern "the possibility or impossibility" of these cognitions to correspond to reality (*KrV*, Axii). While this interpretation relies on keeping metaphysical analysis to our faculty of reason and the thoughts apart from our experience, for Hegel, metaphysics is "the science of things captured in thoughts that have counted as expressing the essentialities of things" (E, 120/58). Hegel's metaphysics has things as its concern – things captured in thoughts. Both definitions have thought content as the area of inquiry, but their goals differ. Hegel does not understand metaphysics as a critique of the faculty of reason or our cognitive abilities. Metaphysics, for Hegel, is meant to be a scientific approach to explain the origin of those things we capture in thought (*ibid.*). Hegel sees Kant's definition as problematic, as it expresses no interest in what these objects are in themselves, but rather what we can claim we know about them considering our cognitive abilities (or limitations).

Kant's understanding of what metaphysics should be differs from Hegel, but is still born out of a shared concern over objectivity. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant states his concern as follows:

[I]f the understanding cannot distinguish whether certain questions lie within its horizon or not, then it is never sure of its claims and its possession, but must always reckon on many embarrassing corrections when it continually oversteps the boundaries of its territory (as is unavoidable) and loses itself in delusion and deceptions. (*KrV*, A238)

The above context is the problem of determining the limits of our understanding so that we will know what kind of data is relevant to judgments – or what are possible judgments about what could or could not be the case. Philosophy (and any responsible thinking) must find boundaries for knowledge to determine what kind of questions we can and cannot answer from our experience. If we cannot establish such boundaries, we suffer a further problem in that without possible judgments, true judgments are unavailable as well. If we cannot fix this horizon of the understanding to what actual possibilities are or are not, as a secondary issue, we remain unsure of what kinds of knowledge claims are truthful claims. Consequently, without a fixed domain for objective judgments (or possible judgments that can be known as true judgments), we are also unsure of the ontological status of the content of our knowledge (*ibid*). We would have ideas of things but no way to confirm their significance outside our consideration of them. From this view, Hegel sees that Kant should be interested in both the epistemic conditions of our knowing and the ontological standing of the objects considered known.<sup>8</sup> However, as Hegel will argue that Kant simply drops the ontological consideration, we lose what is truly vital to metaphysics as opposed to a critical rehabilitation of it.

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<sup>8</sup> The epistemological significance of this concern seems straightforward, but Kant's mention of 'delusions and deceptions' is a concern about the ontological status of the idea of something which in some unqualified way *is not*. To examine a knowledge claim in terms of its veracity is also to ask if those things which are within the claim exist. My beagle's name is Lily only if I exist, there is a beagle I own, and a moment occurred from which I named her. This is important to note if we are going to focus our interpretation of the noumenal as a logical posit, as such a posit would need to somehow aid answering the ontological concern as well as the epistemological to meet Kant's goal above.

Hegel and Kant's shared project of a critical rehabilitation of metaphysics parts most sharply in their methods. For Kant, the concern to stop erroneous judgment by establishing clear boundaries for the understanding leads Kant to search for necessary conditions of experience. The result of such an investigation aims to provide a "method to be followed" that gives us a "system of metaphysics, purified by criticism" (*KrV*, Bxxiv). This purification is not meant to discard the notion of metaphysical investigation or metaphysical objects, but "marks out and defines both the external boundaries and internal structure" of what is appropriate to metaphysics (*ibid.*). This distinction between the internal structure and external boundary is the scope of Kantian knowledge claims. The internal structure of cognizing experience will set external boundaries for the contents of that knowledge. Because establishing the horizon of those boundaries is the aim of Kantian critique, this task "only serves to warn us against venturing, with speculative reason, beyond the limits of experience" (*KrV*, Bxxv). In simpler terms, we must guard ourselves against knowledge claims about things we cannot experience. Our speculation on such things would be epistemologically idle.<sup>9</sup> With no standard to determine the truth of speculation, we lack the ability to ground truthmaking conditions and collapse into opinion and conviction. However, by Hegel's reckoning, the cost of Kant's form of objectivity is the too high in limiting our knowledge claims to only what we can experience.

Hegel's idea that this cost to metaphysics is not only unnecessary but also harmful is first seen in Hegel's most consistent criticism of Kant's aim to rehabilitate

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<sup>9</sup> This is not to say we cannot make knowledge claims about what we have not experienced directly or first-hand. Kant does not (nor does Hegel understand Kant to) demand that all experience be first-hand private experiences.

metaphysics by limiting our discussion of reality to sensuous experience. Hegel sees Kant's project as an attempt to ward off skepticism that ultimately collapses into skepticism because it makes our subjectivity's capacity to experience the ultimate ground of testing metaphysical claims (D, 100/160). Hegel feels this approach dismisses the role that something other than that subjectivity may play, and criticizes Kant for being insensitive to the notion, "that just as nature is conditioned by subjectivity, so is subjectivity conditioned by nature" (ibid.). Further, Hegel points to a difficulty in that such a deflationary account of metaphysics becomes dismissive of metaphysics rather than rehabilitative or even purgative. To quash metaphysical investigations into thinghood seems to put Kant to cross-purposes to his stated goals in the Introduction (*KrV*, Bxviii-ix). For Hegel, if Kant wanted to preserve metaphysics in earnest, whatever role transcendental investigation is to take, it could only be subordinate to the mission of providing some account of being, and not simply the cognitive apparatuses of a particular species of being.

Hegel traces Kant's revolution of traditional metaphysics to transcendental conditions in Kant's phenomena-noumena distinction, which Hegel believes overstates the severity of our subjective limitations in knowing. It is not so much that Kant does not give us objects of experience, but that his method does so through a "psychological reflex" [*psychologischer Reflex*] (WL2, 261/SL, 520) which creates, "the autocracy of the subjective Reason" [*die Autokratie der subjektiven Vernunft*] (VGP3, 388/LHP3, 477). The psychological reflex begins with subjective conditions for our cognition to examine no more than those conditions. From start to finish, psychological states are both the content and method of Kant's philosophy. They are the beginning and end, as well as

form and content. This thorough embeddedness in an examination of human subjectivity is why Hegel describes Kant's philosophy as the autocracy of the subjective Reason. If subjectivity alone is to govern what we can investigate philosophically, and it does injustice to the whole of reality, as Kant leaves out an account for objects in themselves to restrict our inquiry to what we experience of them. Hegel remarks that "the sickness of our time has led to the desperation that our knowing is merely subjective and that this subjectivity is the last word" (E, 118/56). Regardless of the cause of the sickness, this desperate turn towards subjectivity "has been advocated particularly by the Critical philosophy against the conviction of the whole previous world" (ibid.). Hegel sees one of his goals as undoing the motivation to turn to the Kantian philosophy for refuge from the contemporary crisis of knowing. Hegel sums up Kant's philosophy as "a Philistine conception" that "renounces Reason" (VGP3, 387/LHP3, 476). Hegel argues that Kant's work came into vogue because it gives the appearance, "that men were once for all free from the old metaphysic," having been, "saved the trouble of penetrating to [Reason's] own inward meaning and exploring the depths of Nature and Spirit" (ibid.). In the end, Hegel sees Kant's philosophy as a shortcut through an earnest engagement with metaphysical problems. For Hegel, Kant's project is to explain why true metaphysical problems are not to be bothered with, and that we may comfortably skip a philosophic obligation to elucidate our knowledge of being itself. Hegel argues this leaves us with nothing to explain about our world except what we are doing when we experience something. When we fail to explore "the depths of Nature and Spirit," we thereby fail metaphysical ambitions to answer questions we have customarily held to be so important to us about our relationship to Nature and Spirit.

Turning towards the phenomenal/noumenal distinction, the relevant aspects of Kant's view for our discussion lie largely on the empirical characteristics Kant imparts to our knowledge and the claim that we do not know things in themselves (noumena) but only as they appear to us (phenomena). In this section, the discussion of Kant's concept of thinghood is limited to those aspects relevant to Hegel's rejection of Kant's account (in Section Three) and Hegel's alternative to Kant's conception (in Section Four).

Hegel understands Kant's account of our knowledge of thinghood as contingent on sensibility, as Hegel alleges Kant insists all our knowledge of objects must somehow be derivative from a sensuous manifold. What we can experience from the empirical senses emerges as appearances – what Kant calls *phenomena*. There are two aspects involved in appearance – the thing which appears and the thinking subject's cognitive grasp of the appearance to make it an experience for the subject. Kant writes, “Appearances, to the extent that as objects they are thought in accordance with the unity of the categories, are called *phaenomena*” (*KrV*, A249). Appearances are not things in themselves. Appearances are things as we experience them. These appearances are “limited by the understanding, in that they do not pertain to things in themselves, but only to the way in which, because our subjective constitution, things appear to us” (*KrV*, A251). Organizing the data of sense under our cognitive operations implies that objects, as they appear to us, are in part limited to our ability to represent the object. We have a limitation [*eingeschränkt*] (*ibid.*) in our grasp of the scope of the object's ultimate ontological status “on account of our subjective constitution.” What appears to us is not the entirety of the object. If this limitation is not present, then the object remains untouched by our representation of it under our subjective constitution. In that case, we

would never experience such objects, because we had never conceptualized the intuition of such objects.

Further, for whatever object we do experience, whatever we experience of that object is contingent upon our subjective constitution. Phenomena, then, are not objects themselves, but objects of our experience, as they conform to the various ways we conceptualize experience. To the extent that this sensuous manifold is not thought through our conceptual apparatuses, there is no appearance. Because of our necessary reliance on sensibility to have an experience "...we can have cognition of no object as a thing in itself, but only insofar as it is an object of sensible intuition, i.e. as an appearance." (*KrV*, Bxxvi). As we will see, Hegel understands Kant to mean that the whole of our cognitive operations will never include objects which may lie outside sensibility. The traditional concerns of metaphysics regarding the reality of Nature and Spirit are to be set aside as they are not manifest in sensibility.

The noumenon is "a thing insofar as it is not an object of our sensible intuition" (*KrV*, B307). Because Kant denies knowledge of an object outside our sensible intuition, the negative aspect of a thing in itself (noumenon) is that it does not appear to us, and it cannot be understood because we do not experience it. Kant describes the noumenal as no more than "a mere something of which we should not understand what it is, even if someone were in a position to tell us" (*KrV*, A277-8/B333-4). What is noumenal is beyond our description and comprehension because it is outside our sensibility. Even if some other being should experience what we could not, we could have no second-hand understanding of their first-hand account. Because this negative aspect of the noumena distinguishes what we can and cannot experience from an object, the concept of:

the noumenon is therefore merely a boundary concept [*Grenzbegriff*], in order to limit the pretension of sensibility, and therefore only of negative use. But it is nevertheless not invented arbitrarily, but is rather connected with the limitation of sensibility [*Einschränkung der Sinnlichkeit*], yet without being able to posit anything positive outside of the domain of the latter. (*KrV*, A255/B311)

Sensibility does not give us an object in itself but rather the empirical affects of what we can experience of the object. As a boundary concept, the noumenal reminds us of the limitations of our senses – that there may be more to an object than what the senses communicate. While the noumenon cannot tell us anything positive about the object itself, this is not to say it has no application in the objects that we experience. Since we still have a knowledge of an object as we experience it, the concept of noumena is vital to our experience. Kant notes that:

even if we cannot cognize these same objects as things in themselves, we at least must be able to think them as things in themselves. For otherwise there would follow the absurd proposition that there is an appearance without anything that appears. (*KrV*, Bxxv-xxvi)

The objects of our experience can still be thought of as noumena even if they are known as phenomena. Further:

something must correspond to it which is not in itself appearance, for appearance can be nothing for itself and outside of our kind of representation; thus, if there is not to be a constant circle, the word "appearance" must already indicate a relation to something the immediate representation of which is, to be sure, sensible, but which in itself, without this constitution of our sensibility (on which the form of our intuition is grounded), must be something, i.e., an object independent of sensibility. (*KrV*, A251-252)

We are forced to think of phenomena as things in themselves because we cannot understand an appearance of nothing. We can agree with Kant that “we are required to be able to think of [...] things in themselves. Otherwise, we should have the absurd conclusion that there could be an appearance without there being something that appears”

(*KrV*, Bxxxvi). The appearance of nothing is an unintelligible idea, and it seems we are required to think of things in themselves for there to be appearances. The positive concept of the noumenon, then, is that this concept allows us to treat phenomena as an actual appearance of something as opposed to some fictive representation that corresponds to nothing known or experienced. Even though objects for us (objects as they appear) reveal no specific thing in itself, the thing in itself is implicit in the appearance, as the appearance presupposes a thing in itself that makes the appearance possible. We must conclude, then, that irrespective of what the thing we experience ultimately is, the experience is of something.

Hegel agrees with Kant that noumena are conceptually posited in phenomena, and are necessary for us to think of anything at all. In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit*, Hegel explains the Kantian necessity of noumena as follows:

We refer ourselves to the object, and this is the relation of the object to us: i.e., that which is not our own is [nonetheless] in us and thus determined through us. We are active in these determinations, because they are ours. However, they are not arbitrary but belong to the necessity of thought. This necessity is the objective necessity as Kant also designates it. It is objective in itself, without any contrast to the subjective. To find the noumenon requires that we are the determining activity, otherwise it is not possible to find it. This necessary activity is usually confused with arbitrary positing. [But] the positing is an objective one. This insight is very important, an insight that Kant opposed to Lockean philosophy and to the so-called ideology according to which in thought, just as in sensation, we are supposed to be only externally affected. (VPG, 157/LPS, 178)

In the above passage, Hegel outlines the relationship between ourselves and objects as “a necessity of thought” – each experience is necessarily a subject in relation to an object, as Kant has shown the denial of this necessity is unintelligible to explain the origin of an appearance. Because we experience the object, it is, in some sense, “determined through us,” as we make the object an object of our experience (ibid.). This distance between the

object itself and how we relate that object to ourselves in experience is an objective fact “without any contrast to the subjective.” I understand Hegel to mean that there exists no other conceptual alternative to this objectivity, and so no subjective variation of this account is even theoretically possible. In our search for the in itself, our searching itself must always be one part of the determining activity for the recognition of what we have found. Second, however much our subjective determinations factor in transforming the noumenal into the phenomenal, Hegel wants his audience to know he does not believe this leads to phenomenalism – that reality is only perceptions in the act of perceiving. Our role in determining the object is not an “arbitrary positing,” nor does Hegel claim this is a conclusion forced on Kant. Hegel wishes to stress that for whatever other difficulties he finds in Kant’s account of the phenomenal/noumenal distinction, a difficulty is not that the notion of positing a noumenon is arbitrary or fails to be an objective posit. He calls Kant’s insight “very important” because, unlike the British Empiricists (particularly Locke), Kant gives us a way to understand the noumenal by mere external affectation – as something that is an intrusive given outside our experience that invades our consciousness.

Nonetheless, this objective necessity in the role of the noumenal’s relation to the phenomenal is not without its problems. For whatever strides Kant has made against the empiricists, they are not radical enough for Hegel. Hegel focuses on the role Kant gives to sensuous intuition as a condition for an object to appear: “Kant’s appearance is a given content of perception that presupposes affections, determinations of the subject which are immediate to each other and to the subject” (WL2, 20/SL, 343). Hegel’s target is Kant’s understanding of things as percepts that emerge from an immediate unity of sensations to

one another and the subject experiencing them. Here, whatever we experience relies on sensuous affectivity. Something from the field of sensibility affects our sense intuition, is conceptualized, and becomes a perceptible object. This is not to say that there are no objects to experience if there is no perceiving subject to experience them, nor is that Hegel's criticism of Kant's account of thinghood.

Hegel is less concerned with the possibility that Kant's account leads to a radical phenomenalism than what he takes to be a strange disparity between what started as an account of empirical objects but leads to an account of perception instead. In the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel again points to Kant's perceptual constraints on the objects of experience, whereby:

...experience grasps phenomena only, and that by means of the knowledge which we obtain through experience we do not know things as they are in themselves, but only as they are in the form of laws of perception and sensuousness. For the first component part of experience, sensation, is doubtless subjective, since it is connected with our organs. The matter of perception is only what it is in my sensation. I know of this sensation only and not of the thing. But, in the second place, the objective, which ought to constitute the opposite to this subjective side, is itself subjective likewise: it does not indeed pertain to my feeling, but it remains shut up in the region of my self-consciousness; the categories are only determinations of our thinking understanding. Neither the one nor the other is consequently anything in itself, nor are both together, knowledge, anything in itself, for it only knows phenomena—a strange contradiction.” (VGP3, 351/LHP3, 440)

The rules for our ability to sense and perceive mark the impassable horizon for what we can experience, and thereby what we can encounter in any object. If we were to trace the origin of any object we experience, we would have to stop with our sensation. Sensation is the “first component part of experience,” and “connected with our organs” (ibid.). The first source of our experience of an object, then, is the success or failure of sensuous affectivity. It is a subjective source since it relies on our bodily functions to affect

consciousness. The content of what is perceived, the objective element of the experience, as a thing other than my experience of the thing, “ought to constitute the opposite to this subjective side” (ibid.) By this, Hegel means that if we wanted to make a distinction between our experience of something and what that something is, we need some way to affirm that we are experiencing something other than our subjective states and the content they alone generate. In each experience, we have the sensation of something, and we have the way we must understand that something.

While we can say the way we must understand something is objective since it is a universal condition for the understanding, it is only allowed to work on what it is fed through sense intuitions. Sense intuitions are not things in themselves. The concepts of the understanding (for Kant) are not things in themselves. If the only content we experience is sense intuition and concepts, neither meets Kant’s understanding of a thing in itself. The *Critique* stresses this point and finds no contradiction. For Hegel, however, Kant keeps objects “shut up in the region” of self-consciousness. We should observe that, in the last passage, Hegel’s use of the word “ought” with respect to the objectivity of the object is an expectation on his part regarding what Kant (1) should have understood an object to be and (2) should have properly concluded about our relation to such objects. On both fronts, Hegel believes Kant has mischaracterized the conditions of thinghood and consequently created a contradiction whereby Kant meant to discuss things but ended discussing cognitive operations. Such a contradiction serves Hegel as the occasion to insert himself as a relevant alternative to what Kant allegedly mismanages. In the next section, we will examine what Hegel claims lead Kant to this mischaracterization and what is the ultimate result of that mischaracterization.

## Hegel's Response to Kant's Phenomenal/Noumenal Distinction

When Hegel comments on Kant's thing in itself, there is no more persistent description from Hegel than "empty abstraction" [*die leere Abstraktion*]. As we saw above, Hegel does not argue that Kant's phenomena/noumena distinction introduces arbitrary noumena. Hegel's concern is with the role Kant gives to the noumena in a metaphysical context. Given Hegel's understanding of metaphysics, Kant provides no science for investigating the nature of the noumenal, but rather he provides reasons to be contented with denying the noumenal has any discernable nature. In the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel refers to Kant's thing in itself as "an objective expression of the empty form of opposition" (D, 9/80). Hegel's understanding of Kant's phenomenal/noumenal distinction identifies an arbitrary "hypostatization" whereby the concept of appearances is worked out, the opposite of that concept is created by merely negating what an appearance is, and the two are superficially bound together to give us a picture of thinghood (ibid.). There is no essential explanation of the noumenon. Kant presents both the appearance of the object and the object in itself as "an objective expression." (ibid). It seems to Hegel that Kant's idea is that we now have a full account of thinghood in this unity of phenomena and noumena that makes the expression objective. However, Hegel argues Kant merely presents the inverse of appearance as the thing in itself as opposed to overcoming the opposition between the two to give us a true account of thinghood. Hegel tends to focus on Kant's negative aspect of the in itself as that thing apart from all our possible experience of it. In the *Encyclopedia* Hegel describes Kant's thing in itself as:

the object insofar as one abstracts from everything that it is for consciousness, i.e. from all determinations of sensation [*Gefohlsbestimmungen*] as well as from all determinate thoughts of it. It is easy to see what remains, namely the complete *abstractum*, something entirely empty, determined only as a beyond; the negative of representation, feeling, determinate thinking, and so on. (E, 151/89)

In the last passage from the previous section, we saw that Hegel understands appearances as comprised of nothing but the determinations of sense and the concepts of the understanding ability to organize them. In this passage, because the thing in itself is to be everything about the object that is not sensed and categorized (as we can know *nothing* of it), Hegel describes Kant's noumena as the removal of those determinations of sense and concepts from any object. The same is said in the *Science* when Hegel writes:

Things are called "in-themselves" in so far as abstraction is made from all being for other, which really means, in so far as they are thought without all determination, as nothing. In this sense, of course, it is impossible to know what the thing in itself is. (WL1, 130/SL, 94)

For example, our experience of a cube of sugar, what the in itself of that sugar cube amounts to is what remains after we subtract<sup>10</sup> anything we could experience of it, because there is absolutely nothing about the in itself we could ever experience (WL2, 129/SL, 428-29). As soon as our approach to thinghood is forced to be of things as we experience them through sense intuitions, we should not be surprised that it is impossible to say what something is apart from our experience of it. In the *Science*, Hegel goes as far as to say that Kant's thing in itself is a "subject without the predicate" and a "thing without properties" (WL2, 231/SL, 554). Remember that the thing in itself is a concept meant to express an object apart from our experience. Hegel sees this as a loss of focus

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<sup>10</sup> Hegel uses the word "abstract," but by this he means that we abstract the qualities of the object we experience, then remove those abstractions (subtract) from the thing in itself.

on the part of an earnest metaphysical investigation into thinghood. It leaves the intended object of investigation (being) unexplained.

With Kant, however, the noumenon is the negated content of the phenomenon. As devoid of all determinations used to understand objects, Hegel calls the noumenon a “complete abstractum,” and it is “entirely empty” because Kant’s noumenon is the result of taking the total absence of anything we could experience about the object and turning that absence into an object (ibid.). More simply, because our knowledge of things must be of things we experience, Hegel thinks Kant sets himself up for failure to discuss thinghood. Kant does this because he insists that “since the things of which the determinations are called for are at the same time presumed to be things in themselves, which means precisely without determination,” the result is that “the impossibility of an answer is thoughtlessly implanted in the question” (WL1, 130/SL, 94). Because the thing in itself should be understood through the same transcendental method that makes experience possible, we cannot answer the question of what things are in themselves. We would have to answer how something we never experience is something we experience. The impossibility to answer the question is the *caput mortuum* of metaphysical inquiry because we cannot discuss ontology (or the nature of what is), but the nature of our experience (E, 151/89). Again, for Hegel, Kant has steered himself into the wrong topic for metaphysics, and he has done so with an unhealthy preoccupation with finding a way to limit ontology to what humans experience. Kant’s attempt may be to restrict the pretenses of prior philosophies’ flights of fancy, but for Hegel, if ontology is traded with transcendental conditions, we have entered a self-defeating realm of needing to answer for what is, but remain silent on what is in itself. If we are to understand the noumenal

such that it has become the empty abstractum of the objects of appearance, Hegel is left wondering, “why one sees it repeated so often that one does not know [*wissen*] what the thing in itself is, when there is nothing easier to know than this” (ibid.). With Hegel’s Kant, every thing in itself is the same thing – a subject without a predicate, a thing without properties. There is no variation. There are no particulars, and there is no discernable difference. There is no difference between one in itself or another in itself. Knowing this is knowing the thing in itself, and given the way Kant structures the in itself, it is easy to know the thing in itself. The thing in itself is never anything other than *the nothing we cannot experience*, and if Kant has proven this, there is no mystery in how we know the in itself. That is all there is to know about the thing in itself, and we are aware that this is all we can know. Hegel finds this conclusion deeply unsatisfying, but, as we will see below, not entirely wrong. An aspect of the in itself genuinely is the empty abstraction, and Hegel will use this notion of abstraction as a modality of concrete existence to enable us to discuss what he takes to be the authentic thing in itself. In the next section, we will examine what Hegel believes is the cause of Kant’s account of the in itself, as the cause points to its reversal and helps us understand Hegel’s direction away from Kant’s account of the noumenon.

### Hegel’s Diagnosis of Kant’s Alleged Error

While critical of Kant treating the noumenal as a boundary concept, Hegel’s criticism is not strictly a criticism of Kant. By Hegel’s account, the restriction thesis is an expected development from the empiricist tradition’s flawed methodological assumptions about how to handle such dichotomies as matter and form as well as thought’s relation to

being.<sup>11</sup> For example, in *Faith and Knowledge*, Hegel claims Kant's method, "similarly confines itself to Locke's goal, that is, to an investigation of the finite intellect" (GW, 376/FK, 69). Hegel sees Kant sharing Locke's ambition (and not necessarily all of Locke's methods or conclusions) to use one's investigation of the discursive intellect as an inquiry into the scope of what is real. Hegel believes that for both Kant and Locke the discussion of what is should reduce to what can be known by such an intellect. This restriction is a normative principle for the philosophic investigation of both Kant and Locke, and just as much a criticism of Locke as it is of Kant. However, Hegel is clear that he does not understand Kant as a Lockean. In the very same paragraph, Hegel tells us that "the results are quite different" between Locke and Kant (ibid.). While Locke and Kant share the same normative principle for investigation, what they come to conclude, apparently to Hegel, is far from identical. Hegel notes several differences between the pioneers of British Empiricism and Kant.<sup>12</sup> However, he still insists that Kant's transcendental method arise from partial commitments to the more philosophically dysfunctional aspects of empiricism (the above divide between form and matter and thought and being) that force Kant's analysis of metaphysics into an anthropological project more concerned with human behavior than what exists.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> I should not be understood (nor Hegel) to suggest that Transcendental Idealism is not unique to Kant, but rather that the restriction thesis itself is a well-worn path before Kant's philosophy.

<sup>12</sup> For example, Hegel understands Locke and Kant to differ on the role of objects in our knowledge acquisition. Locke's general, simple, and complex ideas are derivative of empirical objects, whereas Hegel knows that Kant's empirical objects are constituted by transcendental conditions foreign to Locke's account.

<sup>13</sup> However, Hegel several times acknowledges that Kant struggles to rebuke both the empirical and rationalist traditions, and recognizing that the "Kantian philosophy is in the first instance directed against both" (VGP3, 336/LHP3, 429).

This project of reducing metaphysics to our experience amounts to a retreat into our experiences and away from the world of being. The insistence on empirical observation leads to “an insurmountable gulf” [*eine unübersteigbare Kluft*] between the experience and the object of the experience (E, 147/85). It is not that Hegel objects to using experience *tout court* as a condition to determine what is, but he is concerned by how narrowly Kant’s philosophy defines experience. Hegel concedes that “[c]onsciousness...undoubtedly obtains all conceptions and Notions from experience and in experience; the only question is what we understand by experience” (VGP3, 210/LHP3, 303). Hegel’s notion of experience is not localized to one’s personal experience. His complaint, then, is with any philosophy that contents itself to understand what knowledge is in terms of our finite experiences of the phenomenal. It is the insistence on the vantage point of metaphysics from first-person observation that is too narrow for an account of objectivity, and it is this vantage point Hegel labors to deconstruct. Unlike the empiricists, Kant’s empiricist commitment is not that our ideas originate from encounters with pre-determined external objects or that all ideas reduce to sense impressions. These claims are not Hegel’s concern when discussing Kant. Kant’s empiricist commitment is that for whatever transcendental conditions may be discovered, they are conditions of experience of sensuous intuition from a sensuous manifold.

Hegel calls this retreat from classical metaphysics into the ground of our experience a psychological idealism [*psychologischer Idealismus*] because Kant’s account of thinghood becomes an account of our affects and our dispositions towards them. This new metaphysics, “purified by criticism” (*KrV*, Bxxiv), gives us an account of human cognitive performance and the apparatuses to accomplish that performance. If this

is the result, metaphysics is not purified by genuine criticism, but rather ruins any aspirations for a science of what is. Regarding the categories of being, Kant titles Section 22 of the *Critique of Pure Reason* as “The Category has no other Application in Knowledge than to Objects of Experience,” and it is doubtless that Kant’s discussion within this section strikes Hegel as bald empiricism that brings an end to metaphysical investigation.<sup>14</sup> There Kant stipulates that “the only intuition to us is sensible,” the categories of being are never an intuition of being as they “do not afford us any knowledge of things,” but rather the categories apply “only in regard to things which may be objects of possible experience” (*KrV*, B148). Hegel refers to this treatment of the categories as rendering them “dead pigeon-holes,” having removed all their metaphysical significance (D, 9/80). Hegel’s idea is that Kant has set the categories aside as a matter of metaphysical interest, and only has a use for them to the degree that they explain how our minds experience sensation. Hegel will use this lack of metaphysical significance to further his case in how far we should depart from Kant to restore metaphysics’ grander scope than sensibility.

The principle difficulty Hegel finds in Kant’s phenomenal-noumenal distinction is that it turns the investigation into what is into an investigation of cognitive accessibility of something alien to cognition by understanding the knowing subject as the mediator of an opposition between thought and being. Hegel understands this concept of opposition as omnipresent in Kant’s method, whereby Kant, “remains entirely within the antithesis [*Gegensatze*, contradistinction],” and, “makes the identity of the opposites into the

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<sup>14</sup> Hegel’s own term for this method of restricting our knowledge of being is barbarous (VGP3, 339/LHP3, 431).

absolute terminus of philosophy, the pure boundary which is nothing but the negation of philosophy” (GW, 374/FK, 67). Remaining within this antithesis is to be stuck in the position that the phenomenal is not the noumenal, the noumenal is not the phenomenal, and that we must remain in this unreconciled distinction regarding our judgments.

Hegel’s claim is that Kant gives us a series of oppositions, leaves them as opposed, and insists the opposition has no resolution. The transcendental philosophy unifies these various oppositions into an “absolute terminus” from which we are to restrict our philosophic projects from attempting to surmount, as Kant has already alleged established these oppositions as insurmountable. To take these restrictions as legislative is to negate the principle of philosophic investigation and revision. We may say the phenomenal is all we have access to regarding cognition, but that is not to say we eliminate the difference between the object of consideration (noumenon) and the content as considered (phenomenon).

At best, Kant can provide us with a motive to assume the difference is irrelevant for us because of an irresolvable problem of access to that which we cannot experience. This restriction highlights a “contrast to what is merely thought by us and therefore still different from the matter itself or in itself” (E, 147/85). Hegel writes: “The way in which critical philosophy understands the relation of these three termini is that we place thoughts as a medium between us and the things, in the sense that this medium, instead of joining us with such things, would rather cut us off from them” (WL1, 52/SL, 16). Hegel senses our alienation from knowledge of what is as thoughts should bridge that distance as opposed to serving as a wall. For Hegel, this leads to the puzzling idea that “what we think is false because *we* think it” (E, 145/108). Under this opposition, thought cannot be

of the thing in itself, and therefore, whatever thought we claim to have of the thing in itself is wrong precisely because our thoughts do not bridge the opposition between the for-us (phenomena) and the in-itself (noumena).

Hegel takes the above opposition and Kant's empirical commitments to be the principle cause that shapes Kant's philosophy into a psychological idealism, which results in a metaphysics of subjectivity, and ultimately a performative contradiction<sup>15</sup>. While both terms (psychological idealism and metaphysics of subjectivity) may seem interchangeable, and they certainly are related, they are not synonymous. A psychological idealism is using our subjective apparatuses to articulate idealism as opposed to the ideal content itself. Hegel's criticism of psychological idealism is chiefly concerned with the anthropocentric and empirical nature of Kant's account of reality. A metaphysics of subjectivity, by contrast, is the achievement of a comprehensive psychological idealism. Hegel views this achievement as the new metaphysics Kant brings us, and that this new metaphysics achieves nothing other than the ontology of self-consciousness aware of its cognitive operations. This distinction matters because Hegel does not fully reject a psychological idealism (so long as it is supplemental to his idealism) whereas he is opposed to a metaphysics of subjectivity. A psychological idealism, as he understands it, has room for revision and expansion. A metaphysics of subjectivity is a closed system of dogmatic limitations that encourages skepticism. We can work to improve or change a psychological idealism. We can only accept or abandon a metaphysics of subjectivity. Hegel will use the resultant metaphysics of subjectivity to highlight our need to purge the psychological idealism of its unwarranted presuppositions of absolute opposition and

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<sup>15</sup> By performative contradiction, I mean that Kant denies in theory what he presupposes to affirm the theory's truth.

privileging the first-person perspective of experience as a boundary for what we can know.

Because the above absolute opposition shapes the way we view the scope of cognition, Kant's claim about what an object is in itself becomes an epistemological claim in the form of a law that limits the conditions of the possibility of knowledge. One of the functions of this limitation serves as a methodological reminder for a further philosophic investigation that we are "never to forget the absoluteness of the subject in every rational cognition" (GW, 298/FK, xcii). Hegel worries that the absolute quality imposed by the concept of a boundary is a *first-person consideration* of objects, separated from the objects in themselves, will push the knowing subject back into an account of her cognitive operations in any attempt to describe the thing in itself. What replaces metaphysics is an account of subjective performances. While understanding Hegel's concern over subjective limitations, many are still puzzled by Hegel's choice to identify the absoluteness of the subject in the context of psychology. It may seem unclear why Hegel introduces the term "psychological" [*psychologischen*] at all. We will see Hegel chooses the word because he takes Kant to be searching for the origin of our psychological states as opposed to *what is*.<sup>16</sup> After claiming that "Kant remains restricted and confined by his psychological point of view and empirical methods," Hegel gives a bit more information on this psychological point of view:

In the first place, as to the theoretic philosophy, Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason* sets to work in a psychological manner, i.e. historically, inasmuch as he describes the main stages in theoretic consciousness. The first faculty is sensuousness generally, the second understanding, the third reason. All this he

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<sup>16</sup> Our psychic states are surely a part of what is, but this partial investigation is precisely Hegel's complaint regarding the psychological starting point in Kant's investigation.

simply narrates; he accepts it quite empirically, without developing it from the Notion or proceeding by necessity. (VGP3, 340/LHP3, 433)

Hegel associates this psychological idealism with a psychological method he oddly calls historical. Hegel's claim is that Kant's approach haphazardly assumed we should follow the empiricists and confine our metaphysical discussion to what is empirically experiential, since what is available for experience is that which comes from the sensuous manifold. In a historical fashion, focusing on the ground of experience, we find our present state, and can then work backward to its necessary conditions. Hegel's use of the word "historical" is important to highlight that he understands Kant to work in an etiological fashion – that is finding prior explanations for present states of affairs. Identifying the etiological approach in Kant matters because it gives us Kant's starting point (our self-consciousness). We can see the results of such a beginning (narrating a sequence of cognitive acts) and point to a direction to stay away from (reducing our metaphysical inquiries to transcendental conditions in an attempt to investigate thinghood). For Hegel, Kant foregoes understanding either the thing in itself or thought in any substantial way ('developing it from the Notion'), as Kant is only looking for those conditions necessary to explain a present psychic state as we experience that state – or how any human would ideally have an experience. If that is so, we can expect that Kant is only looking for the sufficient conditions to explain how we experience things as we do, and from this psychological manner, having assumed the presence of sensuousness generally, an understanding, and a faculty of reason, Kant can ignore external challenges outside this view as relying on unanswerable antinomies or unknowable things in themselves. For Hegel, such a procedure radically increases our chances to content ourselves with an investigation into psychology as the new metaphysics, and again

sidesteps the very structure of an ontological investigation in switching being in itself for our experience of being.

Hegel's criticism is not just a complaint of Kant's general program. In the *Science*, Hegel relates this criticism explicitly to the phenomenal-noumenal distinction:

[Kant's philosophy] has declared the content of the cognitions of the understanding, and of experience, to be phenomenal, not because of the finitude of the categories as such, but on the ground of a psychological idealism, because they are only determinations derived from self-consciousness. (WL2, 261/SL, 520)

It is not finitude [*die Endlichkeit*] Hegel takes issue with nor is it opposition either. For Hegel, there is an opposition between thought and being, phenomena and noumena, and in further agreement with Kant, we know by way of a finite intellect.<sup>17</sup> These agreements are why the above passage does not take issue with the finitude of the categories as problematic for cognition. Kant has gone wrong by making self-consciousness<sup>18</sup> the only normative quality in Kant's transcendental project – its apparatuses legislate what we can and cannot know. Whatever appears for experience does so from and for one's self-consciousness and thereby one's psychic states.<sup>19</sup> Still, Hegel is not out to disparage the psychological dimensions of Kant's critique. Hegel indicates that the role Kant gives to subjectivity in knowledge acquisition is not false *per se* but one-sided [*einseitig*] (ibid.).

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<sup>17</sup> Hegel's endorsement (and transcendence) of finitude and opposition is addressed in Chapter Five.

<sup>18</sup> "Self-consciousness" in this context refers to the individual's subjective awareness. In this passage, Hegel is using the term in its commonly accepted form. Starting in Chapter Three, however, Hegel's meaning of consciousness is made clear, and in so doing we will see it is not reducible to the type of awareness he mentions here. I mention this because as one approaches the later chapters of this dissertation, we will find that the content of cognition is indeed determinations of a self-consciousness, but not the type that Hegel is discussing in the current passage, which refers to the finite subject's first-person awareness. In the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel is clearer when he specifically states that Kant's method "remains still the individual self-consciousness as such" (VGP3, 351/LHP3, 443).

<sup>19</sup> As a point of clarification, Hegel is not claiming that a psychological idealism is the ground of Kant's philosophy. Hegel's passage indicates that Kant appeals to a psychological idealism to justify the content of cognition as phenomenal.

Key features of the conditions of the possibility of self-consciousness are an integral part of our method of grasping reality. The one-sidedness Hegel is critical of is stopping with those subjective conditions in our investigation of metaphysics. If the objects of our experience “pertain to our subjective thinking only,” and what they are in themselves is admitted as independent of our thought, Kant’s explanation of thinghood describes one aspect of a claimed duplicitous reality – the object as we experience it and the object apart from our experience. Another way to think of Hegel’s dissatisfaction over Kant’s metaphysical restriction is that with Kant’s final boundaries for knowledge, a metaphysics emerges of only a portion of reality – that of reality’s subjective conditions in isolation of both its subjective and objective conditions from an objective point of view. Hegel is concerned that Kant makes the one-sidedness of thinghood the only side of our philosophic investigations. In adopting this notion of thinghood, we move from the psychological method to its results – a metaphysics of subjectivity. This refuge in subjectivity, the shift from the ontology of the in-itself to the epistemology of our consideration of the in-itself as a boundary concept, becomes the new metaphysics. Hegel focuses on the psychological and subjective elements in Kant’s thought with the purpose of making it clear what Kant has us surrender, and what price we pay in doing so.

Before turning to Hegel’s alternative view of thinghood, we should consider Hegel’s concern over a performative contradiction in Kant’s account of thinghood. Hegel argues that Kant commits a series of performative contradictions by treating thinking as an instrument (instrumentalism) and presupposing the supersensible to argue our experience of things is limited to sensibility. Here our discussion shifts from the metaphysical relationship of phenomena to noumena to a problem for cognition that

results from the phenomenal-noumenal distinction. A difficulty emerges when knowledge, explicitly thought, is taken as a thing in itself. The difficulty is that the source by which we claim to know objectively is revealed to be another for us and not a thing in itself. As the restriction thesis presents itself in cognitional theory, claims to objectivity within the restriction thesis become contradictory, as the instrument of knowledge is no thing in itself nor is the content known capable of passing the test of being an item of knowledge in itself. This amounts to claiming knowledge about an instrument in itself to deny knowledge of any in itself, including that instrument claimed to be known – hence, a performative contradiction.

These difficulties in articulating what knowledge is within the restriction thesis are first seen in Kant’s instrumentalism. Instrumentalism establishes a barrier between ourselves and things with thinking as the mediator. The approach comes from supposing the absolute opposition between things and our experience of them. Thought is meant to be the instrument that bridges this divide. Hegel twice compares Kant’s instrumentalism to a fabled paradox that a Scholastic encounters in the “resolution to learn to *swim, before he ventured into the water*” (E, 54/38). Hegel finds this methodological attitude bizarre because “the examination of knowing cannot take place other than *by way of knowing*” (ibid.). There are two noteworthy insights we can draw from this analogy. The first is that Kant claims we must pause our investigation into things until we can understand how we know. Hegel’s complaint on this point is that turning knowledge into a thing to know makes it just another thing we cannot know until we know how we know.<sup>20</sup> If instrumentalism is our approach, we will not venture into the water, as we can infinitely

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<sup>20</sup> I will return to this point below.

stall ourselves investigating the transcendental conditions of knowledge as opposed to knowledge itself. The second conclusion we can draw from this is Hegel's intimation that instrumentalism makes itself unnecessary, as one must already know what and how knowledge acquisition works if the results of an investigation into knowledge are to be true. The instrument is always already correct in that knowledge can be nothing other than what it is known by. Treating knowledge as an instrument makes "examining it...nothing other than acquiring knowledge of it" (ibid.). In one sense, Kant's instrumentalism incurs the charge of a performative contradiction in denying what it uses, and in another sense, his instrumentalism is undermotivated in its lack of necessity. For Hegel, in both cases, it is instrumentalism that is keeping us from grasping the in itself and not a problem essential to cognition.

The Scholastic reference above may seem to suggest that Hegel's Kant makes too much of our difficulty to know things in themselves. Later in the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel explains that the heart of Kant's worry over knowledge acquisition (how to know what knowing is) is not misplaced. However, yet again, Kant errs from his empirical leanings, because he cannot treat these forms in themselves – only how they relate to our sensuous experience. Hegel writes:

[T]he faculty of knowledge was now supposed to be investigated prior to knowing. In this there is contained the correct thought that the forms of thought themselves must indeed be made the object of knowing. However, the misunderstanding of wanting already to know prior to knowing or of wanting not to set foot in the water before one has learned to swim, very quickly creeps into the process. To be sure, the forms of thought should not be employed unexamined, but examining them is already itself a process of knowing. Consequently, the activity of the forms of thought and their critique must be joined in knowing. The forms of thought must be considered in and of themselves [*an und für sich*]. They are themselves the object as well as the activity of the

object. They themselves examine themselves and they must determine for themselves their limits and point up their deficiency in themselves. (E, 114/84)

In this passage, we begin to see something beyond a criticism of Kant's method, as we are presented with an alternative we will see Hegel develop throughout this dissertation. Within the idea of instrumentalism is the seed of another idea – “the forms of thought themselves must indeed be made the object of knowing” – that is, these forms are instruments that need examining (ibid.). The structures through which we think, the categories we use to understand being, are indeed used and in that sense like an instrument by which we know. Therefore, it is not enough to simply examine how we use these forms to make experience intelligible. Our task should include an explanation of what these forms are in and of themselves beyond their mere personal utility for us. In this same sense, we can treat the forms of thought like objects (or collectively as an object). The desire to objectify the thought forms for the sake of understanding understanding is not wrongheaded, and will prove to be necessary, but apparently not at the right time in Kant's sequence of the investigation into thinking. Hegel, as we will see in Chapter Three, insists that these forms of thought are to be our starting point, and all insights about reality must come from “thought thinking thought.” For now, Hegel tells us that Kant errs because “the forms of thought must be considered in and of themselves” (ibid.). It may be unclear in what sense Kant has not treated these forms in and of themselves, but we must first ask what sense there is in investigating the in itself of anything from the Kantian perspective we have examined here. Those forms, apart from our experience of them, would be wholly transcendent to our knowledge. The in itself of the forms of thought is everything we will never experience. Hegel claims that “[t]he objective, according to Kant, is only what is in itself; and we know not what Things in

themselves are” (VGP3, 382/LHP3, 472). There is no point in asking what those forms are objectively and no evidence to prove we have understood them in themselves. Secondly, we are not addressing the forms in themselves in the Kantian procedure because of the instance that their relevant scope is in appearances. This insistence forces the forms to be instrumental and no more. They are heuristic devices for knowing, provided by our cognitive faculties to make sensuous data intelligible. The Kantian approach has us investigate those forms as they pertain to our experience. The forms serve as an instrument because all we know of them is how we use them. According to Hegel, “the activity of the forms of thought and their critique must be joined in knowing” (ibid.). With Kant, we get an account of *our* activity in employing these forms and not the activity of the forms themselves. The critique of these forms, in Kant, is a critique of our limited ability to employ these forms. Hegel is concerned that neither the critique nor the activity of these forms emerges in Kant’s analysis. It is replaced by the psychological preoccupation with what we do with these forms and what we can claim to know about these forms based on their function to facilitate empirical experiences. Hegel is convinced Kant’s preoccupation with human self-consciousness led to setting aside the issue of what these forms are in themselves because the investigation was intended to explain only those *a priori* conditions necessary for sensuous experience and subjugating metaphysics to the restraint of those conditions. Consequently, Kant closes the door on investigating being in and of itself, which Hegel takes to be a hasty and undermotivated maneuver.

In contrast to Kant’s more conservative approach to metaphysics, Hegel’s alternative approach is likely to sound either absurd or impossible. He writes that the

forms, “themselves examine themselves and they must determine for themselves their limits and point up their deficiency in themselves (E, 114/84). At the beginning of this chapter, I mentioned that Hegel would reject the idea of knowing as a first-person subjectivity. The argument for this must wait until Chapter Four. Nonetheless, the inevitability of this view in Hegel’s work rears its head here. He is explicitly claiming that, in some way apart from our interaction with them, these forms have some internal mechanism for which they are self-critiquing. They not only do but *must* “determine for themselves their limits” (ibid.) They will demonstrate their deficiencies, and in this sense, they “themselves examine themselves” (ibid.) Here Hegel assumes that the forms of thought (at least) can have their own intelligibility apart from our determinations of them. He suggests we would have been better served to examine their internal logic rather than impose our behaviors on them. These forms are not just autonomous objects apart from our experience, but they are also “the activity of the object” (ibid.) It is not our subjective employment of the forms of thought that activates them and makes them real. They are not the borrowed existents (or instruments) from our self-consciousness. Hegel suggests that they turn up in self-consciousness, but it is their activity upon our consciousness that is prior to our understanding of them. Because we encounter these forms as opposed to creating them, their autonomous nature signifies that an account of our subjective operations does not explain these forms. Kant’s analysis of these thought determinations is, therefore, incomplete and thereby distorts our understanding of these forms through his analysis’ lack of a comprehensiveness. This distortion is most significant in claiming our knowledge is limited to concepts and intuitions, but failing to explain what concepts are apart from our subjective manipulation of them. Our understanding may be bound to

the unity of concept and intuition, but Kant has not demonstrated that these concepts are produced by the understanding. He has, according to Hegel, simply taken up a common assumption about their origin. Without an exhaustive examination of the origin of concepts, the scope of knowledge contingent on those concepts is unknowable, because we would not know (either affirmatively or negatively) what realms of being are (or are not) conveyed in thought. We would not know where the concepts come from and what that origin may (or may not) convey about a reality apart from experience.

The next contradiction Hegel observes in Kant's restriction thesis is the finality (or absoluteness) of the barrier between the phenomenal and noumenal. Hegel notes, "Something can be known [*gewult*], even felt to be a *barrier*, a lack only insofar as one has at the same time *gone beyond* it" (E, 144/107). It may seem a trivial point, but we could rephrase Hegel's claim to say that we already know something about the object that is beyond the appearance of the object because we can differentiate the phenomenal and noumenal as opposed to seeing the phenomenal as noumenal. That the noumenon has conditions is already some knowledge about its qualities. The contradiction, for Hegel, emerges in Kant because Kant overemphasizes the analysis of the phenomenal quality of our knowledge, and does not find it nearly as remarkable as Hegel does that we have managed to say something about the object's noumenal quality in the very attempt to abstain from claiming any noumenal knowledge.

Even if Kant does not make much of this ability, Hegel feels Kant should have seen a contradiction in using knowledge in itself (noumenal knowledge) for knowledge conditions that deny knowledge of the noumenal. For Hegel, Kant intends his restriction thesis to hold for the absolute character of knowledge. However, if Kant intends to

maintain that this thesis is the case, Hegel argues we have a self-refuting critique of the scope of our knowledge.<sup>21</sup> If we try to figure out why knowledge can go no further than appearances, it would seem our investigation into this claim should never require knowledge of any things that are not appearances. Hegel finds this requirement inconsistent:

It is therefore the greatest inconsistency to admit, on the one hand, that the understanding acquires knowledge of appearances only, while maintaining, on the other, that this kind of knowledge is something absolute by saying that knowing *cannot* go further, that this is the *natural*, absolute barrier [*Schranke*] for human knowledge [*Wissen*].<sup>22</sup> (E, 143-44/106)

Hegel's emphasis on "cannot" and "natural" highlights his discomfort in the idea that the restriction thesis is something that has a normative quality for knowledge in itself.

This restriction comes from a human predicament and not a philosophic method that imposes conditions we know to be absolute. However, it is important to ask what makes this view inconsistent and opposed to merely incorrect.

Michael Baur phrases the inconsistency in a helpful way, noting, "The Kantian dichotomy between what is 'for cognition' and what is 'in itself' amounts to the contradictory idea that cognition is simultaneously both 'outside of the truth,' yet 'nevertheless true' as well."<sup>23</sup> If the understanding is restricted to appearances, and appearances are not things in themselves, what is for cognition is not known to be true of things in themselves. If this is the case, then we are outside of the truth of things in

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<sup>21</sup> While this criticism has been expressed numerous times, its most succinct account can be found in what Markus Gabriel refers to as Kant's epistemic nihilism. See Gabriel, Markus. *Transcendental Ontology: Essays in German Idealism*. (New York: Continuum, 2011). pp. x-xiii

<sup>22</sup> While Hegel is not credited with this insight, this is also nearly verbatim Guyer's own criticism of both Kant and Allison in his "Debating Allison on Transcendental Idealism." *Kantian Review*. Vol. 12, No. 2 (2007).

<sup>23</sup> Baur, Michael. "The Role of Skepticism in the Emergence of German Idealism." *The Emergence of German Idealism*. eds. Michael Baur & Daniel O. Dahlstrom. (Washington: Catholic University Of America Press, 1999), p.74.

themselves while trying to make a claim that is true of things in themselves. If this claim about our understanding's restriction is to address the understanding as it is in itself, this claim is addressing the appearance of the understanding. Hegel's belief is that Kant must claim one of two things, both of which are contradictions. The first contradiction would be to claim that (1) all our knowledge is reduced to appearances, and we know this is true through the *a priori* structure of cognition, which is not an appearance. As an *a priori* condition, it is, by definition, prior to experience and any appearance as the very condition of the possibility of such appearances. If we know the *a priori* structure in itself, and if we know by way of this structure, our knowledge is not reducible to or derivative from appearances. The second claim is that (2) we can know the understanding in itself from the appearance of the understanding. If this is the case, we can know things in themselves from the appearance of things, and then there is no restriction thesis. If Kant intends to argue that somehow we can abstract from experience to deduce something about the understanding itself, then there should be no absolute restriction as Kant has apparently overcome it in the very assertion of its presence. These two contradictions are paired to comprise "the perpetual contradiction in Kant's philosophy," whereby "Kant says that we must remain at what is one-sided, at the very moment when he is passing out beyond it" (VGP3, 382/LHP3, 472). Kant contradicts himself to maintain either (1) or (2), for Hegel, because just as Kant makes his case for the one-sidedness of knowledge of the phenomenal, Kant somehow appeals to our knowledge of the noumenal. Somewhere in the structure of the restriction thesis is a way outside of it to access the noumenal, and Hegel finds concrete existence implicit in Kant's empty abstraction of thinghood.

Despite Hegel's claim to our access of the noumenal, he should not be understood as a pre-critical metaphysician willing to grant some intelligible unmediated experience of what is in itself. In the *Phenomenology*, he tells us that:

The object, it is true, seems only to be for consciousness in the way that consciousness knows it; it seems that consciousness cannot, as it were get behind the object as it exists for consciousness so as to examine what the object is in itself, and hence, too, cannot test its own knowledge by that standard. (PG, 16/PS, 54)

Hegel grants that it seems unlikely we could "get behind the object" as we experience it. Transcending our experience seems unlikely as we have no other experience of the object than the experience we have of it. A denial of this sort of restriction would be an absurd proposition. However, edifying as our examination into human cognition may be for understanding what knowing is for us, in our inquiry into "the truth of knowledge, it seems that we are asking what knowledge is in itself" (PG, 15/PS, 53). Hegel wants us to view knowledge as a thing or an object itself, and he discourages us from understanding knowledge as an abstract noun from the activity of knowing. Again, this is a break from Kant's search for *a priori* conditions of experience into a more rationalist perspective of treating concepts in some (as yet undetermined) ontological fashion. For Hegel, knowledge is a concept that serves as an object of investigation and thereby is a thing, even if immaterial.

The more rationalist alternative is not wholly absent in Kant. According to transcendental investigation, there are no phenomena in the absence of *a priori* intellectual conditions for experience. This intellection (or thought) is understood not to be contingent upon anything, and because of its lack of conditions is "the absolute ultimate" because "for it nothing external is authoritative" (VGP3, 331/LHP3, 424).

Hegel takes this idea to move us away from empirical leanings because “all authority can receive validity only through thought” (ibid.) Thought should be the lens from which we should understand any other philosophic discoveries because thought is the only unconditional source from which all validity must arise. Hegel expects that Kant should see thought as the most primordial condition of all phenomenal reality – the only reality we experience. In this precondition for phenomenality, an “absolute standpoint” [*absolute Standpunkt*] is revealed as the origin of our experience that “binds together the finite and leads up to the infinite” (ibid.) By this, I understand Hegel to mean that thought’s unconditional nature as a prerequisite to experience makes thought a part of every particular finite experience. It binds all our finite experiences, as the unifying condition behind them all.

This unifying condition of the finite to the infinite is thought “determining itself within itself” [*Sich in sich selbst bestimmen*], whereby an experience becomes “concrete” through the intelligibility that thought bestows upon it. From this, we can get a sense that Hegel has something ontological in mind in his expectations of how we should regard thought. In one sense thought is merely the subjective act of gathering diverse finite elements of reality to provide concrete, intelligible experiences. In another sense, however, for whatever exists from the transcendental standpoint, its existence is owed to thought. The standpoint itself is owed to thought. Within the transcendental view, being is being thought. Irrespective of our concepts’ limited application to the sensuous manifold, they are *a priori* categories of a concept – being. If we were to pursue this line of reasoning (as we will in Chapter Three and Four), we would find good reason to affirm an identity between thought and being. Hegel is disappointed that Kant does not. With

Kant, concepts without intuitions are “empty,” and this thereby makes the concept of being empty except to the degree that the concept is elucidated by sensuous intuitions.

### Hegel’s Alternative Notion of Thinghood

Returning to the empty abstractum of Section Three, I have mentioned that Hegel’s criticism of this abstraction is not that it is false but that it is one-sided. To understand the breadth of Hegel’s ontology, the important question to ask is how the noumenon is both an empty abstractum of the thing in itself and that thing from which the abstraction is made. For Hegel, the answer to this question is the fact that there are several modalities to being,<sup>24</sup> one of which is Kant’s abstractum and another is the intelligible structure of concrete existents as an identity of thought and being. To advance beyond a mere list of criticisms of Kant’s restriction thesis to some positive doctrine of thinghood, Hegel wants us to grasp that Kant’s restriction fails because “the thing in general advances beyond its mere in-Itself as the abstract reflection-in-itself” (E, 229/192). What is first important to note in this remark is that there is something inherent in the notion of a thing that transcends it being merely a thing in itself. Kant’s noumenon implicitly reflects an ontologically wider thing in itself than the empty abstraction, and “[j]ust as the seed advances beyond itself to the plant, this empty abstraction can be developed correctly to express what is implicit within it” (ibid.). What is interesting in this claim is the suggestion that we can reach what is essential about thinghood through mere reflection

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<sup>24</sup> My own explanation of the following passages understands Hegel’s notion of being with little variation from Aristotle’s notion of *pros hen equivocality* (diverse meanings that are derivative of one unifying concept of being) in the *Metaphysics*. See Book Γ in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. trans. & ed. W. D. Ross. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).

on this apparent emptiness. We do not need to look to individual things to discern what thinghood is, and more to the point considering what Kant shows us about phenomena's failure to exhibit the noumenal, we cannot discern thinghood from individual things.

On thinghood, Hegel aims to show that Kant's restriction carries the seed to overcome the restriction Kant imposes. If we dismiss the particular things, we find (as Kant does) that "the thing in itself is nothing other than the completely abstract and indeterminate thing in general" (ibid.), because it is just that part of the object of our experience devoid of any determinations:

one might by the same right also speak of the quality-in-itself, the quantity-in-itself, and equally of all the remaining categories, whereby these categories would have to be understood in their abstract immediacy, that is to say, apart from their development and inner determinacy. (ibid.)

Two important insights occur in this passage. First, as mentioned above, Hegel is trying to persuade us to stop thinking of thinghood in terms of the particular things we experience. A thing, in general, is so abstract that the sensuous object will not serve to demonstrate what thinghood is because the thing in itself is the absence of all sensuality. As we can use "in itself" as a predicate of whatever we wish, we can forego the starting point with the objects of experience as they are all prey to the same emptying power of the in itself. A discussion about things in themselves gives us the same in itself in every instance (be it a dog, a car, or a concept). The in itself, as the Kantian noumena, is the same absence of any determination for each of these things. At the core of Hegel's objection is the opposition to the idea that we must derive the concept of thinghood from our interaction with particular things. He sees in Kant's discussion of thinghood that we will never arrive at a knowledge of the thing in itself from particular things. Second,

Hegel intimates how we might stop trying to arrive at an understanding of thinghood from what we cannot infer from our experience. He contrasts the abstract immediacy of Kant's noumenon to what he takes to be a more profitable examination into the concept of thinghood by turning towards the concept's development and inner determinacy (ibid.). However, the concept of thinghood in the absence of reference to particular things creates a problem for us. One might rightly ask what meaning there is in affirming that something, which is no particular thing, has any discernable aspect from which we could investigate its features or inner determinacy. How the concept of the in itself does not become a particular concept (and thereby a particular thing by Hegel's view) is initially unclear. If the concept is a particular thing, we have another empty abstraction. We have "thinghood in itself" just as arbitrarily as "quantity in itself" or "quality in itself."

Remember, however; Hegel has already affirmed that the in itself always gives the understanding the empty abstraction. The empty abstraction is the seed that becomes the tree. Regarding our method of investigation, our germinal state is such that we must start our investigation into thinghood not with an examination of empty abstractions but from the realization of their necessary abstract nature. We may attempt to stop our investigation into thinghood at the empty abstraction because it is the result that always occurs in considering our experience of things in relation to things in themselves.

However, if we start another examination into thinghood considering this emptiness, we are left with the question of what this abstraction is in relation to being (or what exists). In this second examination, we achieve a more comprehensive account of the abstraction, its origin, and from that account, a more critical analysis of thought's relation to being emerges.

Before proceeding to the notion of thinghood, it is necessary to introduce two terms. Akin to the concepts of things in themselves and things for us, Hegel discusses being in itself and being for other. Following Kant, when we think of any object, there is a duplicitous nature about it – its noumenal and phenomenal aspects. Being lends itself to this same distinction:

Being in itself and being for other are different at first. But that something also has in it what it is in itself and conversely is in itself also what it is as being for other – this is the identity of being in itself and being for other, in accordance with the determination that the something is itself one and the same something of both moments, and these are in it, therefore, undivided. (WL1, 129/SL, 93-94)

Any thing, like with Kant's distinction, has a discernable opposition between what it is in itself and a wider context of what it is in relation to something else. We can identify these as two modalities of being, as being lends itself to being understood in more ways than one. Both expressions of being are separate moments but of the same thing. They share the same identity, as both are equally the same being. The for-other and the in-itself differ as separate aspects, but their difference is unified in that these aspects are of the same thing. Hegel's Kant would maintain that the portion of the identity which is the in-itself is not available to our understanding because it is not a for-other. However, Hegel is speaking of being in general whereas Kant's distinction regards particular objects. Kant forecloses the option to talk about being in itself, and so he misses the modal connection of the unity of phenomenon and noumenon in being itself, and not just for the understanding.

We have nothing in the distinction above that tells us how things in themselves relate either to being or ourselves. If thinghood is to capture actual things in themselves, Hegel needs to find a way to move from this universal concept of being to the particular

concept of thinghood as it is instantiated in the concrete individual thing. Hegel attempts the move from being to thinghood to individual things in the *Science's* chapter "Concrete Existence," and particularly in the first subsection on "the Thing and its Properties." His discussion moves in a procedure of implications, expansions, and revisions. By this I mean as he discovers something about one thing, it will have implications for another thing, and those implications for the second thing will revise the notion of the first thing.

I will first examine what Hegel means by "concrete existence," then "concrete existent," and conclude with what a thing in itself is in the context of the relationship between concrete existence and concrete existents. Earlier in the *Science*, Hegel argues that "Existence is *determinate* being; its determinateness is *existent* determinateness, *quality*. Through its quality, *something* is opposed to an *other*" (WL1, 119/SL, 83). Regarding being, existence is a particular modality (or moment) of being that has qualities, determinations, and the ability to be differentiated among other beings. Hegel defines concrete existence as "an immediacy that has arisen through the reflection of the mediation into itself" (WL2, 124/SL, 423). Concrete existence is an instance of existence where the ability to be some determinate thing (a thing with qualities) becomes that actual thing (reflects those qualities). Existence itself is the realm of possible predication (determinations of quality) that presupposes the presence of such qualities to determine. It is this presupposition of predicates that makes existence determinate being as it has these predicates to actualize in concrete existence; concrete existence is the actualization of those determinations that presupposes their existential possibility. In other words, concrete existence is the realm where the possibility for a thing to be some particular way becomes the actual thing in a definite way. The "reflection of the mediation into itself"

[*die Reflexion der Vermittlung in sich selbst*] is the moment that shows concrete existence can be something as opposed to an other. When one of these somethings manifests itself in being, it is a concrete existent. The undetermined realm of being (the universal), contains the possibility of a plurality of determinate things (the particulars of concrete existence), with the actual determinate things as instances of that possibility becoming determined (individual concrete existents). The possibility (concrete existence) is reflected, and thereby discernable, through the concrete existents. It is a necessary condition for anything to manifest itself with any determinations simply because if there were no precondition as the possibility of such a manifestation, there would logically be no manifestation.

Hegel begins to relate these notions of concrete existence and its existents to things as follows:

Concrete existence as a concrete existent is posited in the form of the negative unity which it essentially is. But this negative unity is at first only immediate determination, hence the oneness of the something in general. But the concretely existent something is different from the something that exists immediately. The former is essentially an immediacy that has arisen through the reflection of mediation into itself. The concretely existent something is thus a thing. (WL2, 125/SL, 424)

For every concrete existent, there is the negative unity [*die negative Einheit*] (between the concrete existence and concrete existents) that comprises its essential character. The negative unity is simply to say that the two are unified but through the negation of each other. An existent is not existence, but an existent is also contingent upon existence to be. Existence is not an individual existent, but if there were no individual existents, nothing would exist. This is the negative unity of concrete existence and concrete existents, and this difference between them is an essential reciprocal relationship that makes each of

them what they are. This unity is essential because their most primordial quality is “at first only immediate determination,” and serves as the identity (or “oneness” [*einheit*]) of something *in general*. Hegel cautions us to keep in mind that a concretely existent something is not the same as something in general. Concrete existents are further determinations of being than the immediate identity of something and its possibility to exist. Something in general is the structure of the thing apart from its particulars. When that structure obtains qualities, those qualities share their identity with the structure (of concrete existents coming to be through concrete existence). That sharing is the reflection of mediation into itself (*ibid.*). The mediation of the concrete existent and its concrete existence “concretizes” into one thing that is a reflection of their unity. That one thing is Hegel’s concept of thinghood. This reflected mediation (the negative unity) is the concretely existent something and is thus a thing (*ibid.*). Each thing must be that reflected mediation as implied in the conceptual unfolding of the notion of existence. Hegel writes that the thing in itself is “the simple reflectedness of the concrete existence within itself” (*ibid.*). The reflection of mediation, which is a reflection of the concrete existent, is nonetheless an abstract reflection. The reflection is not the existent but the existent’s mediation between what it could have been (its potential existence) and what it has been determined to be (its concrete existence as a concrete existent). The determinate thing is not the reflection, and for Hegel to claim that the thing in itself is the simple reflectedness of the concrete existence within itself is to say that the reflection is an abstraction from concrete existence (*ibid.*).

This reflection, we are told, “falls outside the thing in itself,” which looks as if Hegel is claiming that the reflection cannot be the thing in itself because it falls outside

the thing in itself (ibid.). However, this apparent contradiction is what makes the abstraction empty. Given that Hegel refers to the distinction between these aspects of mediation of concrete existents as moments, there is what is essential to the thing in itself (the mediation) and what may best be described as the result of that mediation.<sup>25</sup> The abstract thing in itself is nothing in itself (hence empty) but the resultant reflection of some mediated concrete existence. The reflection is the unessential (to the concrete existent) representation of the concrete existent (ibid.). The abstraction “obtains...only when exposed to external reflection, though it remains indifferent to it” (ibid.). The abstraction obtains, or appears, in relation to something outside the thing itself. The best way to understand this abstraction is that there is the original noumenal thing in itself and then there is also the phenomenal thing in itself. The noumenal thing in itself is the essential relation of mediated concrete existence in the concrete existent. The phenomenal thing in itself is the way that mediation appears to others. However, the abstract thing in itself is also unlike the phenomenal as Hegel notes that it is indifferent to external reflection. The abstraction will only and always reflect one and the same thing (the concrete existent) irrespective of external reflection because it is a modality of the thing in itself and not our experience of something. There exists, then, an unessential element of concrete existents that is their empty abstraction, and this is the concept of the thing in itself when wrongfully expected to be understood solely by an analysis of phenomena. The phenomenal view of the noumena only discovers the empty abstraction and misses concrete existence as it seems to expect concrete existence to reveal itself in appearances. To fixate on the abstraction of concrete existents overlooks the opportunity

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<sup>25</sup> However, Hegel sees these modalities as simultaneous aspects of the thing and so “result” may be misleading since no modality causes another but reflect their unity in the thing.

to integrate that abstraction into its proper realm of investigation, which is being in itself, as opposed to our experience.

To appreciate the move from Kant's epistemological conditions for knowing objects to the ontological description of the thing in itself, we need to consider the various modalities of being Hegel puts at his disposal. We have discussed being in itself, being for other, existence, concrete existence, concrete existents, and things. All of these have their unique characteristics, and all of them are intended to be ontological descriptions of existent things. For Hegel, these are not just ways we are subjectively compelled to understand objects of experience. The concept of thinghood requires concrete existents, dependent on concrete existence, that are always both in themselves and for others in an ontological manner. Even as we move from the subjective act of contemplation of the concept of a thing, each determination of that concept's essential features speaks to the notion of thinghood irrespective of our experience of things. Each is a way of understanding what is, and for Hegel, no concrete existent or thing exists apart from these modalities. Hegel's discussion is one of the intelligibility inherent in the concept of being and not an account of what our knowledge fails to accomplish in comprehending what we cannot experience. His perspective differs from transcendental method since the notion of being, and its implications for existence, serves as a better litmus test for understanding what is than an examination of what we can experience.

In the context of Kant's thinghood, we can see now that Hegel accuses Kant of mistaking this unessential reflectedness of concrete existence for what things in themselves are supposed to be – concrete existents. Kant gives us the abstraction because he will not progress his analysis of thinghood further than reflected appearances. What

appears of the noumenal is the empty remainder of the object understood as an unknowable etiological posit of how the appearance appears – what Hegel means by Kant’s “historical” approach to his analysis of the noumena. The problem with this approach is the expectation that we should understand the in-itself the same as we understand the for-us. In the context of Hegel’s modalities of being, we can see that Hegel thinks Kant has grabbed the wrong moment to isolate as the concrete existent. The abstract thing is every bit a true modality of concrete existence, but as an abstraction, it points the way to a more primordial mediation between existence and existent.

### Conclusion

For what parts of the object itself that we do not experience, it can still be said that whatever we experience is still the thing in itself, irrespective of how partial or perspectival. The accuracy of what we understand from experience is a separate epistemological matter from the ontological matter of what the in itself is and its external reflection. From this empty abstraction in the external reflection of the phenomenal representation of the thing in itself, we can discern that there are proper predicates to the in itself Kant ignores. The in-itself (thinghood) has an intelligible structure that shows us both concrete existents and thereby concrete existence. This intelligible structure is something we can reason even if we cannot empirically experience the object in a noumenal fashion. For Hegel, Kant’s insistence of viewing the noumenal from the phenomenal vantage point, as a matter of method, forces us “to rely on chaff and husks alone” (E, 130/68). Such husks are indicative of concrete existence, but only when we

mistake the one modality of the in itself and with its totality. We miss the full scope of even what our experience signifies when we trade ontology for transcendental method.

However, Kant's trade of traditional metaphysics for transcendental philosophy is not wanton or undermotivated. Hegel's aim to gain back philosophic access to ontology risks replicating a problem Kant aimed to escape. Hegel's approach to thinghood is a highly rationalistic tactic where one might assume, as with Anselm's ontological argument, that Hegel has simply defined thinghood into existence. Shortly after Hegel's death, we first see the criticism in Kierkegaard who remarks that Hegel built "a palace of ideas" only to live "outside it in a barn."<sup>26</sup> The essential criticism, and its variants, is that Hegel's elaborate explanation of thinghood demonstrates no correspondence in a world outside of its relations of terms and logic. Hegel's world is a conceptual realm of inter-related ideas opposed to the concrete world he inhabits. The concern is how one is to verify that this account is the way being is apart from Hegel's insistence that the logic he explicates necessitates being must be this way. Answering that concern is outside our present topic – although this dissertation as a whole should aid in understanding why Hegel believes he has solved that problem. Still, this concern should be addressed in part within the present chapter as the reader may experience some of the same uneasiness about Hegel's procedure. At present, I can only offer a temporary motivation to set this concern aside until Chapter Five. The difficulty in understanding Hegel's account of thinghood is not to rush ahead to our expected outcomes for an account of knowledge of things. The scope of Hegel's analysis is not, in the context of this chapter, attempting to explain how we know particular objects exist or what we can know about particular

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<sup>26</sup> Kierkegaard, Soren. *Papers and Journals: A Selection*. (New York: Penguin Classics, 1996) p. 212.

objects. An ontology may explain the *nature* of particular things, but it is not an explanation of which particular things exist.

There is also the concern over what Gustavus Watts Cunningham refers to as “trans-experiential reality” – a reality wholly transcendent to our experience.<sup>27</sup>

Cunningham places the perceived difficulty in Hegel’s move from his account of logic to his philosophy of nature. In *Thought and Reality in Hegel’s System*, Cunningham addresses the charge of trans-experiential reality as it is formulated by Pringle-Pattison. Pringle-Pattison’s formulation is a succinct expression of the concern in Hegel’s method towards thinghood. The views of both Cunningham and Pringle-Pattison show us what is at stake in following Hegel’s logic and to what extent we should be concerned about such danger.

Cunningham interprets the criticism as an alleged verbal sleight of hand from which Hegel awkwardly moves from his logic to its unjustified leap into nature:

the criticism seems to be that in this transition Hegel deliberately attempted to deduce nature from the logical Idea, and that, by a copious use of metaphors, he deluded himself into thinking that he had successfully bridged the gulf which separates formal thought from actual existence.<sup>28</sup>

While the passage above refers to Hegel’s method generally, it has obvious significance to our present discussion. Pringle-Pattison’s states the objection as:

Existence is one thing, knowledge is another. But the logical bias of the Hegelian philosophy tends to make this essential distinction disappear, and to reduce things to mere types or ‘concretions’ of abstract formulae.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Cunningham, Gustavus Watts. *Thought and Reality in Hegel’s System*. (South Yarra: Leopold Classic Library, 2015), p. 74.

<sup>28</sup> Cunningham, *Thought and Reality*, 70.

<sup>29</sup> Seth, Andrew. *Hegelianism and Personality*. (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1893), p. 133.

Pringle-Pattison argues that Hegel too hastily collapses the bridge between existence and knowledge. His concern is that Hegel creates a definition of existence, calls it a concept, and treating it as a subject with predicates, Hegel tricks himself into thinking he has discerned something about actual existence, because he can find predicates to link to his own concept of existence. It appears to Pringle-Pattison as if Hegel has “ontologized” abstract thought, “and then has turned about and attempted to deduce concrete reality from this hypostatized abstraction.”<sup>30</sup> There are two concerns with this statement. The first concern is that Hegel may take certain concepts we have to be real just because we can have a concept of them – ontologizing our abstract thought. The second concern is that if we do ontologize thought this way, we delude ourselves into thinking we have made any demonstration of how nature must be solely because we are claiming an identity between the concept of something and the being to which it refers (the hypostatized abstraction from the concept). If Hegel’s identity of thought and being cannot somehow maintain a significant distinction, then Pringle-Pattison is right to claim that:

The result of Hegel’s procedure would really be to sweep ‘existential reality’ off the board altogether, under the persuasion, apparently, that a full statement of all the thought-relations that constitute our knowledge of the thing is equivalent to the existent thing itself.<sup>31</sup>

This is the most potentially devastating criticism to Hegel’s system. For whatever criticisms Hegel may have of Kant’s system, transcendental idealism begins with the objects of experience – existential reality. Hegel seems to want us to be satisfied with the idea that unpacking the logic behind our ideas of things (“all of the thought-relations that

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<sup>30</sup> Cunningham, *Thought and Reality*, 66.

<sup>31</sup> Seth, *Hegelianism and Personality*, 133.

constitute our knowledge of the thing”) leads to a tally (“a full statement”) of what the things are. This will give the impression that Hegel’s logic of being replaces the existential reality we experience as that which determines what can be real. In this case, Hegel’s logic would be a transcendental philosophy of experience that is indifferent to its relation to experience. It would attempt to account for the nature of reality that makes experience possible but do so indifferently to how we experience, because such data is made irrelevant to the concept of reality itself.

The possibility of creating a systematic account of reality by mere stipulation of terms is a concern not to be ignored, but a full answer to this concern is reserved for Chapter Four and concludes in Chapter Five. With respect to Pringle-Pattison, there is a fundamental misunderstanding in his use of “our knowledge.” As will be argued in Chapter Three, a vital project of Hegel’s is to overcome the notion that knowledge is a subjective act belonging to some pronounced being or beings alien to the intelligibility of things in themselves. For Hegel, *our* knowledge is a species of cognition, and it is the genera of that species which Hegel refers to when he speaks of intelligibility. Hegel indeed sees being as intelligible, which makes the study of being (ontology) possible since there is something inherent in being to be understood. The essence of being has a logic to it, and our participation in rationality allows us to grasp that essential logic in a scientific manner capable of exposition. The knowledge gained in ontology is a modality of being and not an act of subjective construction. Hegel’s *Science of Logic* is meant to be the exposition of being’s *logos*. The logos of being is the knowledge that includes our subjective participation in knowing but also transcends it in such a way that is irreducible to subjectivity.

With respect to the notion of Hegel's potential dismissal of existential reality in virtue of his preoccupation with logic, Cunningham gives us a conditional statement to bear in mind throughout the duration of this dissertation, whereby the conditions for Hegel's identity of thought and being become more palatable:

...if thought comprehends reality and is capable of expressing it, if there is no 'residuum' which lies outside of thought and which in its nature is inexpressible in terms of thought, then the science of thought is in a very important sense the science of things.<sup>32</sup>

This is a daunting condition to satisfy given the limited scope of our knowledge.

However, Hegel's idea of thought is not our thought, even if we must understand it through our thought. As transcendental to our thinking, it takes up our experience and is thereby experiential as opposed to abstract.

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<sup>32</sup> Cunningham, *Thought and Reality*, 62.

## CHAPTER 2

### INDIFFERENCE AND THE SUBJECTIVE IMPOTENCE OF REASON

In Chapter One we examined Hegel's conceptual advancement from the notion of being to concrete existents. However, Hegel's concept of concrete existents (thinghood in itself) does not explain our cognitive relationship with those existents. In the absence of such an account, we may discern the conditions of what comes to be and what sort of context it may exist in, but he provides nothing particular about how we encounter these objects. It is vital, then, to turn to Kant again, as Hegel uses Kant's theory of cognition as the springboard for his account of our relation to things.<sup>33</sup> For Hegel, "The fact to which Kant clings most strongly is this, that Being cannot be extracted from the Notion." (VGP3, 455/LHP3, 521). The mere idea of something has no implications for the existence of something, and so it is with our notion of being.

However, as we saw in Chapter One, Hegel argues that there is much to know about being from the mere concept of a thing. For Kant, we begin our encounter with objects through a relay between a sensuous manifold and sensibility. The relay continues to what we understand from that sensibility and how what is understood is organized to be intelligible to us through reason. Hegel endorses Kant's notion that the understanding (but not reason) must be rooted in sensuous data, and as Kant maintains, we not only

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<sup>33</sup> However, a crucial step in considering the cognitive relation between ourselves and things is the notion of categorization, which will not be discussed until Chapter Three, as its significance requires two chapters to fully explain in the context of Hegel's cognitional theory.

have a discursive understanding but also cannot understand any other way.<sup>34</sup> Because Kant and Hegel differ so radically on their notions of reason, however, I introduce their distinction between the two notions (the understanding and reason) to explain why Hegel diverges from Kant's account of reason (namely, its limitations) even as both share the same notion regarding the understanding.<sup>35</sup>

In this chapter, we will focus on Hegel's account of a problem the understanding generates for reason in the way that it determines (or presents) objects to reason. For between Kant and Hegel, the understanding creates serious difficulties for reason in its inability to give significance to the data it provides. As Michael Baur notes, "thought finds itself condemned to a perennial and arbitrary interplay of qualitative and quantitative alterations which lack any stable substance or truth of their own."<sup>36</sup> When thought first encounters its content, thought can combine or organize the content in a multitude of equally warranted ways that makes the content's organization seem arbitrary. For Kant, this may lead to paralogisms (erroneous arguments) or antinomies (two mutually exclusive conclusions that both apply) (*KrV*, A406/B433). This arbitrary interplay is caused by the understanding's inability to determine significant relationships between objects, as the understanding's goal is to grasp each object singularly. The part

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<sup>34</sup> On our grasp of the Absolute in relation to intellectual intuition (discussed in Chapter Four), Hegel writes, "Whatever richer name be given to it than is expressed by mere being, the only legitimate consideration is how such an absolute enters into *discursive* knowledge and the enunciation of this knowledge" (WL1, 81/SL, 55). This is far from a rationalist viewpoint, and Hegel does not attempt to bypass the empirical understanding. He will argue, however, that *reason* transcends finite experience.

<sup>35</sup> They also share much of the same understanding of what Hegel would call 'dialectical reason,' but Hegel understands Kant as never allowing us to move beyond reason's dialectical nature to its proper speculative nature.

<sup>36</sup> Baur, Michael. "Sublating Kant and the Old Metaphysics: A Reading from the Transition of Being to Essence in Hegel's *Logic*." *Owl of Minerva*. Vol. 29 (1998) p. 146.

of reason that seeks to understand that relationship principally is involved in comparisons to find qualitative differences.

Making the distinction between objects is the work of what Hegel calls *dialectical reason* [*dialektischer Vernunft*] (WL2, 492/SL, 693). For Hegel, “dialectical” simply refers to a movement of something [*Etwas*] as a “mere transition into an other” [*nur das Übergehen in ein Anderes*] (ibid.). The back and forth that makes reason dialectical is reason’s capacity to consider the determined objects from the understanding as relational. Dialectical reason takes the individual objects and attempts to pair them in a meaningful way. Diverse things stand in relation to other things as qualitatively different. Reason aims to grasp those differences in a way that unifies them into a comprehensive understanding. However, the understanding does not reveal which relationships are appropriate or not, and so dialectical reason creates relationships it has no means to justify.<sup>37</sup>

The absence of dialectical reason’s ability to provide an objective relation between objects is what Hegel refers to as “subjective impotence of reason” [*subjektive Ohnmacht der Vernunft*] (WL2, 287/SL, 539). This inability is the subjective impotence of reason that arises from the limited role of the understanding – which is a prime difficulty for any cognition that relies on the understanding. To dialectical reason, there is no rule for how it is to proceed, or which relationships it should identify. It cannot determine which relationships are either likely or actual. This impotence of reason renders the objects we encounter indifferent [*gleichgültig*] to one another. As such, the

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<sup>37</sup> Establishing the significance and accuracy of the relationship is the task of speculative reason, but this subject is left until Chapter Five as the means to assess Hegel’s account first requires a discussion of the intracategorical-extracategorical debate (Chapters Three and Four).

objects are indifferently related, and dialectical reason is indifferent to the proper relations. Dialectical reason will blindly produce any relations that are conceivable. Unfortunately, little secondary literature places much emphasis on this failure of reason except for a few neglected commentaries on Hegel's *Science*. Contemporary interpretations tend to neglect crucial points Hegel makes regarding his account of the insufficiencies of dialectical reason.<sup>38</sup> Little (if any) is made of Hegel's account of indifference [*indifferenz*] as a catalyst to grasp cognition's motivation towards (and realization of) Absolute Knowing. Outside of specific commentaries dedicated to the whole of Hegel's *Science*, like with concrete existence in the last chapter, indifference is almost wholly absent from discussions on identity and difference.<sup>39</sup> However, indifference is a consistent theme in Hegel's work that helps to distinguish the *identity* of thought and being from the mere diversity [*Verschiedenheit*] of two theoretically relatable concepts.

### The Understanding

For those in the Kantian and post-Kantian tradition, generally speaking, cognition is an act comprised of a relationship between sensibility, understanding, and reason. Having discussed sensibility in Chapter One, we will briefly look at Hegel's interpretation of Kant's understanding and reason to see where Hegel departs from Kant's model of

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<sup>38</sup> This is more the case for Hegel's adherents. His critics are quick to criticize dialectical reason, and sometimes unknowingly with Hegel's own criticisms of dialectical reason.

<sup>39</sup> It is odd (and disconcerting) that an anthology titled *Identity and Difference: Studies in Hegel's Logic, Philosophy of Spirit, and Politics* only has the word 'indifference' in this context twice (six in total) in twelve articles covering 289 pages. See *Identity and Difference: Studies in Hegel's Logic, Philosophy of Spirit, and Politics*. ed. Philip T. Grier. (New York: SUNY Press, 2007).

cognition. This departure will help us better understand why Hegel proceeds to develop his notion of reason in opposition to Kantian cognitive restrictions. In the Kantian tradition, these two aspects of cognition, understanding and reason, make the data of sense intelligible (the understanding) and choose which principles are necessary to guide this process (reason). The understanding grasps what is intelligible in the object of experience at reason's request for systematic comprehension of the data presented to cognition.

With Kant, "all acts of the understanding [are] judgments," where "judgment" [*urteil*] is defined as "mediate knowledge of an object, that is, the representation of a representation of it" (*KrV*, A68-69/B93-94). Our acts of understanding (mediating sensibility with concepts) are the result of our cognitive processes shaping (representing) the object (the representation) so that it conforms to the conditions necessary for us to experience it. When sensibility and concepts unite into judgments of the object, we have completed an act of understanding. Understanding, then, is the way we present an object to ourselves such that it is intelligible to us.

Whereas the understanding directly engages the data of our experience, reason plays a different role in cognition's drive to make experience intelligible. Regarding reason, Kant writes that it:

never applies directly to experience, or to any sensuous object; its object is, on the contrary, the understanding, to the manifold cognition of which it gives a unity *a priori* by means of conceptions – a unity which may be called rational unity, and which is of a nature very different from that of the unity produced by the understanding. (*KrV*, B359)

The scope of reason is limited to interact with one and the same object – the understanding. Reason is not an act of discernment of fact. It is not deliberation on events

or objects of experience. As the understanding is discerning how to represent the object, reason is discerning how to best organize the understanding. The understanding unifies representations into discrete judgments. Reason unifies these judgments under various principles of the understanding. The *a priori* unity affects both the beginning and end of the understanding's functioning. This rational unity directs the understanding to make a significant contribution to cognition in imposing a higher order of organized lawfulness on the data presented to the understanding. This lawfulness is a higher order because, as we will see in Chapter Three, the pure concepts of the understanding are already imposing a first order lawfulness when categorizing being.

Given the role reason plays in orchestrating systematic comprehension, for Kant, "Human reason is by its nature architectonic" (*KrV*, A474/B502). Reason's function and purpose is not to discern the truth of any *particular* matter, but systematically organize the understanding to maximize comprehension to the broadest context possible.<sup>40</sup> Kant makes reason's purpose clear: "reason is a faculty for the production of unity of rules (of the understanding) under principles" (*KrV*, B359). Reason's interest is to create a systematic unity of rules the understanding can use to represent representations. Reason is not trying to grasp what is true about reality *directly*, and this includes whether or not its choices regarding systematic unity are proper (or even what would constitute what is proper), even though its ultimate goal is its search to determine an objective unconditioned. As Kant notes, "the proper principle of reason in general (in its logical use) is to find the unconditioned for conditioned cognitions of the understanding, with

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<sup>40</sup> For a brief account of Kant's account of the systematicity of reason, see Paul Guyer's "Kant on the Systematicity of Nature: Two Puzzles." *History of Philosophy Quarterly*. Vol. 20, No. 3, (2003) p. 284ff. See also "Reason and Reflective Judgment: Kant on the Significance of Systematicity." *Noûs*, Vol. 24, No. 1, (1990) pp. 33-36.

which its unity will be completed” (*KrV*, A307/B364). According to Kant, we understand reason as the aspect of cognition that seeks the best explanation for how something *should* be understood – this *should* being the unconditioned for conditioned cognitions. Hegel insists Kant’s reason cannot accomplish this task because it is never allowed access to an objective unconditioned from which it could know its proper path of systematic organization for the understanding. Reason guesses, using trial and error and proliferates mutually exclusive positions (such as the existence and nonexistence of free will) depending on how reason systematizes the understanding (*KrV*, A407/B434).

Our best portrait of Hegel’s understanding of Kant’s account of cognition comes from his history of philosophy lectures. Hegel understands Kant to present us with a relay in cognition, whereby “[t]he first faculty is sensuousness generally, the second understanding, the third reason” (VGP3, 433/LHP3, 508). These faculties are not only quantified but work as stages from sensibility to intelligible experience. Hegel later remarks: “All our knowledge begins from the senses, thence proceeds to the understanding, and finishes up with reason; nothing higher than this is to be found in us, for it signifies the working up of the material of perception, and the reducing of it to the highest unity of thought” (VGP3, 443/LHP3, 518-519). In this sequence of events, to know anything we must first sense something, have this sensation given to the understanding for categorization and determination (judgment), then pass the determinations on to reason, whereby these determinations are related to principles to aid their significance to cognition’s desire for comprehension. There is no knowledge apart from this sequence as “nothing higher than this is to be found in us” (*ibid.*) because Kant has exhausted explaining the cognitive apparatuses for the material of perception (*ibid.*).

If what is to be understood is what can be perceived, and Kant has sufficiently explained what can be perceived, we need not speculate on the imperceptible, or if we do it is mere speculation – the principle target of Kant’s critical method.

Hegel’s complaint about Kant’s treatment of cognition is quite similar to his criticism of Kant’s account of thinghood: “All this [Kant] simply narrates; he accepts it quite empirically, without developing it from the Notion or proceeding by necessity” (VGP3, 508/LHP3, 433). Hegel is again concerned that Kant bases his account of cognition on an anthropological investigation into the idiosyncrasies of our understanding empirical objects. An anthropological investigation would tell us much about human behavior but little in the way of what cognition is apart from how we happen to cognize. He remarks that Kant, “hunts through the soul’s sack to see what faculties are still to be found there; and thus by merest chance he lights on Reason” (VGP3, 518-519/LHP3, 443). Whereas in discussing thinghood Kant looked to empirical things to examine how we understand them as the basis of what we can say they are, here Hegel believes, Kant looks to how we understand empirical objects to say what thought is.<sup>41</sup> As for the understanding specifically, Hegel quotes Kant’s remark that the understanding “is the faculty of thinking the object of sensuous perception” (VGP3, 516/LHP3, 441). In the *Lectures*, Hegel uses this idea to insist that Kant relied on too narrow a view of cognition because the source is, again, the sensuous manifold and the scope is human perception.

Kant placing the origin of thought in our encounter with the sensuous manifold is important to understand as a sequence, as it highlights the empirical scope of the understanding. For Hegel, “the understanding thus obtains from the sensuous its matter,”

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<sup>41</sup> Kant does, as we will see in Chapter Four, consider theoretically other forms of cognition, such as divine, but dismisses our need to account for models of thought we cannot ourselves experience.

and consequently the “thoughts of the understanding as such are thus limited thoughts, thought of the finite only” (VGP3, 512/LHP3, 437). Hegel notes this limitation because to his mind this restriction leaves us in a strange situation regarding the understanding. If it is only “when the sensuous faculty has supplied material and the understanding has united to this its thoughts, that knowledge results,” then the understanding’s only proper use is the judgment of sensible material (ibid.). Our concepts of being that we employ to understand sensuous material are, therefore, empty.<sup>42</sup> Maintaining the merely formal and empty character of these concepts leads to the idea that the notions of quantity, quality, modality, and relation are meaningless except in relation to how they function in perception. It appears to Hegel that, in Kant, apart from perception, these notions are empty concepts of unknowable imperceptibles (WL1, 69/SL, 41). If this is so, Hegel worries that with the categories of being, our only way to grasp being, we will be led by Kant to believe that we never actually grasp being through our concepts.<sup>43</sup> Hegel fears we will be content to restrict philosophic investigation into the scope of Kant’s categorization, which is of sense data alone. If we maintain this restriction, we block ourselves from understanding the wider context within which our thought takes place outside our perception.

Beyond this narrow view of cognition, Hegel finds Kant’s approach to determining the scope of cognition undermotivated. The principle difficulty Hegel finds in Kant’s account of cognition is that Kant’s theory of cognition cannot reach a coherent

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<sup>42</sup> Similar to the empty abstraction of thinghood in Chapter One, Hegel will agree that these categories are empty in a likewise sense, but because these are an abstraction of concrete being. Nonetheless, in another sense, they are real expressions of being itself. Their reality beyond their empty abstract nature (the extracategorial view of the categories) is discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>43</sup> This concern of Hegel’s is explained at length in Chapters Three and Four.

explanation of reason's systematic ambitions. Reason, as the final point in the relay after sensibility and understanding, seeks "the unconditioned involved in the conditioned knowledge of the understanding" (VGP3, 520/LHP3, 444). What this unconditioned is becomes a bit clearer with the following passage:

Reason is therefore, according to Kant, the power of obtaining knowledge from principles, that is, the power of knowing the particular in the universal by means of Notions; the understanding, on the contrary, reaches its particular by means of perception. (VGP3, 518-519/LHP3, 443)

Whereas the understanding uses perceptible sensations to determine objects into (or judge) experiential objects, reason has one object – the understanding. The materials reason must work with are the concepts of the understanding. Its working consists in the systematic organization of these concepts to obtain knowledge through these principles by reason's attempt at exhaustive comprehension. This exhaustiveness, once achieved, would be the unconditioned [*das Unbedingte*], the all-encompassing idea that accounts for the intelligibility of the representation (or object as experienced). In the absence of this exhaustiveness, the intelligibility of our representations could be partially explained through how we happen to cognize, but we still leave unexplained how reason has a notion of the unconditioned, which Kant introduces into his theory of cognition, and yet claims reason never encounters. Odder still is the idea that reason somehow knows enough about the unconditioned to direct reason's efforts towards manifesting the unconditioned.

The oddity stems from the fact that the unconditioned is not a perception or something that turns up in perception. As entirely conceptual, when Kant makes cognition contingent upon sensibility, he alienates us from the objective reality of the

unconditioned.<sup>44</sup> For Kant, the unconditioned remains a regulative idea from which we must believe in its possibility to explain the ambition of reason. Kant's reason desires the unconditioned but does not have the power to satisfy this desire (VGP3, 520/LHP3, 444). The mere idea of the unconditioned, for Kant, does not indicate some feature of reality except as a subjective desire. Hegel sees abandoning the objectivity of the unconditioned as an expected conclusion from Kant's restriction of cognitive data to the sensuous manifold. Hegel quotes Kant on the unconditioned as saying that "no congruent or corresponding object can be discovered in the sensuous world" (ibid.).<sup>45</sup> Whereas we may attempt to explain the reality of such abstract concepts like numbers or justice as supervenient from prior material conditions, Kant argues that the unconditioned has no place in the world of our experience and corresponds to no feature (or combined features) of it. We cannot deduce the unconditioned from experience, but it is permissible to infer its existence. Hegel attempts to explain how Kant makes the unconditioned transcendent to reason as follows:

And the reason which Kant gives for this (*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, pp. 277, 278), is on the one hand that no psychologically sensuous intuition or perception corresponds with the infinite, that it is not given in outward or inward experience...It depends, however, on how the world is looked at; but experience and observation of the world mean nothing else for Kant than a candlestick standing here, and a snuff-box standing there. (ibid.)

We can see again that Hegel believes Kant's ties to empiricism are standing in the way of the very thing Kant meant to describe. As with thinghood, which became things as they

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<sup>44</sup> The inability to establish the sort of objectivity Hegel has in mind may not pose a difficulty for every philosophic system, and Hegel's remarks about reason's difficulties are modeled explicitly on his understanding of Kant's model of reason. Even of Kant's theoretical philosophy, Hegel grants he has achieved a sort of objectivity (objective determinations of objects), but that it is defective and ultimately subjective (VGP3, 521/LHP3, 445).

<sup>45</sup> Hegel uses the term "unconditional" and "infinite" interchangeably in the passages that follow, as we will see shortly. Introducing the term "the infinite" does not change the context of our discussion of the unconditioned.

appear to us, we have no inward or outward appearance to call “the unconditioned” – nothing either material nor a part of our experiential psychic states. As Kant only allows empirical experience to count for our experience, it is little wonder the unconditioned remains an unreachable goal for cognition, as empirical limitations determine cognition.

Because we can neither use our outward experience of objects or our interior mental states to find the unconditioned, Hegel agrees with Kant’s view that:

It is certainly correct to say that the infinite is not given in the world of sensuous perception; and supposing that what we know is experience, a synthesis of what is thought and what is felt, the infinite can certainly not be known in the sense that we have a sensuous perception of it. But no one wishes to demand a sensuous proof in verification of the infinite; spirit is for spirit alone. (VGP3, 521/LHP3, 445)

First, Hegel does not expect that we would find the unconditioned where Kant is looking, but Kant is correct that the unconditioned is not observable for sensuous perception.

Sensuous intuitions and the concepts of the understanding give perception nothing but objects like candlesticks and snuff-boxes, and *in that sense*, we have no knowledge of the unconditioned. Hegel is not looking to jettison Kant’s account of how the understanding works. His principle target is Kant’s reason and empiricist foundations. Hegel believes the understanding will not comprehend the unconditioned, and therefore he allows the distinction between the understanding and reason to persist in his philosophic discourse to highlight the importance of reason. We can, per Hegel, reason what we cannot understand. We do have knowledge from what we reason, but it is not a part of the function of the understanding, but rather a part of cognition as a whole, with the understanding and reason working in conjunction. In Hegel’s concession to Kant’s claim that experience does not yield the unconditioned, he still finds it odd that one would ever think to look to perception for such a thing. It seems more likely to Hegel that if we have

this notion of the unconditioned apart from perception that we should reconsider how intimately tied thought is to the sensuous manifold.

While experience fails to convey the unconditional, Hegel still recognizes that experience of something is necessary to understand that something, but, of course, much of this requirement rests on what we mean by experience (ibid.). We want to understand the unconditioned but cannot. When we attempt to understand the unconditioned we have to turn it into a thing, to make it some concrete existent from which something could be understood. Hegel notes that “the unconditioned must now be grasped as concrete, and therein lies the main difficulty. For to know the unconditioned means to determine it and to deduce its determinations” (ibid.). We understand the unconditioned as one thing among others by the inability to think of it without an article, and indeed, we would have to experience an object that, by its definition, cannot be an object. This impossibility is why Hegel summarizes the outcome of Kant’s critique of reason by noting that “Kant says that reason has certainly the desire to know the infinite, but has not the power” (ibid.). Kant grants reason only “formal unity for the methodical systemization of the knowledge of the understanding” (VGP3, 521/LHP3, 455). In Kant’s relay from cognition’s data to reason’s employment, reason will never find what it is looking for within that relay. Moreover, as Hegel mentions, nothing outward indicates the existence of the unconditioned and neither does the inward. Reason itself cannot ground the notions that it uses except to say that they must be used. Again, we come back to Hegel’s discomfort with the historical treatment of what thought is as what we do when we think. Kant explains how phenomena are organized by cognition, and he regards this process as objective because this is what we must do to understand anything. However, such

organization does not tell us what is true or false but what we had to do to organize a set of data a certain way to have a particular kind of experience. Kantian reason, for Hegel, can provide a detailed and cogent view of the way something seems to us. Kantian reason, however, suffers the limitation of providing an account of only our cognitive habits as opposed to thought's relation to being.

Having briefly discussed Hegel's concern with Kant's account of the understanding and reason, we will now examine Hegel's alternative to Kant's account. The alternative, as it turns out, finds both the understanding and reason far more problematic than Kant does. However, Hegel believes that there is still a way to meet the shared outcome desired by both himself and Kant – the satisfaction of the necessary terms to know reason has grasped the unconditional.

Hegel's interest in Kant's account of the understanding lies in the understanding's power to determine objects. Our discussion of the transition from existence to concrete existents should help us grasp how Hegel conceives of the understanding. As the modal nature of being contains a range from sheer indeterminate being (isness) to the individual concrete existents of our experience, this capacity to experience this modal nature begins with our understanding. The understanding first plunges itself into being to grasp specific beings through its power of determination. An undifferentiated manifold has something plucked from it, by the understanding, and this something undergoes an examination by cognition to see what it is, what categories it falls under, and what it is not.

Hegel's attitude towards the understanding appears strange regarding the understanding's capabilities for cognition. In the *Science*, Hegel tells us that the understanding possesses "infinite force" [*die unendliche Kraft*] (WL2, 286/SL, 538). In

the *Phenomenology*, he says the understanding has a power which is “the most astonishing and mightiest of powers, or rather the absolute power” (PG, 36/PS, 18). However, only a few pages later Hegel claims that the understanding is also a dead understanding [*ist eines gleich toter Verstand*] and its products lifeless [*leblosen*] (PG, 52/PS, 31). That the understanding exhibits an infinite force but is lifeless is hard to reconcile. Appreciating Hegel’s puzzling attitude on the understanding begins with his account of the power of determination. In the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel gives a concise definition of the understanding: “Thinking that produces only *finite* determinations and moves among them is called *understanding* (in the more precise sense of the word)” (E, 91/66). The precise, or technical, expression of the understanding is that our understanding individuates our individual objects of thought. It is thinking that looks at these objects individually by changing its focus from one thing to another. This movement is limited to the determination of objects and not to the relationship between them. The understanding never has any more to consider than the specific object under its consideration, as we will see below. While Kant focuses on the unifying nature of the understanding, Hegel focuses on the understanding’s ability to determine individual objects through a process of distinguishing objects by negation. Hegel’s perspective reveals an origin from which determinations emerge as opposed to pairing up two unrelated objects. Hegel’s perspective is not less problematic because of this approach, as the understanding’s ability to differentiate objects by determinate negations carries a force that is just as destructive towards what is understood as it is in aiding the understanding. This destructive nature of determination (and thereby the understanding) emerges in the notion of determination as differentiation. Hegel writes that “[f]or the

understanding, all determination is only a *limitation [Schranke]* of the simple *identity*, a negation as such” (E, 130/96). The power to determine an object is a power to differentiate objects. The understanding attempts to provide a determinate object by setting boundaries meant to keep the object ontologically distinct from other objects. Determination works as a principle of exclusion to establish the identity of the object to help us understand what the object is by understanding what the object cannot be.

The negative role of determination cannot be a full account of determination, as Hegel also discerns a positive role in determination that is not mere negation for the purpose of setting ontological boundaries. In the *Science*, Hegel writes:

Determination is affirmative determinateness; it is the in-itself by which a something abides in its existence while involved with an other that would determine it, by which it preserves itself in its self-equality, holding on to it in its being for other. (WL1, 132/SL, 95)

Hegel suggests there is a positive role determination plays despite its capacity to differentiate. *Affirmative determinateness [die bejahende Bestimmtheit]* is the positive remainder of negation as opposed to the previous passage’s *negative determinateness [die negative Bestimmtheit]*. The determination makes a positive judgment (in Kant’s sense in the previous section) regarding the wider context of the object. This determination is the power to keep the identity of the object fixed among the flux of all other objects that it might have been before determined. As Jon Stewart remarks, the understanding’s power of determination gives us the concepts of the *One* and the *Also*:

In order for an object to be determinate it must have these two aspects: it must be identical with itself and different from other things. Every determinate object has a self-relation, i.e., one of identity; in other words, it is just what it is.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Stewart, Jon. *The Unity of Hegel's "Phenomenology of Spirit": A Systematic Interpretation*. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2011) p. 69.

Determination allows the object to be the affirmative individual object it is with the aid of the negative determinations that set boundaries to create a discernable identity. While self-relation seems more like  $A=A$ , and the simple identity of “it is just what it is” seems more like  $A$ , Stewart’s point is that there is an interior identity that makes the object what it is. The affirmatively determined object is determined as *One*, which Hegel defines as “a relation of self to self and it excludes an other”<sup>47</sup> (PG, 95/PS, 69). The affirmative role secures the identity of the object at the cost of its identity in relation to other objects; it “excludes an other” to be “just what it is” (ibid.) However, the negativity of determination does not leave the identity of the object there, and this is why there are two aspects to determination.<sup>48</sup> A dual nature of identity exists that gives us the positive aspect of the identity of the object itself, and the negative aspect that gives us a context outside of that identity. That context for the object is its *Also*. The *Also* is still a part of its identity, but not its simple identity. Stewart explains:

But every determinate object also has a relation of difference to other things; in other words, by virtue of the given objects’ being what it is, it is NOT the same as other things. This is what Hegel calls the “Also.” The “Also” represents the object in its aspect of the plurality of existing properties; the object distinguishes itself in this way from other things.<sup>49</sup>

Determination affords a context from which difference emerges, but also preserves the identity of the object determined. This context allows a *One* to be an *Also*. The determinate object does not become something in relation to nothing, but “maintaining

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<sup>47</sup> This determination as *One* differs from the idea of one among many. When the determined object is viewed as *One*, its exclusion of an other is an exclusion of *any* other. This will become relevant in our discussion of diversity because an object as a discrete *One* becomes everything in reference to nothing else. However, for Hegel, this is how simple identity works, and in reality, every *One* is simultaneously an *Also*. These two terms are parallel inasmuch as each is the same identity, but also different as they are reciprocal determinations of each other. Every *One* (in itself) is always an *Also* (being for other).

<sup>48</sup> This will be explained in greater detail in the next section.

<sup>49</sup> Stewart, *Systematic Interpretation*, 69.

itself in its self-equality,” it is an object in a world of objects that do the same. The *in-itself* is the object’s identity for itself, but there is also the object’s *being for other*. These two terms are parallel because each is the same identity, but also different as they are reciprocal determinations of each other. Every *One* (in-itself) is always an *Also* (being for other). This being for other is where those same determinations of the object are retained in the context of some other differentiated object (WL1, 132/SL, 95). While identity is the goal of determination, such identity is contingent upon discernable differences. Such determination allows the understanding to draw distinctions such as  $A = \sim B$ , or  $A \neq \sim A$ , and  $A = A$ . A has its identity as well as its identity among other identities different from its own. The affirmative and negative powers of determination that make up the understanding give us the ability to discern identity and difference, and the core axioms of formal logic such as the law of non-contradiction. It is not hard to understand why Hegel would call this power to determine the mightiest power of cognition. In the absence of this power, it is difficult to see how anything could be distinguishable or intelligible. However, there is something about the process that Hegel sees as rendering this force “lifeless.” The remainder of this section aims to make clear the difficulties the understanding encounters despite its tremendous power. Difference becomes diversity, and the understanding fails to grasp the identity of the determined object. This failure occurs because of the infinite repetition of negation from the process of determining.

The understanding sets boundaries for individual objects of cognition (regarding how they can be present to cognition) by parsing differences through determination. These boundaries are established by a mechanism of negation – the capacity to create the negative determination of *not-that* and the positive determination of *but-this* through

differentiation. This process “abstracts, and therefore separates what remains fixed in its separations” (WL1, 38/SL, 25). The power to discern differences is the power to discern the qualities that make something that which it is and exclude the possibilities of what something might be.

The understanding abstracts by focusing on something particular within an undifferentiated manifold.<sup>50</sup> In doing so, it separates parts from wholes and creates the determinate distinctions of *One* and *Also*. On this distinction, Hegel notes, “a determinate something has the character of an other with respect to a first” (WL1, 72/SL, 50).<sup>51</sup> Because particularity is contingent on a prior whole from which something becomes particular, the understanding uses a principle of exclusion that guides its determination of the object as one thing in opposition to others. For the understanding, to grasp the identity of a thing is to distinguish it from other things. Whatever plurality exists, it exists because of negations from some undifferentiated *something* prior to the determined thing.<sup>52</sup> A simple analogy should suffice to grasp this process.<sup>53</sup> Imagine a piece of cake cut from its whole. This wedge is only the individual wedge because it is sliced from the whole cake. The piece is not an individual if it is just an undifferentiated area within the whole. It fails

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<sup>50</sup> This can be understood simply as “that which exists in a particular moment.”

<sup>51</sup> We will see, however, that while a determinate something has this otherness as a part of its identity, the understanding does not comprehend this.

<sup>52</sup> Hegel refers to this something as “pure being,” but clarifying this concept does not move my present topic forward.

<sup>53</sup> Technically, for Hegel, the following example is not an analogy, but a moment where the world exhibits diremption. Identity, difference, diremption, and the other concepts from his *Reflexionsbestimmungen* (WL2, 35-80/SL, 354-385) are not merely mental but ontological. A defense of the claim will appear in the next chapter. On the warrant to read *Reflexion* as ontological (as opposed to merely a part of our cognition), see Stephen Houlgate’s “A Reply to John Burbidge,” in *Dissertations on Hegel's Logic*. ed. George Di Giovanni. (New York: SUNY Press, 1990). Also, Hegel provides an alternate example from mine in his criticism of sense-certainty’s inability to grasp plurality, whereby we arrive at the “night in which all cows are black” (PG, 22/PS, 9). However, his example touches on several possible themes at once (e.g. a critique of immediacy to some scholars or the problem of indexicals to others), and proves more misleading for our discussion than it may be helpful.

to be a particular piece and fails to be the individual piece of cake present to us. As an individual piece of cake, it is not the whole cake. Its very individuality is because it is negated from that whole but consubstantial to that whole. So too are determinate objects to the degree that each is a part of that from which it is determined.

This process of negation is vital to providing us discrete units as determinations for cognition, but it cannot represent cognition. This incompleteness helps show why the distinction between the understanding and reason is made at all. This act of representing representations (as Kant puts it) is far from the reason that makes these representations meaningful in relation to other objects. Further, while the understanding allows matters to become more complex in discerning more nuanced differences, this raises a problem as the understanding does not stop its use of negation. A difficulty arises in that any stopping point proves arbitrary as there are always more differences to define. This negating power of the understanding exhibits the “diremptiveness” (or “brittleness”) [*Sprodigkeit*] of reality itself. (PG, 436/PS, 512). We can see this brittleness in Hegel’s use of architectural metaphor on the content provided by the understanding, which helps us imagine the abstract process of the understanding’s use of determinations. Hegel remarks that “[t]he understanding picks out only finite determinations; these are inherently [*an sich*] unsupported and wobbly [*haltlos und wankend*], and the building erected upon them collapses” (E, 109/80). These finite determinations are themselves structurally unsound and unsupported, and our confidence in using these determinations as a foundation for what knowledge is becomes untenable given the role of negation in determination.

As individual determinations treated as wholes in relation to nothing else, nothing outside these determinations exist to give them context and allow us to understand why one thing is one way and not another. The thinking of the understanding that moves among these determinations will not reach what is essential to these objects. The understanding abstracts *ad infinitum*. It continues to catalog all the distinctions it can make and can always make more distinctions. Noting divisions allows the understanding to keep separate what the object is or is not. Its mechanism is difference, and in seeking out what something *just is*, it always finds a *not just* in need of further qualification.

Hegel does not mean to disparage the understanding, but only to show that the understanding is an insufficient model of cognition. In fact, he suggests that:

we must pay due respect to the infinite force of the understanding in splitting the concrete into abstract determinacies and plumbing the depth of the difference – this force which alone is at the same time the mighty power causing the transition of the determinacies. (WL2, 286/SL, 538-39)

This mighty power that is within our capacity to understand allows us to render representations that our understanding grasps from the concrete world.<sup>54</sup> These representations allow us smaller portions of reality for further examination. Here Hegel's claim is that we can split [*zutrennen*] reality, as opposed to distort [*verzerren*], to consider the world by abstracting a series of determinations through the understanding. Hegel's concern with cognition is not that the understanding malfunctions, but that we must understand its limited scope in the role it plays in knowing. Often we express intelligibility, understood as comprehension, in phrases such as "I understand what you mean," and "This is understood." However, such expressions are misleading by Hegel's account (WL1, 17/SL, 10). The understanding does not comprehend. Comprehension

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<sup>54</sup> To understand should not be confused with "to comprehend" as mentioned below.

and comprehensiveness are reason's domain (ibid.). Reason reconciles differences whereas the understanding can only distinguish a One as an Also. The understanding has an infinite force [*unendliche Kraft*], which splits [*trennt*] the concrete into abstract determinations. These determinations are abstract, not because they are vague or poor copies of an original, but because the understanding separates a piece of reality from the concrete for the mind's consideration.<sup>55</sup> The understanding "plumbs the depths of difference" [*die Tiefe des Unterschieds zu fassen*], passing along what it differentiates to reason, as a shovel excavates an archeological dig for archeologists to sort. This method of excavation is, of course, vital to knowledge, but the understanding does not do what we generally consider to be knowing. It simply separates and passes on what it has separated.

The understanding places us in a bind between its ability to render determinate objects but also infinitely deconstruct them. The understanding abstracts a part of the concrete, rendering it brittle in its power to abstract from the abstraction *ad infinitum*. As an abstraction from the concrete, the understanding segments a portion of reality as if it were a piece broken off from a whole. The power to break up what is concrete through abstraction allows anything the understanding can grasp to be subject to that power. Every whole is brittle because it can break into abstract parts by the force of the understanding. However, it is the understanding that allows us to conceive of wholes at all. Hegel writes: "it is the understanding that through the form of universality imparts stable subsistence to the otherwise inherent instability of determinateness" (WL2,

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<sup>55</sup> A claim that I will have to defend much later is presupposed here – intelligibility is part of the object under consideration. The abstraction is indeed a piece of the object, but obviously not a material item. We've really got something about the object under consideration, and not a copy of it. This is the heart of the matter in the intracategorical/extracategorical debate addressed in the next chapter.

287/SL, 539). By the *form of universality* [*der Form der Universalität*], Hegel means that the determination is a totality as a whole or One. The understanding plumbs the depth of difference, and that this difference within the determinate object itself (and its relations from being an Also) has an inherent instability. Every determination occurs only to be determined further, and each whole breaks into parts. However, the understanding keeps the rigidity [*Härte*] of a stable subsistence for the diremption of each whole into two new wholes from the one determination that remains a whole itself (ibid.) Every determination (and each subsequent determination from what is already determined) has the form of universality – a self-subsistent whole. Through the understanding, we can grasp the concepts of universal, particular, and individual, and apply them to our experience. However, this power has no self-governing principle and operates as a mechanism. There is nothing within *the understanding itself* to determine when it should cease abstraction:

[W]hen one [object] has been described, then another must be started on, and continually looked for, in order that the activity of describing shall not come to an end. If it is no longer easy to find new *whole* things, then we must go back to those already found, divide and analyze them further, and bring to light fresh aspects of thinghood in them. This restless, insatiable instinct can never run out of material. (PG, 188/PS, 148)

In trying to piece together what something is, we move from that something to *the parts* of that something as *individual somethings*. These new aspects of the thing, as things themselves, invite the process to repeat. Reason's drive for comprehensiveness, however, "can never run out of material" (ibid.). What the understanding gives cognition is similar to a dismantled radio with its parts scattered across the floor. The understanding cannot reassemble it as it "plumbs the depths of difference." If it picked up a dial, not only is there no radio there to place the dial on, the understanding would try to grasp the dial in itself as an entirely determinate object. The dial is treated in "the form of universality" –

the only object that exists. The understanding will go on making distinctions about the dial and lose its original task of reassembling the radio. While the virtue of the understanding is in its capacity to present us with determinations, its infinite power brings an infinite amount of determinations to those determinations to the point of no end. When this process repeats indefinitely, for the understanding there is no return to the original subject because the whole process repeats with the next determination as a further remove from the original task.

In the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel further explains:

The understanding allows these determinations themselves to be so separate from one another that, although the comparison has one and the same substrate for likeness and unlikeness, these are supposed to be diverse *sides* and *respects* in the same [substrate]. (E, 240/180)

In making further distinctions, each distinction is of the same substrate; each distinction is a distinction from the same object. That substrate (whatever constitutes the origin from which the distinction emerges) is lost in the distinguishing. What reason requests from the understanding in this distinguishing is to provide qualitative differences of the same thing for a more comprehensive grasp of the object. However, the understanding provides no indication of what relationship there is among diverse aspects of the object as the understanding treats those aspects as entirely independent of one another. Nonetheless, among all the diversity the understanding creates, we experience wholes, as well as their parts. We experience parts of those wholes as wholes themselves. We experience the notion of unity within a plurality of objects. Something besides the understanding is operative in cognition as we do not experience difference alone. We seem capable of rendering an identity of some individual thing within the plurality of the scattered determinations of the understanding.

## Indifference and Dialectical Reason

This section aims to further explain why, as David Grey Carlson writes, dialectical reason is “no more than the mechanics of sundering – it is not the grasp of reality.”<sup>56</sup> We have looked at the distinction between reason and understanding. We have discussed how Hegel sees Kant’s distinction at work on the side of the understanding. For Hegel, reason, very briefly, is that which becomes syllogistic [*sylogistisch*].<sup>57</sup> This syllogistic nature being reason’s power to unite two terms (or determinations) through a middle term with a conclusive new term that unifies the determinations into significant relationships (PG, 351-352/PS, 588).<sup>58</sup>

If we recall, Hegel describes “dialectic” as mere motion. He expands this view of what is dialectical about cognition in his treatment of what reason does to the determined content of the understanding:

In its distinctive determinateness, the dialectic is far more the proper, true nature of the determinations of the understanding, of things, and of the finite in general. Reflexion is at first a process of going beyond the isolated determinacy, i.e. a relating of it, whereby it is brought into a relationship, despite its being maintained in its isolated validity. The dialectic is, by contrast, this *immanent* process of going beyond [such determinacy] wherein the one-sided and limited character of the determinations of the understanding presents itself as what it is, namely as their negation. (E, 173/128-129)

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<sup>56</sup> Carlson, *Commentary to Hegel*, 375.

<sup>57</sup> As I will argue in Chapter Four, Hegel does not reduce reason to a mental act of finite being, but rather sees reason as something ontological – a modality of being. Regarding the claim above, whatever stands in relation to anything in such a way that allows construction of syllogisms exhibits its reasonableness in the possibility of that construction. This is a principle idea behind Hegel’s claim that the Real is rational. (GPR, 24/PR, xix) However, this should not be confused with the concept of truth or truthmaking. That *the Real* is syllogistic is not to say that we always or even always could find everything that exists intelligible.

<sup>58</sup> For example, the understanding provides us the following determinate P, Q, and S; but it is reason that allows us to conceive that because P implies Q, and Q implies S, when P is present so is S.

As we saw, the understanding makes determinations by abstracting from the concrete to give discrete units of intelligible objects (objects that *can be* understood). However, while the infinite force of the understanding negates to individuate, it gives us isolated rather than distinctive determinacies. The difference being that isolated objects are separate wholes, but distinct objects are contrasted qualitatively to other objects. The understanding allows us to grasp separate objects as separate, but for Hegel, this is a partial account of how objects are determined. A complete account of determination would not just demonstrate that we can decipher discrete units from a whole, but these units have qualitative determinations that distinguish them from the rest that is determined. Reflexion, when understood as a part of cognition, becomes dialectical reason when it is the movement beyond the isolated determination to a relationship of itself to an other (WL2, 24/SL, 345-46). The determined objects reflect something that is not merely the object itself but a reflected extension *about* the object. Determinate objects, in the hands of the understanding, have the limited character of communicating *that they are* as opposed to *what they are*. Unlike the understanding's sheer determination of objects, dialectical reason treats diverse determinations as relations of objects in an attempt to tell us something about the object as opposed to the fact that the object exists.<sup>59</sup> This attempted movement by cognition, from the existence of the object to facts about the object, is the "immanent process" that "goes beyond" the mere determinacy of the object. Dialectical reason aims to transcend the reduction of the object as a determined One to tell us about this One. It is in dialectical reason, as opposed to the

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<sup>59</sup> We will see below that dialectical reason fails to meet this objective, but that is not to say that cognition fails.

understanding, that the significance of the object in relation to other objects becomes possible to discern.

As Hegel begins to explain how we cognize significant relations among objects, dialectical reason presents us with the possibility of such significance and simultaneously frustrates this process. Two passages from the *Science* help further this interpretation of dialectical reason. Early in the *Science*, Hegel writes:

The *understanding determines*, and holds the determination fixed. *Reason* is negative and *dialectical*, since it dissolves the determinations of the understanding into nothing; it is *positive*, since it generates the *universal*, and comprehends the particular therein. Just as the understanding is usually taken as something separate from reason in general, so also dialectical reason is taken as something separate from positive reason. (WL1, 17/SL, 10)

and

It is the negative, that which constitutes the quality of both the dialectical reason and the understanding; it negates the simple, thereby posits the determinate difference of the understanding; but it equally dissolves this difference, and so it is dialectical. But spirit does not stay at the nothing of this result. (ibid.)

There is the understanding that determines, and a twofold nature of reason. Reason functions both positively and negatively. The negative function of reason is that which is dialectical, and this is our present concern. Negation itself is a characteristic of both the understanding and dialectical reason, “since it dissolves the determinations of the understanding into nothing” (ibid.) While the understanding “holds the determination fixed,” negation, and thereby dialectical reason, destroys the determinate element of the determined object, allowing the object to be understood in multiple ways other than under the form of universality that the understanding imparts to it.<sup>60</sup> It would seem this process,

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<sup>60</sup> This universality is the way the object is the only thing the understanding occupies itself with. Any individual object is ‘the universal’ to the degree that nothing else is determined but that object. However, in plainer terms we can say that this power of negation takes the universal form of the One, and shows

whereby negation destroys the form of universality in the determination, never grasps anything particular, similar to a handful of sand in which grains fall through the spaces between the fingers. Even this process of negation faces the same difficulty of comprehending as that which it determines because as dialectical reason “negates the simple,” this negation itself becomes a positive determination. As a positive determination, the negation is treated as a determinate object and faces the same process of dissection from the understanding. What dialectical reason gives us is the “nothing of this result” (ibid.) By this, I understand Hegel to mean that if all cognition has at its disposal to comprehend is the understanding and dialectical reason, relationships would exist among determinations, but what they signify would be unknown. The dialectical reasoning between determinations and the understanding suffers “what happens in ordinary proof, where the reasons given are themselves in need of further reasons, and so on *ad infinitum*” (PG, 61/PS, 40). The infinite regress in explaining significant relations presents an apparent impasse, whereby the notion that there are any significant discernable relations among such determinations is threatened.

Cognition is not, however, left at an impasse from the infinite force of the understanding. Hegel is convinced he has found the animus in cognition that will not rest content with this process of negation: “Spirit does not stay at the nothing of this result.”<sup>61</sup> Hegel is critical of the ambitions we may have over what the understanding can accomplish, but only as these ambitions relate to limiting the scope of the understanding.

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the definite article is improper. Negation contradicts this form of universality to where the One becomes a One among the Many.

<sup>61</sup> However cryptic the remark seems here, the movement of the restlessness culminates in Hegel’s discussion of the idea of life and the idea of cognition, particularly pages 694-696 in the *Science* (WL2, 493-496).

Hegel is not claiming that there is something wrong with the understanding itself. In fact, the fault of cognition's erroneous judgments is the dialectical element of reason. At the very end of the *Science*, Hegel concedes that:

it is not the fault of the understanding if there is no advance [beyond these determinations]. It is a subjective *impotence of reason* that allows these determinacies to remain so dispersed, and is unable to bring them back to their unity. (WL2, 286/SL, 539)

Hegel claims that the understanding is not responsible for moving us from these determinations to what these determinations signify. That movement is the task of reason. When reason does not make that movement, the understanding is not to blame, as that movement is not a function of the understanding. There is an impotence to reason, even if this condition can be overcome. This impotence comes from the perpetual negation of dialectical reason that keeps the determinacies apart and cannot unify them in an intelligible manner. Here reason is blamed for this problem of infinite diremption. The trouble cognition runs into when it tries to ask, "What is it?" and "Is it so?" highlights dialectical reason's "subjective impotence." This impotence leaves us with a significant problem regarding the objectivity of our judgments. There are so many options to grasp the cognitive content that dialectical reason becomes useless at grasping which options and descriptions are relevant to the subject at hand (or object of inquiry). Without dialectical reason, we would have no relations between determinate objects, but as the relations spill out indefinitely, dialectical reason is incapable in its capacity to stop the infinite diremptions. However, it is not the task of dialectical reason to unify those determinations in an intelligible manner, and so neither it nor the understanding errs on their parts. The infinite diremption of determinates and their relations does not signal a

defect in thought, but only that these two parts of cognition cannot be wholly responsible for our knowledge production.

In their extensive commentaries on the *Science*, David Gray Carlson,<sup>62</sup> Stephen Houlgate,<sup>63</sup> John Burbidge,<sup>64</sup> and G.R.G. Mure<sup>65</sup> provide an account of indifference's role in Hegel's understanding of reason. I will use those portions from their analysis to further demonstrate the problematic nature of subjective (or dialectical) reason in conjunction with Hegel's work – principally on the problem of diversity in contrast to difference. Hegel uses indifference regarding its relation to ontology (as in his critique of Schelling's Absolute Indifference (VGP3, 576-620/LHP3, 516-545), but also in formal logic's role in cognition (what I will refer to as *logical indifference*) (E, 84/61). He also comments in the *Philosophy of Right* on the practical and moral difficulties that stem from logical indifference (what I will refer to as *existential indifference*).<sup>66</sup> Hegel's account of the insufficiency of dialectical reason (namely in his treatment of identity and difference in the *Science*) rests on the latter form of indifference, whereby the antinomial nature of the understanding reveals mutually exclusive propositions as true and contradictory to one another (WL1, 215/SL, 158). Because of our thought's reliance on the law of non-contradiction, a point of indifference emerges in deciding between thesis or antithesis. Logical indifference can become existential paralysis as it is no longer the content thought that is divided, but the thinking subject as well. The difficulty posed to

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<sup>62</sup> Carlson, David Gray. *A Commentary to Hegel's Science of Logic*. (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

<sup>63</sup> Houlgate, Stephen. *The Opening of Hegel's Logic: From Being to Infinity*. (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2005).

<sup>64</sup> Burbidge, John. *On Hegel's Logic: Fragments of a Commentary*. (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1981). See also *The Logic of Hegel's Logic: An Introduction* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2006).

<sup>65</sup> Mure, G.R.G. *A Study of Hegel's Logic*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959).

<sup>66</sup> On Hegel's concerns for existential indifference in the *Philosophy of Right*, see (GPR, 276-280/PR, 69-73).

thought replicates itself as an existential one for our choices. If we cannot resolve the apparent arbitrariness in our logical relations, we will find that same arbitrariness plague our attempts to justify our judgments.

The problematic nature of dialectical reason is a haven of both logical and existential indifference, but before we address the problem of indifference, we must first interpret Hegel's account of difference [*Unterschied*] in contrast to diversity [*Verschiedenheit*]. George di Giovanni notes that English treats "difference," "distinction," and "diversity" as synonymous terms (SL, lxxi). Hegel does the same from time to time. Nonetheless, a significant difference exists between the two terms. My interpretation agrees with di Giovanni that "'Diversity' tends to stress the plurality and variety of the things..." (ibid.). Diversity here refers to quantitative distinctions. Difference, however, "tends to stress what makes [determinations] different" (ibid.).<sup>67</sup> Di Giovanni's use of the word "different" in defining difference is obviously problematic. However, we should focus on difference as that aspect of determination that sets apart determinations, as opposed to diversity which simply notes a plurality of determinations. Doing so helps us keep the analysis of qualitative and quantitative aspects of objects distinct – with qualitative distinctions being different and quantitative distinctions being diverse.

While there is little literature that seeks to find a significant reason to contrast diversity to difference in Hegel's *Science*, Mure, Carlson, and Burbidge have rightly made the problem of diversity an integral part of their understanding of Hegel's theory of

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<sup>67</sup> See also John Burbidge's *Fragments*, p. 75, which maintains this distinction as a logical outcome from identity's inability to turn difference into an identity as well as difference's inability to find identity in difference.

cognition.<sup>68</sup> Hegel argues that because of dialectical reason's inability to reconcile differences from its subjective impotence, indifference arises with two types of indifference to bear in mind.<sup>69</sup> The first is someone's response to something viewed as undecidable, where any decision and its alternative have equal (including no) merit, and objective judgment cannot be established.<sup>70</sup> We can call this existential indifference, which is found in various ways in the practical counsel in Cynicism, Pyrrhonian Skepticism, or bald misology. While such indifference can arise for many reasons, it seems to stem from mistaking qualitative differences with quantitative diversity. For Hegel, indifference is a product of diversity, which is distinguishable from difference. While diversity and difference are not always clearly contrasted by Hegel, there are important moments when a contrast is found:

Difference in general contains both its sides as moments; in diversity, these sides fall apart as indifferent to each other; and in opposition as such, they are the moments of difference, each determined by the other and hence only moments. But in opposition these moments are equally determined within, indifferent to each other and mutually exclusive, self-subsisting determinations of reflection. (WL2, 64/SL, 374)

To say that difference contains both its sides as moments is to say that on the one hand, we have A as both (A=A) and (A as not-B), and on the other hand we have B as (B =B) and (B as not-A). When A is different from B, part of A's identity is its reference to B as the context of its difference. Diversity, however, lacks this specificity. In the above passage, with diversity, there is an isolated A and an isolated B with no external context

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<sup>68</sup> Mure Study pp. 49, 101, 110-112, 119-122. Carlson Commentary 285-298. Burbidge Logic Heg Logic pp. 75-88

<sup>69</sup> There are more types of indifference, such as Schelling's idea of 'Absolute Indifference,' but my present concern is to chart a particular movement in cognition that only need consider these two. Hegel himself does not explicitly make the distinction I am, but he does use 'indifference' in both ways without qualification.

<sup>70</sup> This does not ever happen, but the subject has the conviction that no judgment is made, and this conviction is what I have in mind.

(or referent that may be used to distinguish it from something else). Qualities are overlooked to deal with objects quantitatively. With nothing to refer A to, we are left with one thing. If there is also a B present, in diversity, there's no more to say about it than it is Thing Two. The conditions of diversity are quantitative conditions, not qualitative differences. It is similar to variables as place markers for unspecified numbers in an equation. One can use them in equations, but left as variables their values are undetermined. The value of X could be identical to Y, and the disregard for difference will not affect  $X+Y=Z$ . Here, we are dealing with diversity. One unit added to another unit (and it may even be the same value, as quality means nothing here) equals another unit. X and Y could be 2 and 3, but just as easily 4 and 7. X and Y could also be the same thing – both could be 2. As G.R.G. Mure notes, even when the variables are fixed, there is nothing “dictated by anything in the nature of Number” from which dialectical reason can form a necessary connection to something else.<sup>71</sup> Dialectical reason cannot find the significance of the objects' relations among the objects in themselves. In *The Opening of Hegel's Logic*, Stephen Houlgate attributes our predicament with diversity to indifference because the determined object is, “not defined primarily by its difference from its negation but exhibits a certain *indifference* to what differs from it because it is folded or closed in on itself. To put it simply, what is characteristic of something above all is that it is *itself*, not that it is the negation of what it is not.”<sup>72</sup> Houlgate explains that the essence of determination is to set apart something from all else, to have the thing be closed in on itself – the *One*. The nature of identity in common logic is to be self-sufficiently indifferent and autonomous from whatever else may exist. The uninfluenced autonomy of

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<sup>71</sup> Mure, *Study of Hegel's Logic*, 64.

<sup>72</sup> Houlgate, *Opening to Hegel's Logic*, 320.

the determined object is its principle characteristic as a singular identity. That autonomy, Houlgate argues, is achieved through indifference and not simply difference. Houlgate continues this view, claiming that “[s]uch indifference, or lack of relation between something and its other, is not imported into their relation by us but is entailed by their logical structure.”<sup>73</sup> This logical indifference is not existential. The structure of two determinations will necessarily be indifferent to the degree that the identity of each is not contingent upon the other. Logical indifference is the unrelated separateness of two identities – the “unrelatedness of their determinateness” (WL1, 174/SL, 126). It is the absence of what these two things mean to one another other than the logical structure that reveals there is a distinction to be made between things. The power to identify such objects through the logic of the understanding is indeed mighty, but in the absence of being able to tell us what those distinctions are, it is “lifeless” (PG, 52/PS, 31). This lifelessness is furthered by dialectical reason’s restricted reliance on formal logic, or at least the sort of common logic Hegel has in mind, which finds itself indifferent to the qualities of its particular content. Whatever is made of the relationship between two things, neither of the two communicates the necessity of that relationship. The relationship of identity and difference is inherent in logic, but the imposition of significance about the objects’ identities is brought under other relations external to the objects’ identities and external to the logic of the understanding. This externality leaves the combination of our understanding and dialectical reason alienated from determining the significance of relations, and that failure to find significance is what Hegel refers to as

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<sup>73</sup> Houlgate, *Opening to Hegel’s Logic*, 335.

the subjective impotence of reason, but, again, this failure is no shortcoming of either the understanding or dialectical reason.

The combination of the understanding and dialectical reason is absent the missing link between diverse objects in their external relations. Mure explains: “the relation of Diversity in which they stand is indifferent to the *diversa*, this relation falls outside them into an externally reflecting and comparing subject.”<sup>74</sup> The diverse things have no qualities that inform us about the other *diversa*. This lack of quality within diversity does not indicate that no significant relationships exist. Nonetheless, the objects themselves (singularly) do not indicate what these relationships should be. The problem of diversity that the understanding passes on to dialectical reason is that the understanding can provide no information to determine what that external context is only what those things singularly are. If we were trying to find a meaningful connection between Thing One and Thing Two, it must come from outside the understanding. As outside the understanding, it is divorced from the objects themselves. As John Burbidge explains: “In the first place, because each term is to have its own independent meaning, the two are mutually indifferent one to the other. There is no inherent reason why they should be associated. Therefore, when they are brought together into a single intellectual perspective, an external identity is imposed on them.”<sup>75</sup> For the understanding, there is no other object but that which is determined. The two wholes are mutually indifferent. Unifying these in an intellectual perspective allows us to move beyond the understanding into dialectical reason’s ability to contrast and compare. However, as Mure notes, “The likeness of the compared terms is an identity not in and for itself, and their unlikeness is external

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<sup>74</sup> Mure, *Study of Hegel’s Logic*, 101.

<sup>75</sup> Burbidge, *Logic of Hegel’s Logic*, 76.

difference, not in and for itself the difference of the unlike terms.”<sup>76</sup> What the differences may be is not in the determining of the two objects. The qualitative differences arise from “the comparing subject which stands over against them.”<sup>77</sup> The comparison, not the objects, creates the relations of the diverse things. As Hegel notes in the *Science*, “the comparing and the unity do not touch these subject matters themselves but are rather a doing and a determining external to them” (WL1, 93/SL, 67). Diverse objects will not confirm the subject’s comparison because for whatever confirmation there is, the subject would again need to compare this new relation to its understanding of the old relation, and this process, as with determining parts as wholes, will again continue indefinitely.

Because these comparisons can continue indefinitely, we face a severe problem satisfying reason’s demand for objectivity or a comprehensive understanding when cognition is limited to the understanding in conjunction with dialectical reason. Because comparisons are understood as external to the objects themselves, in the context of the understanding and dialectical reason, likeness and unlikeness will be understood as a subjective act of imposing comparisons unwarranted by the objects themselves. The identification of some relationship between Thing One and Thing Two is alien to both Thing One and Thing Two. Hegel calls their unity through our reflective acts of combination an “unfortunate word,” because we know it is not a true unity of the objects but our mind’s imposition upon those objects (ibid.). This relationship, returning to Burbidge’s comment, is an external imposition on their singular identity.<sup>78</sup> When dialectical reason attempts to discern a unifying structure of diverse content, as Mure

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<sup>76</sup> Mure, *Study of Hegel’s Logic*, 101.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Burbidge, *Logic of Hegel’s Logic*, 76.

notes, “the synthesis will then seem to be not a real union of opposites but one in which, as it were, the terms are too fluid and indifferent either to resist or to accept union.”<sup>79</sup>

Relationships can be externally imposed by reason on diverse objects; reason can dialectically situate the two into a synthesis of unity, and while this capacity is necessary to grasp anything in any intelligible context, dialectical reason is ineffectual at demonstrating the proper connections that unify the diversa into a necessary (or even significant) relationship.

Without qualities, the objects as mere quantities could signify one thing or another. Because this possibility is a consequence of diversity, when qualitative differences are overlooked (or surrendered as impossible to truly discern), logical indifference is prone to infect our judgment. Logical indifference poses a transition from non-descript variables in logic to an existential difficulty in handling the logical indifference. Hegel notes that such a difficulty can amount to dissatisfaction with formal logic, whereby such indifference becomes existential because it is no longer merely formal.<sup>80</sup> Hegel remarks:

...nothing is as unsatisfactory as such a formal syllogism, since which middle term is employed is a matter of chance or arbitrariness. No matter how elegantly a deduction is run through inferences of this kind, however fully its correctness is to be conceded, all this still amounts to nothing, for the possibility is still there that other middle terms may be found from which the opposite can be deduced with equal correctness. (WL2, 361/SL, 594-595)

Here, Hegel draws a link between our expectations of what logic can accomplish practically and the limited scope of formal logic to solve concrete matters. Often we want

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<sup>79</sup> Mure, *Study of Hegel's Logic*, 32.

<sup>80</sup> Hegel discusses this in the context of Kant's antinomies of reason, and where they leave us with respect to practical decision-making in the absence of a concrete resolution to the antinomies. See WL2, 361/SL, 594-595.

to judge something with all the rigor of a formal deductive argument, but we discover our movement from logical validity (as formal correctness in the structure of the argument) to soundness (as the content of the argument being true as given in the structure) is determined by something other than formal validity itself. For Hegel, this vital component to the selection of the middle term may be viewed as a mere whim or wish. An argument may be logically correct, but because of what one may substitute for middle terms, this formal correctness cannot show us what is true – the aim of constructing the argument in the first place. Here is where we might make a move from logical indifference to existential indifference.<sup>81</sup> We may see our subjectivity as the ruler of objectivity in the manipulation of premises to prove our conclusions. This attitude towards subjectivity may further render our views of truth and truthmaking along the lines of persuasiveness or rhetorical feats. Hegel's concern is that to the degree that objectivity is seen as the craft of the subject, objectivity is always an exploitable force under the domain of a subjective will, with no independent checks and balances save more craftwork from more subjects to no end.

For Hegel, the subjective manipulation of logic will tend to a limit, and an advantage of indifference is that, in its denial of a sound rule, law, or procedure by which one could overcome such indifference, there is the kernel of such a procedure *via negativa*. What seems absent to aid dialectical reason out of this dilemma of indifferent diversity is a satisfactory notion of lawfulness. However, at the level of dialectical reason,

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<sup>81</sup> As Klaus Brinkmann notes, "To be sure, it could be argued that a truth claim that is put forward on the basis of legitimate methodological and ontological background assumptions qualifies as a potential truth. But this only pushes the problem back one level. The issue would then be to account for the legitimacy of those background assumptions and this cannot be done simply by accumulating more evidence based on those very assumptions." *Idealism Without Limits: Hegel and the Problem of Objectivity*. (Boston: Springer Publishing, 2010) p. 6.

no positive notion of lawfulness will be satisfactory. Lawfulness is something other than the object or objects under consideration.<sup>82</sup> Dialectical reason would encounter the law coming from outside the objects but would have no law itself by which we know how this newly introduced law is to be placed.<sup>83</sup> Reason demands a sound procedure to move from the diverse objects to an intelligible construction of their relations. If an intelligible blueprint were presented, however, dialectical reason would persistently point out the differences between the proposed design and the objects, exposing the absence of a blueprint that shows how the blueprint and the object go together, and a blueprint for that blueprint, *ad infinitum*. This process leads Hegel to claim that what is understood by dialectical reason is like "a disordered heap of bones" (WL1, 44/SL, 31). As a disordered heap, the bones still offer some information, but the information is fairly trivial when there is no way to substantiate any procedure by which we should understand what the data signifies. Burbidge notes that:

A simple assertion does not provide any warrant for why it should be said. It is a singular intellectual act, and cannot do justice to the universality of the subject that is supposed to determine the appropriate predicate. Since, as Kant argued, universals are possibles, not actuals, that universality could better be captured by a problematic judgment: "s is possibly P." No sooner is that expedient tried than thought recognizes its inadequacy. For what is only possibly P could equally well be not P. Pure possibility does not discriminate between them. So what is needed is a judgment form that does justice to the necessity involved in the universal: "s must be P."<sup>84</sup>

As with the disordered heap of bones, any judgment about them is a singular intellectual act that needs to express the warrant of how it pertains to the matter at hand. The

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<sup>82</sup> Kant's treatment of this issue, which Hegel seems to embrace, is found in his discussion of purposiveness [*Zweckmässigkeit*] and its absence in nature despite our necessary conviction that it must exist. See *KdU*, 20:201-217.

<sup>83</sup> This problem should not be confused with the philosophic problem of criterion. Dialectical reason functions as a diversifying element in cognition itself, and the subject here is not about what material would best ground objectivity.

<sup>84</sup> Burbidge, *Logic of Hegel's Logic*, 87.

judgment must trace back to some necessity in the matter as a ground for its assertion. Dialectical reason does not give us this trace but rather presents us with alternatives from which we may go on to affirm, based on what it provides, only the problematic judgment that “s is possibly P.” However, as Burbidge notes, if we try to make this mere possibility the scope of reason, reason finds possibility to be inadequate.<sup>85</sup> Possibility lacks necessity and gives no assurances of probability. What is possibly the case is as likely as its opposite in the absence of necessity or probability. Pure possibility is indifferent to what is the case. What reason demands, but does not receive from its dialectical side, is the necessity of “s must be P.”<sup>86</sup>

Without entangling us too deeply in truthmaking theory, we can understand Hegel’s attitude towards the subjective impotence of reason better through a reflection from Klaus Brinkmann:

Probable truth is not yet truth. To be sure, it could be argued that a truth claim that is put forward on the basis of legitimate methodological and ontological background assumptions qualifies as a potential truth. But this only pushes the problem back one level. The issue would then be to account for the legitimacy of those background assumptions and this cannot be done simply by accumulating more evidence based on those very assumptions.<sup>87</sup>

In dialectical reason, there is no probability. Dialectical reason takes us no further than the idea that it is possibly x amount probable that y is the case, but it is also possible it is not as probable as that. Introducing the potential for a claim to be true merely moves us to an earlier ground of justification from which dialectical reason finds itself every bit as impotent to justify as its initial claim. It “only pushes back the problem one level” (ibid.). This push causes a regress of motivating prior assumptions with equally inadequate new

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Brinkmann, *Idealism Without Limits*, 5.

information to demonstrate a necessary connection in the very structure of its denial of necessary connections. One could, of course, try to maintain that reason simply desires what it cannot have, and insist on practical or pragmatic solutions to account for things in the absence of necessary conditions (the universals of the subjects). However, for Hegel, that is not a coherent attitude, and the attitude comes closer to a misology that masks conviction as a critique of reason. Either way, the position, by Hegel's understanding, cannot be maintained in any way that is not self-contradictory, and contenting oneself with the contradiction is no longer reasonable but a matter of one's personal will (VGP1, 467/LHP1, 370).

### Conclusion

In this chapter, we examined how the understanding presents reason with a dilemma, and the discussion has emphasized a puzzle for cognitional theory's ability of discerning significant relationships between determinacies. The issue of logical indifference has no proper solution because there is no actual problem. Such indifference is a matter of how the understanding works and employs logic. Existential indifference, however, can pose extreme difficulties in aiding misology and hypocrisy.<sup>88</sup> Beyond this difficulty is the path to its solution in the notion of Absolute Knowledge (discussed in Chapter Five) – that aspect of thought which Hegel promises can give us objective and significant relationships between things. Of course, one may not view this subjective impotence as a

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<sup>88</sup> One can see the problem of existential indifference from logical indifference in Hegel's comments on misology and its role in conviction in (PG, 36/PS, 18) and (GPR, 276-280/PR, 69-73).

problem for cognition. One may insist that we can still have a kind of objectivity reducible to an intersubjective social agreement.<sup>89</sup> Those arguments are omitted here because while I do not deny they are true, I would not contest them. We can regard a subjective common sense as both relative and normative. What we cannot do with these views, however, is claim that Hegel maintains them.

Lastly, the subjective impotence of reason, created by the function of the understanding, is further problematized by the role the categories of the understanding play in our grasp of reality. The relation of the categories, beyond our need to think of being in a particular way to grasping what being is in itself, requires the kind of substantial relations between our thoughts of being and being itself. The difficulty in discerning that proper relationship is not only from the subjective impotence of reason but also from Kant's understanding of the scope of the categories. At the level of dialectical reason, it is little wonder that one would conclude that we find no way for our ideas of being to match up with being in itself. The understanding will not find this match, and dialectical reason will simply suggest all the ways that being could do so but equally may not. Hegel feels that Kant, remaining at the level of dialectical reason, again bars our access to concrete existents (and being), because the concepts used to grasp being apply only to the understanding and could not be known to apply to being itself. For Hegel, this amounts to the claim that every claim to grasp being does so through concepts that do not grasp being. Hegel sees Kant as insisting that our categories of being

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<sup>89</sup> These attitudes and arguments can be found in the following works: Beatrice Longuenesse's, *Hegel's Critique of Metaphysics*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), Tom Rockmore's *Hegel, Idealism, and Analytic Philosophy*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005) as well as his *Cognition: An Introduction to Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), and also Robert Pippin's *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfaction of Self-Consciousness*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

are indifferently related to being. They may or may not express what being is, but we could never know one way or another, so our task is to err on the side of caution and assume they do not, but act as if they do. Hegel finds that it is Kant's empirical commitments that lead to this conclusion, and if we were to conceive cognition in a wider context of the empirical subject, we would discover Kant is wrong. Our next chapter focuses on a debate of the ontological scope of the categories (an assessment of how and how much of being they articulate or grasp) and Hegel's attack on first-person subjectivity as the paradigm of understanding what thinking is.

### CHAPTER 3

#### THE ONTOLOGICAL SCOPE OF THE CATEGORIES IN THE INTRACATEGORIAL/EXTRACATEGORIAL DEBATE

In Chapter One, we saw that Hegel's concept of thinghood intends to give us a comprehensible thing in itself, whereas, by his understanding, Kant denies us any knowledge of such a thing as in itself. The consequence of an inaccessible thing in itself and reason's demand for objective universality places Kant, as Hegel explains in *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, in a position where "the implicit, the thing in itself" is separated from our knowledge in such a way "that the universality and necessity are all the time a subjective condition of knowledge," whereby "reason does not attain to a knowledge of truth" (ibid.). While Hegel often describes this gap between reason and the in itself as stemming from Kant's empirical commitments, the role of the categories in transcendental philosophy is another vital component claimed to frustrate our access to being [*das Sein*] in itself. Within transcendental philosophy, from the divide between reason's desire for a comprehensive grasp of what is and the understanding's inability to reveal the thing in itself, the role of formal logic's relation to being comes into question. This question emerges from the pre-critical reliance on logical categories to faithfully articulate what being is, which through the Kantian tradition, becomes less and less plausible. Beatrice Longuenesse remarks:

Kant no longer took the identity of logical and real connections for granted. This being so, forms of thought are just this: forms of thought. And the question arises: just what is their relation to forms of being, or to the way things are?<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Longuenesse, Beatrice. "Kant on *a priori* Concepts: The Metaphysical Deduction of the Categories." *Cambridge Companion to Kant and Early Modern Philosophy*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University

As the critical enterprise no longer assumed the structure(s) of the world held a one-to-one correspondence with the structure(s) of thought, our emphasis on the subjective immanence of knowledge production began to suggest that talk of any correspondence would be futile, and a new notion of objectivity should emerge from our new understanding of the limitations of knowing.<sup>91</sup> What this new understanding of logic means for the categories is that even as we must necessarily use them to understand what we experience, such forms of thought are a necessary component of our *understanding* and not of *things*. The Kantian categories, as best seen in Terry Pinkard's interpretation of Hegel, become "explanatory posits that are justified only by their explanatory value."<sup>92</sup> As explanatory posits, an analysis of the categories is only an analysis of their heuristic function and the success of that function in making our experiences intelligible. For Hegel, what is left of Longuenesse's question, within the Kantian tradition, is a premature conclusion that costs philosophy heavily because he takes critical philosophy to answer that there is no knowable relation, and because we know this, there is also no sense investigating further. For Hegel, the Kantian insistence on the categories as merely formal paves the way for a harmful concept of objectivity. The concept is harmful because the categories from which we grasp what being is are themselves only instrumental to that subjective craving for maximal comprehension. The categories have

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Press, 2006) p. 138.

<sup>91</sup> As mentioned in Chapter One, in one sense, 'limitation' can be misleading. If the critical position is that there is no other genuine knowledge save discursive knowledge, then there is no limitation. We have an appropriate understanding of objectivity not because we recognize the limited scope of our knowledge, but because we have a more accurate understanding of what understanding accomplishes. If there is no kind of knowledge more comprehensive than discursive knowledge, it is certainly a misnomer to refer to our type of knowing as being "limited" as opposed to just being what knowledge is.

<sup>92</sup> Pinkard, Terry. *Hegel's Dialectic: The Explanation of Possibility*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), p. 23.

no known ontological significance, as they are not fit to exhibit reality as being in itself. If the categories are unfit to articulate being in itself, Hegel worries that we will lose the ability to make true judgments about what is the case.

This chapter will begin to explain Hegel's understanding of the ontological scope of the categories – which is the correspondence of thought's role in being and being's role in thought.<sup>93</sup> For Hegelian scholarship, the response to Longuenesse's question can either be answered intracategorically or extracategorically.<sup>94</sup> The intracategorical interpretation argues that the categories are solely formal classifications that the understanding consistently applies to its thought content. The categories are expressions of our subjective necessity to understand what we experience.<sup>95</sup> The extracategorical approach argues that the categories articulate a reality that transcends (but is not transcendent to) our finite and sensible experience. The categories are indeed extracategorical in the sense that their concepts transcend their often relegation as a tool for discursive understanding. While the categories do play the role of a subjectively indispensable tool by which we cognize, the intracategorical approach does not fully appreciate, and thereby inhibits, the role of the categories in revealing aspects of reality indiscernible to the understanding but available to reason. In the intracategorical interpretation, we are then presented with an incomplete and unnecessarily skeptical portrait of cognition.

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<sup>93</sup> Technically, this is an identity in terms of oneness (*einheit*), and not a relation as we commonly think. This issue is addressed in detail in Chapter Five. What Hegel is really after, regarding category theory, is to see if the thought content, in the act of thinking being, forms an identity where, in that moment, mind and world are 'one,' thereby the reality of the content has entered the mind.

<sup>94</sup> The terms intracategorical and extracategorical are coined by Thomas Bole in "Contradiction in Hegel's 'Science of Logic'." *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (1987).

<sup>95</sup> The most sustained argument in favor of this view is found in Pinkard's *Hegel's Dialectic*, p. 105-110. See also Pinkard's "Hegel's Idealism and Hegel's Logic." *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*. Bd. 33, H. 2 (1979).

The aim of this chapter is to provide an account of the intracategorical approach to category theory, assess the degree to which this corresponds to Hegel's view, and lastly offer an example of what it would mean for a category to transcend itself without being transcendent to cognition. This last portion is accomplished by examining Hegel's understanding of finitude. The category of finitude is chosen as Hegel himself calls his analysis of the category "a graphic example" [*einem ausgeführten Beispiele*] of "the nature of speculative thought in its determining feature" (WL1, 169/SL, 122). Our determinations of finitude, for example, presuppose a contrast (finitude's relation to the infinite), and the category of finitude itself reveals a dynamic unity between finitude and infinitude that is neither a category in the Kantian sense nor categorizable, but still implicit in the category itself. We will see this is so in Hegel's account of a dynamic ideality (*Idealität*) present in the categories. This dynamic *ideality*, what Hegel calls "the *quality* of the infinite" or a "process of becoming" (WL1, 168/SL, 120) is the unity of finite and infinite in one identity. By this I understand him to mean an oscillation of coming to be and ceasing to be of the infinite within the finite – hence the ever presence of the infinite within the finite as a determinate quality of the infinite. John Grier Hibben refers to Hegel's ideality as "the self-directing and self-manifesting architectonic principle" in all being that "works out its ends from within."<sup>96</sup> Within the categories of being, the categories are an artefactual expression of an extracategorical reality determining itself in such a way as to generate those categories for the sake of its expression. In this sense, the infinite leaves determinate artifacts of its presence within

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<sup>96</sup> Hibben, John Grier. *Hegel's Logic: An Essay in Interpretation*. (New York: Prism Key Press, 2012), p. 57.

the finite categories. The artefactual quality of the infinite in its coming to be and ceasing to be (what emerges and leaves), will show the finite categories embody some content outside their determinations.

However, this chapter restricts much of the motivation to adopt this view to assess the competing intracategorical interpretation. With respect to the categories of the finite and infinite, this inherent negativity Hegel calls “contradiction,” which he describes has as its resolution:

not the acknowledgment of the *equal correctness*, and of the equal incorrectness, of both claims – this would only be another shape of the still abiding contradiction – but the *ideality* of both, in the sense that in their distinction, as reciprocal negations, they are only moments. (WL1, 170/SL, 122)

Here Hegel makes clear that (1) the finite determinations of opposed categories do not merely remain opposed to one another in “another shape of the still abiding contradiction,” and (2) the distinguishability of the categories’ opposition exhibits “only moments” of some reality that is not reducible to these reciprocal negations, but rather exhibited in their contradictory nature. This “shape of the still biding contradiction” is an intracategorical space of two separate and opposed categories. That shape indeed exists and is how the understanding encounters and employs the categories. However, besides this space of fixed determinations of the categories is the “*ideality* of both” [emphasis Hegel’s] (ibid.). This ideality is dynamic in that it is neither category per se, nor their combination, nor some third thing as an intermediary or cause. This ideality of opposed categories is the original unity of the categories from which opposition is possible, but as the original unity, as we will see in Section Five and more so in Chapter Four, is a dynamic ideality that cannot be fixed as a category, but is the essential nature of each category. This essential nature of an identity through the negativity of oscillating

relations between the categories is, I will argue, best understood as extracategorical in the sense that no category of the understanding captures the concept, and each category points towards this ideality it only partially expresses. The alternative approach offered in the intracategorical interpretation misses the opportunity to adequately connect thought and being through this fundamental notion of the transcendence of finitude in dynamic ideation.

I believe Hegel provides an account of the categories that compels us to avoid an intracategorical category theory, as such an approach ultimately fails to explain the nature of the categories as symbols of various dynamic idealizations. Hegel refers to all categories as both untrue determinations [*unwahre Bestimmungen*] and symbols [*Symbole*] (WL1, 205/SL, 157). As such symbols, the categories express their inherent extracategoriality. As untrue determinations, they are partial concepts of the reality they express. Under this interpretation of category theory, such idealization reveals that opposed concepts of the understanding are reasoned to have a reality indiscernible to the understanding and irreducible to pure concepts of the understanding. It is in this sense that categories transcend intracategoriality and are extracategorial. We can have knowledge of the categories ideality because that ideality is comprehensible even though it cannot be understood. For Hegel, comprehension is different from understanding, as understanding is the determination of objects for experience, and comprehension is the grasp of what their significance is in a specific context (WL2, 278/SL, 516; WL2, 363/SL, 603).

Lastly, for those familiar with Kantian and Post-Kantian category theory, it may seem confusing to retain a term (*extracategorial*) that is used pejoratively to rebuke any

viable interpretation of Hegel's category theory or his commitment to an immanent deduction of the categories. However, I too reject the theories customarily understood as extracategorical – those that use a pre-established notion of reality to which category theory must conform. Nonetheless, I believe, particularly when our discussion concludes this chapter with Hegel's reflection on the bad infinite [*das schlecht Unendliche*], there is no better term to describe the true nature of the categories than with the seemingly paradoxical phrase "extracategorical." The term best captures that aspect of the categories which is not something from outside the categories to shape our interpretation of them, but, something immanent in the categories that is not reducible to those categories. The term helps us understand that within the categories is a portion of reality beyond the formalism of the understanding's mechanics.

### The Immanent Deduction of the Categories

Before we begin a discussion on the role of the categories in Kant and Hegel, we must consider method because there is a deceptive similarity between Kant and Hegel regarding how the categories should be approached. Hegel twice mentions by name (and persistently demonstrates in his investigations) that determining the scope of cognition begins with an "immanent deduction" of cognition's genesis (WL2, 261/SL, 514; WL2 344/SL, 582).<sup>97</sup> By an immanent deduction, Hegel means that our account of the

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<sup>97</sup> For the moment, we can understand this immanence as the idea that any objective knowledge must be constructed from the subjective conditions of the cognizing agent. The best example of how such a deduction moves can be seen in the introduction to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, whereby Hegel moves from various attitudes we take up to hold on to certainty when our understanding of knowledge is tasked with being consistent.

categories can only develop to the degree that insights into those categories come solely from what is implicit in their meaning and proportionate to our cognitive abilities. This demand for an immanent deduction may seem to be no significant departure from what Kant presents. However, there are different ways Hegel's immanent deduction are customarily understood – each tends to differ from the other because of diverging views on our cognitive abilities.<sup>98</sup> While Kant's transcendental deduction aims to discern the conditions that must be present for us to experience things intelligibly, Hegel's goal in understanding cognition is different, and subsequently, so is his method. Hegel's search for the original genesis of cognition, as we will see in Chapter Four, aims to understand what thought is, where it comes from, and in what relation it stands in with respect to reality.

Whereas Kant's interest, as Hegel sees it, in a transcendental deduction could be phrased by asking, "What are we doing when we know?" Hegel's interest in cognition's immanent deduction is to ask, "In what sense are ideas real?" The ontological scope of thought begins with the affirmation that there are thoughts (or that thoughts exist), and seeks to establish the necessary conditions for such an assertion, and what those conditions tell us about thoughts. Kant attempts a deduction of the categories to test whether they are objectively valid for experience and does so by examining our immanent conditions for a discursive understanding to determine objects of experience. Hegel, however, begins with those immanent conditions<sup>99</sup>, but he also works through our experience in incremental stages of refuting the ultimacy of that experience in

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<sup>98</sup> The divergence based on arguments over our cognitive abilities is treated at length in Chapter Four.

<sup>99</sup> On Hegel's commitment to the "discursivity thesis" – that all our understanding is in fact discursive, see Sally Sedgwick's *Hegel's Critique of Kant: From Dichotomy to Identity*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), particularly pp. 43-45.

determining what cognition is. For Hegel, as the immanent deduction of the categories proceeds, it does not deduce a closed space of more and more immanence, but finds an origin that transcends such immanence –dynamic ideality. This ideality will serve as Hegel’s paradigm to express the relationship of the identity and difference of thought and being.

Both intracategorical and extracategorical interpretations of Hegel’s category theory maintain that what is vital to that theory is Hegel’s commitment to the immanence of the categories (that an account of the categories should not rely on anything from outside of their relationships).<sup>100</sup> Hegel best describes the immanent deduction in the *Philosophy of Right* as follows: “[T]he chief concern [of philosophical cognition] is the *necessity* of a concept, and the route by which it has become a *result* [is] its proof and deduction” (PR, 27/31). By this Hegel means that our main interest in a concept is the rational compulsion to affirm that such a concept must exist. The origin of this necessity should be understood as that which is presupposed for the concept to be intelligible. For Hegel, the necessity is not our utilitarian need to understand, but rather the compulsory rationality that expresses itself in being. Having discerned the compulsion, we have our result as the necessity of the concept. Having the result of this necessity, we have the structure of rational compulsion revealed. We grasp this necessity through the immanent path of the concept’s objective validity from its deduction within our subjectivity. The results of this

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<sup>100</sup> The extracategorical, as viewed by Bole (Bole, “Contradiction,” 532), does not respect this immanence, which is why he chooses to refer to it as ‘extra’ – it borrows content from outside our subjective immanence. Certainly, several accounts of Hegel’s category theory will do this. I use the word ‘ought’ (above) because I agree with Bole that such a maneuver does not reflect Hegel’s text nor does it achieve a successful outcome in providing the ontological scope of the categories. However, I believe we can retain the term ‘extracategorical’ and purge the negative connotations Bole associates with it, and still meet Hegel’s demand for an immanent deduction that gives us something more properly called ‘extracategorical’ than what we are given in the intracategorical critique of the extracategorical view.

internal necessity become the axioms for further insights, and those insights, when shown as a rationally necessary compulsion, are the first order of higher order axioms. As the system differentiates itself, its base is always the same immanence of rationality in more comprehensive determinations beyond subjectivity.

My understanding of this immanent deduction differs from more popular views, as are best expressed in Frederick Beiser's interpretation of Hegel. Beiser describes Hegel's deduction as "nothing less than a transcendental deduction of metaphysics" from "the basis of the Kantian critique of knowledge."<sup>101</sup> This is allegedly so because of Hegel's reliance on "experience" as a core component of such a deduction, and that Hegel's project aims to capture the scope of consciousness' experience – or at least as his project was originally conceived in the *Phenomenology*. Beiser's Hegel requires the "metaphysician's claim to Absolute Knowledge...has to be tested against, and if true ultimately derived from, the experience of consciousness itself."<sup>102</sup> As shown thus far, Hegel's remarks on transcendental method should make us cautious of any association, and particularly one described as "nothing less," between Hegel's program and Kant's – irrespective of shared language.

While I reserve the subject for more detailed analysis in the next chapter, here are two points on this shared language. First, the word "experience" [*Erfahrung*] has a significantly different meaning for Hegel than it does for Kant, and because of this, Hegel's requirement for something to be experiential will not be like Kant's requirement for something to be experiential. Second, as with the word "experience," Hegel does not mean "consciousness" [*Bewusstsein*] the way that many of us (and Kant) understand the

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<sup>101</sup> Beiser, Frederick C. *Hegel*. (New York: Routledge Press, 2005), p. 170.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

word. Consciousness is not reducible to human experience nor even a first-person subjectivity.<sup>103</sup> Assuming the necessity that any concept has must be deduced by an act of human perceiving is far from what Hegel has in mind regarding an immanent deduction of the categories. What I aim to make clear in Chapter Four is Hegel's deconstruction of the supremacy of first-person subjectivity as the paradigm for what thinking is and distance Hegel's account of cognition from notions that its origin is confined to cognitive acts performed by subjects. Once this is accomplished, Hegel allows us a unique way to discuss what cognition is and our participation in it that, by his understanding, better captures how thought and being interact in our world than the transcendental model he finds in Kant.

This dissertation's extracategorical interpretation of Hegel's theory of cognition agrees to relegate our understanding to the immanent domain of the categories, and finds a reason to extend cognition's application beyond the formal mechanics of understanding (discussed in Section Two of Chapter Two) due to the artifactual nature of the categories as an expression of ideality. The ontological extension of the categories' scope beyond the intracategorical is an extension into a realm of knowing, despite the Copernican Turn in German Idealism, that finds a source of transcendence from a formal logic to an ontological logic – that is, the meeting of the rules of thought as the rules of being itself. On this interpretation, being itself is intelligible, and intelligibility is an ontological feature of both the subject that cognizes and the object of its cognition.

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<sup>103</sup> To be sure, Hegel will use the term “consciousness” to refer to several things unique to human experience, but invoking the word as a requirement for investigation does not mean the limit of that investigation is one particular species of consciousness.

## Hegel's Interpretation of Kant's Category Theory

For Hegel, Kant's approach to the categories is timid and "had taken no backward step, but also none forward" (WL1, 67/SL, 30). Hegel believes that it is almost common knowledge among his contemporary philosophers that "the Kantian philosophy made it very easy for itself in *locating* the categories" having considered the business of formal logic "finished and complete" (ibid.).<sup>104</sup> With Kant alienating the in-itself of being from our understanding (as discussed in Chapter One), our categories become further expressions of only a subjective desire to understand. Confining the categories to this role restricts intelligibility to a subjective desire and alienates us from comprehending the adequacy of this desire's satisfaction to grasp what is apart from perception.

A long-standing difficulty with category theory relates specifically to its ontological scope – to what degree the categories articulate what exists. Hegel notes that, borrowing from Aristotle, Kant's table of categories are divided into "twelve fundamental categories, which fall into four categories," with three branches to each of the four (VGP3, 520/LHP3, 445). The categories are of: (1) quantity as (a) unity, (b) plurality, and (c) totality; (2) quality as (a) reality, (b) negation, and (c) limitation; (3) relation as (a) inherence and subsistence, (b) causality and dependence, and (c) community; (4) modality as (a) possibility - impossibility, (b) existence - non-existence, and (c) necessity – contingency. Unlike the later Aristotle's understanding of categories as expressions of being, Kant focuses on the categories as necessary conditions to understand experience –

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<sup>104</sup> The accuracy of this claim I will leave alone as our interest is what Hegel plans to do with his understanding of Kant. What matters to this chapter is the empirical nature of Kant's account of the categories, and that, for all of Hegel's praise of Aristotle's account, it is ultimately these empirical commitments that once again bring about Kant's downfall on a given position.

“only and all that is necessary to determine an object for the understanding (*KrV*, A69/B94). Given our prior discussion of sensuous intuition to concepts, we can see from Kant’s organization of these categories that they serve as general concepts to organize our sense intuitions into various aspects of being. Each category in Kant’s table has being (as we experience it) as its object, and we cannot conceive of beings except by (1), (2), (3), and (4). For example, something that lacks quantity is unimaginable as it must be some unity of plural parts under some total whole. Absent of these quantitative classifications, we could not understand something as lacking quantity and still existing. On modality, we cannot understand something as being both possible and impossible, or something as being neither necessary nor contingent. The Kantian focus on these categories emphasizes that we cannot help but understand our world through these categories, as they are pure *a priori* concepts and therefore unconditioned by our sensuous intuitions (*KrV*, A79/B104). The purity of these concepts is revealed in that not only are they unaffected by our intuitions, but they are that which renders any being we understand in our experience (*KrV*, A81/B106). What is most significant to Kant’s understanding of the categories is that they are concepts that make our experience possible, but they should not be confused with metaphysical features of reality apart from reason’s desire for intelligibility.

In his discussion of Kant’s faculty of knowledge in Section 42 of the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel provides his clearest explanation of how he understands Kant’s categories:

*The theoretical faculty*, knowledge as such. This philosophy identifies the *original identity of the I* in thinking (i.e. the transcendental unity of self-consciousness) as the specific *ground* of the concepts of the understanding... The I relates the manifold of sensing and intuiting to itself [the I] and unifies it [the manifold]

within itself [the I] as *one* consciousness (pure apperception) and, as a result, this manifold is brought to an identity, into an original combination. The determinate ways of relating in the aforesaid manner are the pure concepts of the understanding, the *categories*. (E, 117/85)

Setting aside a detailed discussion of pure apperception [*reine Apperzeption*] for the next chapter, we have a formal definition of Kant's categories as understood by Hegel. In the above passage, Hegel tells us that Kant's categories (the pure concepts of the understanding) are the determinate ways self-consciousness achieves a unity of itself with the content of its experience. Thinking, identified above as the *a priori* unity of self-consciousness in the theoretical faculty of knowledge, moves from its *a priori* nature to a *posteriori* content in relating "the manifold of sense and intuiting to itself" (ibid.). The specific ways it does so are by the pure concepts of the understanding – the categories. If we return to Kant's table, the manifold of sensuousness may be taken into our consciousness with any of the twelve concepts (except, with Kant, those that are mutually exclusive). Taking one example, the category of causality is a way we determine experience such that our self-consciousness brings the concept to the manifold and back to ourselves as *our experience* of something causal within the manifold. As our experience, an identity is achieved between the manifold and ourselves in the unity of the *I*, the content the *I* encounters, and an intelligible relation between the *I* and that content (the process of apperceiving). However, as this structure can apply to any concepts we use, the difference with the pure categories of the understanding is that these are the fundamental (pure) concepts *prior* to experience and necessary for experience to occur. As prior to experience, their presence in consciousness is not explained by experience, but rather the conscious subject is "the specific *ground*," as the transcendental method

cannot trace the categories back further than the *I* from which all understanding originates.

Hegel is largely in agreement with the above understanding of categories. In the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, he notes that “It is only when this object of immediate perception is laid hold of and brought under universal thought determinations [categories] that experience arises therefrom, which has a claim to validity for all time” (VGP3, 521/LHP3, 446). The objective element in experience is indeed the “category which brings the unity of thought into the content of feeling,” and regarding Kant on this point, “a correct analysis has been made” (ibid.). However, the above account makes the categories a byproduct of our subjectivity. If the categories are only subjectively indispensable heuristic notions from which we must organize our experience, Hegel worries that objectivity is made contingent upon the necessary conditions of experience.<sup>105</sup> In the transcendental method, the categories of thought indeed describe *what is*, but *what is* must now be understood, as already mentioned in our discussion of thinghood, as *what can be experienced*. Transcendental method restricts itself to discerning the necessary *a priori* conditions for the possibility of experience (ibid.), and “is occupied not so much with objects but rather with our *a priori* concepts of objects in general” (*KrV*, A11/B25). For category theory, transcendental philosophy encourages us not to occupy ourselves with objects, but rather “our *a priori* concepts” (ibid.). Because we cannot know things in themselves, we make no progress trying to understand how the categories relate to those things. What we can understand and investigate, however, is the

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<sup>105</sup> Kant himself, however, does suggest that the method be viewed as a “mere estimation of pure reason” and should be understood as “only a critique of pure reason” with only “negative utility” (*KrV*, A11/B25).

role the categories play as a subjective need to understand our experience. For whatever is to be said of our knowledge claims, these claims cannot use the categories to explain what things in themselves are but rather what we do when we experience something. The restriction thesis of Chapter One has not only blocked our access to knowing things in themselves, but it has also redefined the traditional role of the categories as categories of *being*. In the place of the intelligibility that may be inherent in nature, Kant presents us with an account of the idiosyncratic nature of our bondage to some particular concepts we find indispensable to the way we happen to think. However, the subjective indispensability of the categories is not the target of Hegel's criticism of Kant's category theory. Hegel agrees we understand nothing apart from the categories as much as Kant does. It the ultimacy Kant gives to this subjectivity as both the origin and end of the scope of the categories. Kant's method of discerning subjective indispensability gives rise to an attitude Hegel takes to be a great loss for philosophy in the shift from ontology to transcendental horizons for our thought.<sup>106</sup> From Hegel's point of view, objectivity now has the scope of judgment's correspondence to that which is constructed by the understanding. However, this sort of objectivity may leave the worry that "the concept and anything logical are declared to be something merely *formal* which, since it abstracts from content, does not contain truth" (WL2, 256/SL, 516). That is, if we adopt this sort of objectivity, our concepts are formal devices of subjectivity, alien to the content they are employed to understand. Like the empty abstraction of being discussed in Chapter One,

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<sup>106</sup> As Hegel aims to explain what Kant's philosophy sacrifices from previous philosophies, it is understandable that Hegel would appear as an advocate of pre-critical thought. However, such is not the case, and it is important to bear in mind that the assertion of the existence of things from a prior philosophy is not the same as using the older philosophy to establish those things. One may wish to speak of numbers as real (as distinct from, say, their representation as numerals), but the assertion itself does not necessitate Platonism.

the categories elucidate nothing about the objects categorized except how we categorize such objects. They do not tell us what is true or false about objects or what is or is not the case apart from subjective experience.

The relegation of the categories to the understanding stems, for Hegel, from two kinds of empiricism he faults Kant for embracing: (1) the empirical approach that is *historical* and (2) the empirical approach that is the commitment to explain reality in terms reducible to sensibility. The first approach relies on an uncritical acceptance of tradition, and the second approach relies on forcing any metaphysical conclusions to ultimately find their justification in what can be experienced through sensation. Hegel finds that the first empirical commitment is unfortunate in that Kant merely adopts his table of categories empirically by relying on a tradition that restricts its analysis of the categories to their use in formal logic (WL2, 375/SL, 613). This poses a problem for Hegel because Kant then repeats a prior account of the categories instead of a new investigation into what they are apart from solely how we have historically used them. Hegel remarks that “Kant does not follow up further the derivation of these categories,” and that he only assesses them in relation to their ability to provide “the whole of the metaphysics of the understanding” (VGP3, 520/LHP3, 445). For Hegel, Kant “finds [the categories] imperfect,” not because they do not communicate what being is, but because Kant’s explanation of what the categories are is explained by Kant in terms of how we have used them historically. In this sense, the historical approach, it is not the categories that are under investigation but human behavior.

Hegel’s approach to the categories is to show that Kant accurately accounts for how the finite understanding employs these categories, but he leaves unexplained what

these categories are – to which Hegel will provide Kant’s missing explanation, thereby avoiding pre-critical arguments carrying pre-critical mistakes. Hegel makes this attempt early in *Faith and Knowledge*, in focusing on the second sense of empiricism above – the reduction of reality to sensibility becomes a reduction of reality to subjectivity. Hegel sees this reduction when Kant’s account of the categories is forced to:

be grasped in such a way that the manifold of sensibility, empirical consciousness as intuition and sensation, is in itself something unintegrated, that the world is in itself falling to pieces, and only gets objective coherence and support, substantiality, multiplicity, even actuality and possibility, through the good offices of human self-consciousness and intellect. All this is an objective determinateness that is man’s own perspective and projection. (GW, 381/FK, 74)

Here Hegel argues that Kant has placed the categories solely within the finite understanding’s tools to make sensibility intelligible and that this placement has poor results for a philosophy that aims to grasp any reality apart from “man’s own perspective and projection” (ibid.). The role Kant grants to subjectivity is an odd hubris in its attempt at epistemic humility. On the one hand, Kant’s ambition was to tame reason’s propensity to make judgments about that which is not experienced and provide a new sort of objectivity that does not dare to trespass what is experiential. On the other hand, what Kant accomplishes is an overexaggerated role for subjectivity alien to the source (unintegrated) of all experience – the world. Hegel’s Kant sees the world as offering no assurances about its nature, but then when pressed to explain how understanding and judgment take place in the absence of this assurance, Kant places the weight of the intelligibility of the world on “the good offices of human self-consciousness” (ibid.). Because the categories are a product of our intelligence, we are responsible for concepts such as “substance, multiplicity, even actuality and possibility” (ibid.). If Kant is right, as Hegel understands him, we do not participate in the intelligibility of the world; we give

intelligibility to it, as we are the source of that intelligibility. Objectivity emerges from our cognition and has no place in the structure of being, as that structure is irretrievably alien to us by the very nature of Kant's characterization of experience.

Hegel expresses dissatisfaction in the notion that the Kantian philosophy could find no better way to understand objectivity except through the activation of *human* self-consciousness. Such self-consciousness should not be what we have in mind when regarding the autonomy of thought and its ability to operate.<sup>107</sup> If we ask what the categories are, how we use them to understand is simply a narration of what we have done with them. If we continue to speak of objective determinateness as how we use the categories in our experience, we only explain objective determination as a projection of human intellect.

Early in the *Science*, Hegel claims that the categories are no better explained in reference to being in the new role Kant assigns them than when they were previously understood as a direct exhibition of being. Kant "has not produced any alteration" of the categories but simply inverted their customary location (WL1, 74/SL, 46-7). They are "left in the same shape for the subject knower as they formerly possessed for the object" (ibid.). In Hegel's mind the categories are no better explained by Kant's placing them on the side of the subject than the pre-critical attempts to keep the categories on the side of the object, and. Kant thereby leaves the categories unexplained in his attempt to situate them within subjectivity. Hegel's chief reason for this accusation must wait until Chapter Four, but his concern is that Kant must invoke "thought as such" [*Denken als solche*] as a

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<sup>107</sup> The autonomy of thought in relation to subjectivity is addressed in Chapter Four. However, as previously mentioned, "thought thinking thought" is not reducible to human subjectivity either in the individual subject or collectively.

mechanism of generating categories, and this thought transcends the subjectivity Kant attempts to confine it to.

### The Intracategorical Interpretation of Category Theory

Moving from Hegel's assessment of Kant's intracategorical interpretation to the general intracategorical interpretation ascribed to Hegel, Thomas Bole helps shape our discussion by sketching the approach of both intracategorical and extracategorical interpretations of Hegel's category theory. Bole's dissertation, "Contradiction in Hegel's 'Science of Logic'," helps us best understand what is at stake in our approach to Hegel's category theory. Bole's dissertation is fertile ground to show how far Hegel deviates from an increasingly customary assumption on the role Hegel accords to the categories. In Anglophonic Hegel studies, contemporary Hegel scholars more often embody Thomas Bole's term "intracategorical" in their approach to understanding Hegel's view of the categories than the dynamic ideation I present in this chapter.<sup>108</sup> Both intracategorical and extracategorical theories are united in the way they understand Hegel's commitment to a discursive understanding as the source of the discovery of categories themselves but differ in what this discovery signifies. Whereas discursivity in Kant is expressed as "cognition through concepts" (*KrV*, B283), discursivity is unique to the understanding, which, for Hegel, is not the whole of cognition. For Hegel, comprehending the

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<sup>108</sup> The most renowned (and cited) scholars on the matter are Robert Pippin and Terry Pinkard. Both advocate removing the metaphysical ambitions of Hegel's category theory, and further would argue that keeping such ambitions are a harm to Hegel's project. See Terry Pinkard's "How Kantian Was Hegel?" *The Review of Metaphysics*. Vol. 43, No. 4 (1990). The claim is repeated in a larger scope on page 105 of Pinkard's *Hegel's Dialectic*. See also Robert Pippin's "apperception thesis" in *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfaction of Self-Consciousness*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) p. 85.

discursivity of our understanding shows the way our cognition transcends the discursive nature of the understanding. As we will see, despite intracategorical claims, there is no genuine knowledge that the understanding is discursive unless cognition can surmount the limitations of discursivity and hence be extracategorical.

Bole understands Hegel's immanent deduction as intracategorical in the sense that, as Hegel's *Logic*, "is a categorial account to be worked out in the domain of categorial thought itself, it must begin with a category."<sup>109</sup> Of the "Objective Logic" in the *Science*, this statement is true. Hegel begins with what he takes to be the most basic and fundamental category (Being) to begin his analysis of what the categories are and how they function. This starting point is the immanence both intracategorical and extracategorical interpretations choose to understand Hegel's approach from which the rest of the deduction proceeds. Bole rightly describes Hegel's procedure in developing his category theory from our employment of the categories. However, as we will see below, it is what Hegel means by "thought" that makes the scope of the categories extracategorical and not Bole's notion of intracategorical limitations.

First, Bole understands a category as "a statement of what being is in terms of thought. The categories thus mark differences which thought makes to being."<sup>110</sup> This marking of differences made to being is the idea that whatever we experience is expressed through a series of imposing determinations from the subject on being, and the categories are those necessary impositions to experience something as intelligible. He takes this understanding of category theory to articulate an intracategorical approach as follows:

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<sup>109</sup> Pinkard, *Hegel's Dialectic*, 521.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

[T]he comprehension which is peculiarly thought's is intracategorical and transcendental. It is intracategorical insofar as it is always the categorial status and limitation of a preceding stage of categorization which any given categorial element purports to explain. And it is transcendental in the sense that the explanation offered is one which grounds the very possibility of the preceding stage's being accorded categorial status. Consequently, Hegel characterized the Logic as an "immanent deduction," the equivalent of Kant's transcendental deduction executed in terms of categorial thought alone.<sup>111</sup>

I understand Bole to mean that the act of thought's comprehensive organization through categorial distinctions is intracategorical in the sense that whatever data led to the new comprehension, this new comprehension is the horizon of what the previous stage may explain or justify. This comprehension is also transcendental because, as we saw from Hegel's passage in the *Philosophy of Right*, "the route by which it has become a *result* [is] its proof and deduction" (PR, 27/31-2). The new stage of comprehensiveness, the result of the preceding acts of comprehension, is proof that the prior comprehension is a valid datum for the deduction of the result.<sup>112</sup> Bole comments above that this marks "the equivalent of Kant's transcendental deduction" applied to category theory because whatever the categories make intelligible about being, it will always trace back to an earlier stage of categorization, and the earliest stage of a comprehensive thought will always be an act of categorization on the part of the understanding. This invariable tracing back to previous stages is indeed like Kant's transcendental deduction, and Bole suggests the similarity for Hegel is that all thought is conditioned by the interconnectedness of the categories' relations to one another. In looking ahead, as the

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<sup>111</sup> Bole, "Contradiction," 532.

<sup>112</sup> Embedding in this is a truthmaking condition on the correspondence to any claim's appeal to evidential standards. However, while I note the presence of such a condition, it's not relevant to the current discussion, as I will try to set aside any need to overcomplicate the analysis with discussion of what should constitute proof.

discrepancy between shared terms and their meanings becomes relevant, we should note that for Bole “thought” is conditioned by its categorial nature. Bole gives his technical definition of thought as “renderings of being in terms of comprehensive categorization.”<sup>113</sup> Hegel, however, defines thought as, “in the absolute sense of infinite thought, not as encumbered by the finitude of consciousness; in short, thought as such” (WL1, 69/SL, 41). Bole is not using “thought” as Hegel is (unencumbered by the finitude of consciousness Bole attributes to thought above).

Because Bole (and any intracategorial interpretation) places thought within the finitude of consciousness, thought will proceed no further than dialectical reason as no speculative element is considered immanent. We can see the appeal to comprehensiveness (the work of speculative reason) granted to dialectical reason in Bole’s understanding of Hegel’s method in the *Science*, which is immersed in “the Dialectic of the Logic,” where “the idea of the dialectic as determinate negation is the crucial concept of the Logic.”<sup>114</sup> Bole sees the dialectic as accomplishing “a reconciliation of the architectonic form of the Logic with its categorial content.”<sup>115</sup> By this, he means that the movement Hegel shows “the Logic fully comprehends the explanatory status of its own formal and material principles.”<sup>116</sup> It “comprehends itself as its own explanation” and “the dialectic is the Logic’s ultimate category, the Absolute Idea.”<sup>117</sup> This dialectic, as ultimate and absolute, is the category of the categories, from which we know our deduction of the categories is both immanent and intracategorial.

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<sup>113</sup> Bole, “Contradiction,” 520.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

Bole's intracategorical interpretation is *intra* in the sense that Hegel's discernment of a dialectic operative in discerning the presence of categories is both an explanation of and the consequence of the formal and material elements of categorization. For Bole, Hegel's category theory must forever remain dialectical because its method determines its results, and its method is always to find how new determinations of categories are explained by prior determinations of categories and vice versa. No thought can exist outside this structure of categorization. Whatever thought is assumed to be extracategorical could only be understood because it is generated and fixed by the categories. Consequently, an intracategorical interpretation would argue that all thought is conditioned by the categories. Because all thought is conditioned by the categories, no thought is extracategorical – no thought manages to be irreducible to categorization. Therefore, any notion of being is only formal in nature and derivative from our ability to categorize.

This inability of thought to transcend the finite categories is a saving grace by Bole's reckoning. He sees the opposite alternative, extracategoriality, as having betrayed the notion of Hegel's immanent deduction, and with disastrous consequences for Hegel's philosophy:

On an immanent, or intracategorical, reading of the *Logic* that status [the objective validity of the categories] is secured by the roles categories play in the dialectical articulation of what thought must be to comprehend what it is of. Because this function of thought is logically presupposed by any and all claims to know what is the case extracategorially, it cannot be explained in a way which would depend upon the truth of any such claim. Hence accounts of the status of the *Logic's* categories which depend upon appeal to extracategorical states of affairs cannot succeed.<sup>118</sup>

First, this criticism of extracategorical theory does not apply to how I will re-interpret the term, and Bole is right to stress that if the *Logic* presupposed a world to which the

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<sup>118</sup> Bole, "Contradiction," 532.

categories must correspond, we would not have reality revealed to us the way Hegel intends – through what is discernable within the capacity of the categories to reveal.

Further:

If thought's comprehension is extralogical, the cogency of the dialectic depends upon its adequacy to that extralogical item, and its explanatory function cannot be gauged in its own terms. The advantage of an intracategorical reading of Hegel's Logic is that it relies solely on conceptual comprehension in a domain that of thought in its explanatory, or logical, function where thought alone has jurisdiction, and thought's other is relevant only insofar as it can be translated into terms of thought.<sup>119</sup>

Again, Bole correctly notes that for Hegel, there can be nothing extralogical, as he understands logic. If there were something extralogical, the logic Hegel defends would lack the systematic means to account for the extralogical piece of reality, and therefore it would not be the all-pervasive logic Hegel needs for his system to be a self-justifying account of the intelligibility of reality. However, extralogical and extracategorical are quite different. What matters here is what would be extralogical for Hegel as opposed to extralogical for Bole. Hegel has a wider stage for logic that makes his category theory extracategorical but not extralogical. Intralogical does not imply intracategorical. Arguing for an intralogical necessity is equally amenable to both the intracategorical and extracategorical positions. Logic, I hope to show, is understood by Hegel as inherently ontological and not merely formal. The stopping point at what Hegel's "common logic" (WL1, 78/SL, 51), which is the type consistently described by Bole, would merely invite Hegel's criticism of a subjective and psychological idealism once again. The initial problem with the intracategorical theory, as we see in Bole's use of "thought" and "extralogical," is replacing Hegel's very technical definitions with common definitions.

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

There are two passages that do, however, lend themselves to an intracategorical interpretation. In his section “Determinateness,” Hegel focuses on the role of linguistic determination inherent in our thinking. The role of mental articulation is often invoked as seeing thought locked within what is available for description:

In everything that the human being has interiorized, in everything that in some way or other has become for him a representation, in whatever he has made his own, there has language penetrated, and everything that he transforms into language and expresses in it contains a category, whether concealed, mixed, or well defined. (WL1, 125/SL, 112)

Hegel’s idea is that nothing is experienced if not somehow *articulated* to oneself – no matter how vague the articulation may be. We interpret or express phenomena in relation to ourselves so that it becomes our experience. Moreover, no matter how well defined, muddled, or hidden, these experiences will always contain categories. As mentioned, the universality of the categories in all experience is something the intracategorical account understands to mean that somehow the universal character constitutes the boundary of thought. However, to my mind, we can (and should) concede that there are no acts of understanding apart from categorization. Nonetheless, there is no statement on Hegel’s part that affirms that *thought as such* or *reason* never transcends the epistemic constraints of the limitations of what is rendered by the categories. Quite the opposite will prove to be the case.

Despite the popularity of the “Determinateness” passage, the most relevant text to my mind is as follows:

Now it must certainly be conceded that the concept is as such not yet complete, that it must rather be raised to the idea which alone is the unity of the concept and reality; and this is a result which will have to emerge in what follows from the nature of the concept itself. For the reality that the concept gives itself cannot be

picked up as it were from the outside but must be derived from the concept itself in accordance with scientific requirements. (WL2, 279/SL, 518)

Hegel is here discussing how a concept comes to express reality. Hegel argues that the reality revealed by concepts must still be derived from the concepts themselves according to the method of immanent deduction. For the intracategorical interpretation, this makes all experiential aspects of reality categorically determined, and those aspects are restricted to only what can be deduced of the categories' ability to determine objects of the understanding. In simpler terms, a scientific category theory commits us to the idea that whatever we want to call reality can only be called reality to the degree that it conforms to pure concepts of the understanding. Whatever else there is in experiences or the world is nothing to experience for us. Whatever else there may be in reality "cannot be picked up...from the outside" (ibid.). The scope of our knowledge about reality cannot transcend categorial thought because that would be the very "outside" Hegel claims is unattainable through categorial thinking. An extracategorical interpretation of the categories, on this view, would radically misunderstand Hegel's requirement to restrict ourselves to "the reality that the concept gives itself" (ibid.).

While this passage suggests an extracategorical interpretation would have to borrow from outside that reality the concept gives, what should seem odd to an intracategorical interpreter in the above passage is why Hegel believes he has discerned these aspects of reality he apparently claims we should have no knowledge of given our discursivity. Hegel does not tell us there exists nothing apart from what we can experience through a discursive understanding. What he does say is that which we understand will be understood discursively. These two claims are different. While we would be taken far afield at the moment to discuss the distinction of *concept*, *reality*, and

*idea*,<sup>120</sup> the pure concepts of the understanding are “not yet complete” (ibid.). Hegel states that the concept must “be raised to the idea which alone is the unity of the concept and reality” (ibid.). The intracategorical interpreters would be quick to point out that such a thing is not accomplished except by Hegel’s condition that the idea still “must be derived from the concept itself” (ibid.). However, the concept itself, from which the idea must be derived, is a starting point that must have a different conclusion than the intracategorical interpretation’s. The idea is not reducible to the categories that Hegel is making a knowledge claim about. Hegel argues that the concept is incomplete until unified with reality. The categories are incomplete until informed by a reality apart from what these categories are, and hence there are portions of reality undetermined by the categories and apparently known to Hegel. If we were to claim that for Hegel thought never transcends categorial thinking, it is hard to image how Hegel has discerned portions of reality that are themselves not determined by the categories. An immanent deduction could discern such things, inasmuch as the concept may contain the relevant data to come to such notions as reality and idea. There is no rational way to interpret the above passage unless Hegel believes the immanent deduction of the categories does not imply restricting thought to a discursive understanding simply because we possess this discursive intellect. One should wonder why Hegel would adopt an intracategorical view of the categories and then proceed to violate that view consistently regarding his most important conclusions on what philosophy accomplishes.

Beyond texts that should call the conclusions of the intracategorical interpretation into question, there are several passages where Hegel explicitly chastises the view and

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<sup>120</sup> One can roughly understand the distinction of concept, reality, and idea as form (concept), content (reality), and their intelligible unity (idea).

makes associating him with such an approach to the categories unfruitful. Hegel speaks of “purifying the categories” because they “work only instinctively” and are such haphazard mechanics that they reveal “only fragmentary and uncertain actuality” (WL1, 130/SL, 117). If what actuality there is were indeed transcendent to cognition, Hegel should rather describe actuality as inaccessible and without fragments we experience. Such is not the case precisely because cognition is extracategorical. In the *Science*, Hegel mentions ideas “negating this circle of categories,” which, if nothing else, suggests something has some kind of reality outside the circle of categories and, again, Hegel is apparently capable of making some knowledge claim about that thing (WL1, 147/SL, 133). The intracategorical interpretation cannot accommodate passages such as these nor are they brought up for discussion in much secondary literature that supports an intracategorical category theory. Further, Hegel’s criticism of how Kant handles the antinomies of reason in the *Critique* marks the clearest rejection of the intracategorical interpretation one could ask for:

Kant’s exposition of these antinomies is very imperfect, both because it is internally awkward and eccentric and because of *the inappropriateness of its result, which presupposes that cognition has no other forms of thought than finite categories.* (WL1, 171/SL, 157, emphasis mine)

Hegel alleges the antinomies, two apparently true but mutually exclusive conclusions, are mismanaged by Kant, because Kant assumes before his treatment of the antinomies that “cognition has no other forms of thought than finite categories” (ibid.). If one could phrase the intracategorical interpretation as succinctly as possible, the phrase would be “cognition has no other forms of thought than the finite categories.” It is this type of thinking, according to Hegel, that is to be avoided, as such an understanding inevitably makes “a complete departure from and even explicit contradiction of its use of

categories,” while “no suspicion dawns on it that another way of thinking than its own is present and employed” (E, 12/10-1). This passage is informative for two reasons. The first reason is that Hegel sees the intracategorical interpretation in a performative contradiction – where it denies in theory what it affirms in practice. The use of the categories, in some way to be explained briefly, is using the categories beyond their the finite thought determinations. The second is that this performative contradiction points to “another way of thinking than its own.” Whatever this other way turns out to be, it is present, used, and not intracategorical. What should be clear is that Hegel has already considered and rejected an intracategorical approach to category theory. His alternative may be wrong, but surely it is not that thinking is encapsulated within the limits of finite thought determinations, even if our investigation into the scope of thought must begin with what is implied in our thinking. An intracategorical interpretation of Hegel’s category theory may start with an immanent deduction, but as a representation of Hegel’s arguments, it cannot conclude that thought is limited to the realm of finitude. In the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel is clear that if we claim reason (as opposed to the understanding) is bound to “the application of the categories,” and that “reason possesses no other determinations for knowing than the categories,” he believes we will “sacrifice all content and import” for what we claim is knowledge (E, 127/94). For Hegel, reason is not bound to categorial thinking (or discursivity),<sup>121</sup> so since we possess reason, its scope is not limited to that which is categorized or categorizable. The “categories of finitude...of force, or substantiality, cause and effect, and so on” are not the limits by which we cognize the realities these categories refer to, but rather are “only symbols when

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<sup>121</sup> Our understanding is bound to finite thought determinations but not reason. Why reason does not face such restrictions is addressed in Chapter Four.

expressing, for instance, living or spiritual relations; that is, they are to them untrue determinations” (WL1, 295/SL, 157). These finite thought determinations are symbols of a dynamic ideation between the fragments that they capture and that which is expressed in those fragments. Hegel uses the categories to reveal a partial account of reality that must be “purified” so that we can see, not that our powers of cognition are limited to an intracategorical view, but that a true category theory moves beyond its analysis of finite determinations to see what grounds the distinction among categories in the first place. The categories are symbolic expressions of something they fail to fully convey – an extracategorical reality that is represented in the categories, and discernable within them, but it is not reducible to them. This insight allows us the possibility to apply the categories beyond our experience to the world from which our experience originates.

#### Hegel’s Account of the Self-Transcendence of the Finite Categories

If the categories have an extracategorical nature about them, there should be something detectable about that nature within their finitude. That is, if we are to abide by Hegel’s immanent deduction, and if we are claiming that we can know something about the extracategorical nature through such immanence, something must be within that finitude that points to an infinitude. For this reason, I have picked those two categories (the finite and infinite) Hegel uses to discern the infinite as a determined artifact within the finite. As with the thing in itself from Chapter One, on the one hand, the infinite will appear as an empty abstraction, as the infinite can be abstracted from the finite, but is no determinate thing. On the other hand, what is an empty abstraction of the finite

determination is another modality of being in the movement of becoming (from nothing to being to nothing) as a place for the emergence of finitude. Because we can observe this movement, we can use the determined artifact of the infinite as our knowledge of the role of the infinite within our finite experience.

In his discussion on existence [*das Dasein*], Hegel invokes two categories implicit in the concept of existence – finitude and infinitude (WL1, 123/SL, 101). Hegel begins with finitude and understands the category as the quality of both determinateness (the immediate or current presence of something) and a point of termination – “things destined to ruin” (ibid.). By this, Hegel means through finitude, we grasp the presence of something in the context of duration and inherent in this idea of duration is an impending endpoint. Things come to be, remain for a duration, and cease to be. Beyond the objects of our experience, we understand moments and events in a chronological sequence of emergence and perishing. In this coming to be and ceasing to be, we find that in our attempt to describe the finite, we get immersed in contextualizing it in terms of something else – that field of being from which things come to be and return to nothing. The notion of duration presupposes times before the event and after the event that are not currently present. Duration also presupposes, however, the notion of permanence. The present, as finite as it may be, is understood as *permanent for that moment* – what Hegel calls “finitude in its immediacy” (ibid.). This notion of finitude as a simultaneously momentary permanence and a permanent momentariness is “...posited with its immanent limit as the contradiction of itself by virtue of which it is directed and driven out and beyond itself” (ibid.). Permanence is not the category of finitude, as finitude is understood as its opposite. Permanence is that which does not perish. However, finitude

participates in permanence for whatever duration something is present. The momentary permanence belonging to finitude emerges as if it were a predicate (or type) of permanence. The momentariness, improper to permanence, is the immanent contradiction Hegel has in mind that drives the concept of finitude beyond itself.

The self-contradictoriness of the category of finitude is shown in the concepts of permanence and perishable because what is perishable always has some permanence. However, in how we understand this permanence as a part of the finite, or apart from the finite, many possibilities exist regarding how we may mismanage the concepts of both finitude and infinitude. As I mentioned, there is a sense in which the infinite appears as the empty abstraction of the finite, but this empty abstraction is revelatory for both finitude and the true infinite. As such, we will examine what happens when we try to understand the infinite as a determinate category. Hegel accounts for several possible ways we may err in our understanding of the categories of finitude and infinitude,<sup>122</sup> but the most relevant ones for our purposes are those that invariably reduce the infinite to a *finitized infinite* (the bad infinite) (WL1, 137/SL, 115). Examining the bad infinite is important to understanding the dynamism of Hegel's category theory, which transcends the intracategorical scope (or "negates the circle of categories") because it is in the bad infinite that we see both the difficulty that will face any intracategorical interpretation of the categories as well as the way to avoid such difficulty.

If we were to treat the discovery of permanence within the concept of finitude as a category, as a pure concept of the understanding, we could only do so considering what the understanding experiences and limit ourselves to finite representations. What the

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<sup>122</sup> See (WL1, 133-146/SL, 111-123) in the *Science of Logic*.

understanding experiences of permanence is its momentary emergence (WL1, 144/SL, 121). Because a moment of permanence is all the understanding can grasp, the infinite should be understood by the understanding as either (1) a determinate moment like finitude, only as a moment that never ends, or (2) the progression of finite moments in a never-ending succession (WL1, 139/SL, 117). However, if (1) is the case, the infinite is now a determined moment. As a determined moment, the infinite now defies explanation as something permanent because it is given the quality of finitude. If (2) is the case, again the infinite becomes finite since its concept is the mere repetition of finitude, without a specified duration, yet duration is still the fundamental characteristic of such infinitude. Hegel argues that any determination of the infinite analogously to the finite "...is corrupted by being saddled with a quality of this sort" (ibid.). In both (1) and (2) permanence is a type of finite moment, and yet a finite moment ought to be a type of permanence (WL1, 135/SL, 113). In both cases, the identity of infinitude is made subservient to the pure concept of finitude because the understanding finds nothing else to use to grasp the infinite but the static category of finitude.

The alternative is to claim that the infinite is wholly transcendent to the finite. However, this also will not work because if we understand the infinite as "the beyond" in opposition to the finite present, the infinite "does not have the affirmation of *existence* in it" (WL1, 141/SL, 119). Finitude is a category for existence – things that currently are. To say the infinite is transcendent to finite existence is to say that finite existence is devoid of the infinite. However, if the infinite is permanence, as the category of finitude suggests, the momentary permanence of finitude is not possible. However, such momentary permanence is a necessary predicate of existence, or nothing would

concretely exist for any particular place and time. Therefore, the infinite cannot be wholly transcendent to the finite.

The understanding frustrates the process of recognizing this negation of the circle of categories, as it only operates with individual and distinct categories. Whatever distinctions are made of these categories, they are understood as constants. If they are not constants, for those moments where the distinctions do not hold, these categories are not those things they were known to be, as their identity is now different. This insistence of the understanding for consistency sets up a problem it is incapable of solving. The understanding must grasp finitude as something different from infinitude or else the distinction is superfluous. The understanding observes both their difference and inter-relatedness, but the understanding cannot grasp this relation as a unity. The unity is lost on the understanding because for every instance the finite and infinite are united, neither is the determined category of finitude or the determined category of infinitude. The understanding must use some third thing (as we saw in Chapter Two's account of diversity) apart from each to understand their unity. However, insisting on constant numerical diversity, the understanding precludes the notion that the mutual implication of finitude in the infinite and infinitude in the finite (both expressions of permanence), "*overlooks* the negation of both...just as it equally overlooks that the two occur in this progression only as moments of a whole" (WL1, 140/SL, 117-18). What the understanding cannot discern is that both finitude and infinitude are two expressions of something that is not a determinate category except as an empty abstraction of an underlying reality. Both are the partial *hints* (or impulses [*Triebe*] as Hegel calls them) of the reality that each aims to express differently. Neither determination is suitable as a

pure concept, as there exists no true purity among the categories. The conceptual content in the notion of either finitude or infinitude (as a category) is borrowed (but immanently revealed in the category of finitude) from an idea that manifests itself in the similarities and dissimilarities between our determinate expressions of permanence and its varying modalities. In this sense, the finite is a modality of permanence, the infinite (as determined) is a modality of permanence. These two concepts convey a dynamic movement of what is and is not proper to attribute to the extracategorical reality of permanence. This extracategorical reality Hegel calls “the ideality of both” but we must take care to not understand this unity as a compound of the finite and infinite. We are tempted to conclude that a genuine nature of the categories of finitude and infinitude is their unity (as an intracategorical account would do), but this misunderstands the extracategorical dynamism with the categories – their ideality. Hegel notes:

The claim is made that the finite and the infinite are one unity. This is a false claim that needs correction by its opposite: the two are absolutely different and opposed. This claim is in turn to be corrected to the effect that the two are inseparable; that in the one determination there lies the other by virtue of the claim to unity; and so forth to infinity. – It is easy enough to see into the nature of the infinite: one must recognize that the infinite progression, the developed infinity of the understanding, is constituted by the *alternation* of the two determinations, of the *unity* and the *separation* of the two moments; and then further recognize that this unity and this separation are inseparable. (WL1, 144/SL, 121)

The finite and infinite are not a strict unity because they are opposed to one another conceptually. This opposition, however, cannot imply that finitude and infinitude are separated, as each is linked in the mutual implication of each other. The understanding yields two separate determinations but fails to capture what is essential to those determinations – that they are the alternating portions of some categorized reality “in their *unity* and *separation*” [*der Einheit und der Trennung*], as we consider each either

singularly or together (ibid.). Their dynamic relation of trading roles to manifest the same reality is their shared ideality, which, as previously mentioned, Hegel calls “the *quality* of the infinite.” This quality is “essentially the process of *becoming*, and hence a transition – like the transition of becoming into existence” (WL1, 143/SL, 120). As previously mentioned, there is an artefactual quality of the infinite in its emergence into the categorized world of existence. The infinite is seen in the transition of becoming – its quality is the permanence between the oscillation of existence’s ability to come to be and cease to be. The infinite is “posited over against the reality which finite existence is” (WL1, 142/SL, 119). As posited, the infinite (as a category) is the determined artifact of the true infinite as the negation of the determined existent (ibid.). Conversely, the presence of the finite is the negation of the infinitude that is posited for the finite’s presence. “The idealized,” for Hegel, “is the finite as it is in the true infinite” (ibid.). The finite, and the categories of finitude, both originate in and bear witness to an accessible and intelligible extracategorical reality.

Hegel’s complicated account of this relationship is eventually summed up under the simple term “moment.” The finite is “a determination, a content, a distinct but not *a subsistent existent, a moment* rather” (ibid.). Ideality, then, is a moment when permanence manifests itself in existence in a limited (lacking permanence) way. Neither static category of finitude or infinitude can capture this nor can the combination of the two. The alternating extracategoriality of becoming that defies exhaustive expression in either category, which is the actual reality of what the categories do and what they are.

## Conclusion

Besides little textual evidence to warrant associating Hegel with an intracategorical approach to category theory, Hegel's notion of the ideality of the categories necessitates what I have described as an extracategorical interpretation. For Hegel, we should not be surprised that the understanding finds itself entangled in contradictory notions of finitude and infinitude, as it can achieve no more comprehensiveness than this contradiction. The understanding has nothing to assess but the determinations that are not themselves the ideality they express. Further, Hegel chastises the dialectical embrace of the determinate opposites as a bald contradiction when he writes that the contradiction's resolution "is not the acknowledgment of the *equal correctness*, and of the equal incorrectness, of both claims" (WL1, 144/SL, 121). We cannot point to the contradiction and absolve ourselves from solving it by arguing that the contradiction shows that a finitized infinite and infinitized finite are every bit as wrong as they are right. Resting with this particular contradiction seems the intracategorical interpretation's only option. The intracategorical theory of the categories perpetuates an irresolvable contradiction in the unity of finite and infinite or a contradictory separateness of finite and infinite. Both contradictions are false considering the ideality Hegel discerns between the finite and infinite. The subject of finitude's relation to infinitude is important enough that Hegel remarks that he has provided a graphic example of the nature of speculative thought in its determining feature (ibid.). That is, the mechanics of this ideality serve as the key to understanding the role of Absolute Knowing as it pertains to the emergence of determinate being.

## CHAPTER 4

### OVERCOMING THE METAPHYSICS OF SUBJECTIVITY

In the last chapter, we saw that the dynamic ideality between finitude and infinitude calls Hegel to push beyond the intracategorical interpretation of the categories towards an investigation into the nature and scope of that ideality. In this chapter, we will see that Hegel's pursuit of the origins of the artifacts of infinitude, as found in the categories or finite thought determinations, will steer his investigation into an unorthodox combination of metaphysics and logic, in which *ontos* and *logos* are two expressions (or moments) of the same identity. In Chapter Three, the categories were seen to exhibit a dialectic between the finite and infinite. For Hegel, the dialectical union, from which each differentiates itself as a determinacy, is the true concept of each determinacy, as the concept is the essential nature of the two which affords the distinction between them. Hegel phrases this unified relation in the *Encyclopedia* as "the benevolence of the absolute to release the individualities to their self-enjoyment, and this absolute drives them back into the absolute unity" (E, 117/86). The mechanics of this benevolence is the subject of the remaining chapters. Hegel argues that the mechanics of this benevolence is seen in the primordial intelligibility of being (the identity of thought and being), from which all division and individuation proceeds, and that each individuation always points back to its essential nature in that primordial intelligible being.

In contrast to Hegel's search for this absolute unity, under the Kantian project's transcendental concerns, such an investigation into Hegel's absolute is both impossible and unnecessary to understand how we experience objects. This Kantian program offers

little to Hegel in support of his view on the identity of thought and being. In fact, Hegel remarks that in the aftermath of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, the preoccupation with the transcendental nature of the categories leaves "the treatment itself of such categories...empty" (WL1, 189/SL, 157), as Kant's program focuses on how the categories facilitate our experience as solely a product of our understanding. Despite such an accusation, Hegel liberally adopts Kant's notions of transcendental apperception, the productive imagination, and intellectual intuition to turn away from the transcendental program and embrace Hegel's absolute identity of thought and being as what should have been the outcome of any investigation into either thought or being. Therefore, our primary interest in this chapter is in Hegel's response to how Kant places the most primordial condition for experience and knowledge in transcendental apperception. Hegel understands transcendental apperception as Kant's attempt to unify consciousness in the subject's relation to its object (ibid). Apperception, as an *a priori* ground for any intelligible experience, is a collective perception (or representation) of a self as it is experiencing perceptions (or representations). Hegel is interested in Kant's claim that every experience exhibits an original synthetic unity of concept and intuition in relation to a subject. This synthesis<sup>123</sup> is the work of transcendental apperception in combining (synthesizing) intuition, concept, and a notion of first-person subjectivity (as *I think*). As Herbert Marcuse notes, Hegel exploits Kant's logic of synthesis to demonstrate "the absolute process of the becoming of beings as such."<sup>124</sup> As a process of becoming, there

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<sup>123</sup> This synthesis differs from what we will discuss as the productive imagination. Transcendental apperception is confined to the synthetic activity of uniting only intuition, concept, and a first-person subjectivity.

<sup>124</sup> Marcuse, Herbert. *Hegel's Ontology and the Theory of Historicity*. trans. Seyla Benhabib. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987) p. 202.

is a logical structure in being's nature (or being as such). It is, per Hegel, being itself, then, that Kant should have found as that which ultimately affords our intelligibility and not merely our ability to wed concepts and intuitions into representations. For Hegel, Kant has located this synthetic unity in the wrong place – finite consciousness as opposed to reality itself. As Kant relegates his investigation to finite consciousness, the true ground of his philosophy escapes him. Hegel sees this as a prime occasion to make an example of Kant's alleged mistake and uses transcendental apperception as motivation to move away from Kant.

The notion that we should move away from Kant, however, may not be seen as progressive. The claim that being is inherently intelligible (that there is an absolute identity of thought and being) poses a great risk to Hegel as being pre-critical, and it is this risk that most likely makes it so important to show how Kant's apperception leads to Hegel's absolute. He aims to avoid, as Marcuse points out, a philosophic regress to pre-Kantian metaphysics by avoiding "presupposing two original substances juxtaposed to one another, like a *res cogitans* and a *res extensa* which must subsequently be joined together."<sup>125</sup> In fact, it is not Hegel's intention to demonstrate that being becomes intelligible when thought on the one hand joins being on the other. However, if thought and being are not unified, one should wonder what role the two play that is somehow unrelatable as this role pertains to both of them. Conversely, if thought and being are an absolute identity, how could they have anything to differentiate them in any significant manner? In modifying Kant's notion of the synthetic activity within transcendental apperception, Hegel believes he (1) demonstrates that he "assumes the ground of

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

transcendental philosophy,”<sup>126</sup> because he will grant Kant’s most originary starting point, but push it further back to its truest primordially; and (2) in assuming this ground, Hegel is uninterested in a mere regress into post-Kantian metaphysics, but rather in working through what appears salvageable in Kant’s thought in the aftermath of its breakdown.

The aim of this chapter is to (1) extend Hegel’s claim, discussed previously in Chapter One, that we must “overcome the metaphysics of subjectivity” by shifting the focus of apperception away from privileging a first-person perspective as our model of consciousness; (2) attempt to understand Hegel’s alleged insight into the productive imagination’s unrestricted<sup>127</sup> function for reality; and (3) examine Hegel’s augmentation of Kant’s notion of intellectual intuition as the true original synthetic unity from which determinate being(s) usher forth. With these three issues addressed, we can then approach Hegel’s understanding of the identity of thought in being in Chapter Five.

In Section One, we will examine Hegel’s most consistent criticism of Kant’s account of apperception – that Kant fails to overcome a subjective account of subject/objects relations, and that he again perpetuates a metaphysics of subjectivity. Hegel’s claim is not that Kant fails to account for our subjective self-consciousness with transcendental apperception, but that Kant fails to explain how the concept of apperception could be reducible to merely transcendental conditions for a discursive understanding (WL2, 176/SL, 515). To make his point, Hegel targets what he sees as Kant’s privileging of the first-person perspective as the domain of all possible synthesizing of concept and intuition. Kant allegedly misunderstands the application of

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<sup>126</sup> Marcuse, *Hegel’s Ontology*, 27.

<sup>127</sup> By unrestricted, I mean its spontaneously unconditioned performance in cognition. See Section Four on this unrestricted sense of spontaneity.

his notion of *a priori* synthesis and should have rejected using the language of genitives and pronouns when discussing what knowledge is, because the transcendental subject (the *I think* of transcendental apperception) cannot be known to correspond to any particular pronoun. This lack of necessary correspondence, if nothing else, tells us that limiting thought to finite consciousness is unwarranted and uncertain.

Section Two examines Hegel's adaptation of Kant's notion of the productive imagination. Hegel understands Kant's productive imagination to be our cognitive ability to represent things to ourselves. For Hegel, the productive imagination is a function of reality itself to present things. Hegel's approach to Kant's productive imagination addresses the fact that, while we are bound to a discursive intellect, because transcendental method reveals an apperceptive self that does not necessarily identify a particular thinking subject, the productive imagination's relation to discursivity does not imply that such spontaneity [*Spontaneität*] is reducible to private acts of understanding – or the total of those acts to speak of conditions exclusive to human thought generally. With this, we then have no warrant to assume a description of the productive imagination is a description of a faculty of our understanding. We only are initially warranted by transcendental method to maintain that our discursivity reveals the necessity of a productive imagination, but one that “belongs” to no knowable source except itself. Here, in the spontaneity (because of its unrestricted lack of contingency) of the productive imagination, Hegel believes we find a way to reason that there exists an intelligible world constructed through rational agency, whereby all that is created is imbued with the rational structure from which it came. This notion is encapsulated in his famous dictum: “*Was vernünftig ist, das ist wirklich; und was wirklich ist, das ist*

*vernünftig*,” which I take to mean, “For what is rational, that truly is; and for what truly is, that is rational.”<sup>128</sup> Hegel gives us a metaphysical principle and an expectation for cognition. In this, there is a nascent assurance that if something is rational, one can know it exists in some way, and if something exists, one can know it must have some rational structure; here there is a holistic or “absolute” knowledge that is possible if we can only discern the identity of thought and being. Hegel comes closest to introducing this possibility in his account of the spontaneity of the productive imagination, and by demonstrating what the content of this Absolute Knowledge would look like by using intellectual intuition as a model. The intellectual intuition, roughly, is the unity of concept and intuition in the absence of any contingency – the spontaneity of the imagination and the production of both form and content. It serves as the intelligible ground from which any further determinations will emerge.

Section Three attempts to make clear how that which exists is inherently rational in, again, another manipulation of one of Kant’s themes – intellectual intuition. By my interpretation, Hegel does not argue that we experience the sort of intellection he calls ‘intuitive.’ The concept of intellectual intuition is something we can reason, but in reasoning intellectual intuition we do not experience it. Hegel disagrees with Kant, not on whether we have an intuitive understanding, but whether or not this form of understanding *exists*. Hegel does not grant us the power of intellectual intuition, but he does explain how we can reason that we know this power to exist despite our inability to experience such power.

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<sup>128</sup> PR, p. 35. Translations vary, with the most common being, “What is real is rational; and what is rational is real.”

While Hegel cites Kant's productive imagination as one of the most important insights into knowledge acquisition, we find the intracategorical account weakened by putting the human intellect into question as the prime model of intellection. A reflection from Jacobi, a predecessor of Hegel's who was also critical of Kant's apperception, helps invert the intracategorical interpretation and passes this inversion on to Hegel in asking, "Does man possess reason or does reason possess man?"<sup>129</sup> Investigating this question becomes important to Hegel as it puts us on the best track to solve the ontological scope of the categories, because these categories exhibit an intelligibility which transcends the discursive understanding's finite determinations. Should we discover that it is reason that possesses the person, we would look to the nature of thought itself to understand the ground of our experience as opposed to finite consciousness.

### Hegel on Transcendental Apperception

We have examined Hegel's concern that Kant creates a metaphysics of subjectivity from the subject's alienation from the thing in itself, which limits us to a world of phenomenal objects known only as we experience them. With Kant's critical enterprise resulting in simply one more manifestation of a metaphysics of subjectivity, Hegel sees Kant's leaning towards empiricism as problematic, but not particularly interesting. In what follows, I provide what is by no means a complete account of transcendental apperception. Our concern, as in previous chapters, are those elements seized either by

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<sup>129</sup> Jacobi, Heinrich Friedrich. *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009) p. 375.

Hegel or Hegel scholars as either significant departures from Kant's theoretical philosophy or from the allegation of Hegel's embrace of such elements.

With Kant's break from the empiricist tradition (towards *a priori* transcendental conditions), Hegel finds fertile ground to expand his idealism at the expense of Kant's. In Kant's search for the conditions for the possibility of experience, he introduces the notion of transcendental apperception as a "pure, original, unchanging consciousness" [*reines, ursprüngliches, unwandelbares Bewußtsein*] (*KrV*, A107) of the "numerical identity" [*numerischer Identität*] of itself throughout experience (*KrV*, A113). That is, each experience has an objective ('original' by Kant's meaning) and *a priori* ('pure' or prior to experience) singular consciousness – an *I think* (*ibid.*) that makes experience possible in unifying the content of experience with the individual experiencing that content. This singular consciousness is not "a passive state of mind," or "just the unity of representations but it is also the unifying of those representations in an act of spontaneity freed from empirical conditions" (*KrV*, B132). Without such apperception, "[t]here can be in us no modes of knowledge, no connection or unity of one mode of knowledge with another, without that unity of consciousness" (*KrV*, A107). This transcendental apperception is a vital component of the *a priori* grounds of experience because no experience occurs without a subject to experience it and no experience occurs apart from some content to experience.

The significance of discovering transcendental apperception reveals an interesting point for Hegel's philosophic development regarding the scope of intelligibility in general. While the content of our self-consciousness is contingent upon the sensuous manifold, the laws which govern self-consciousness are not. Transcendental apperception

culminates in an experience of an *I think*, where the subject is aware of itself in the presence (or contemplation or recollection) of objects.<sup>130</sup> The transcendental *I think*, however, “cannot be regarded as belonging to sensibility” (*KrV*, B132), because transcendental apperception is a precondition of experiencing sensibility as anything particular to our awareness of it. Nonetheless, Kant maintains that transcendental apperception is “how all of the manifold given in an intuition is united in a concept of an object” (*KrV*, B139). This apperception then, while not an aspect of sensibility, has the sensible manifold as its content to unify with the subject of experience. As an act of combination, it is also a cognitive performance. Still, we must be cautious not to anthropomorphize transcendental apperception. Hegel is clear that with Kant, transcendental apperception is neither a soul, a person, nor our *a posteriori* experience of perception (empirical apperception) (*KrV*, A402; *KrV*, B140). The fact that apperception has an accompanying *I think* does not tell us what this I is, but only that it claims possession on all representations we experience. With no identifiable subject at the level of *a priori* thought, the role of the I is all the more unclear as the original ground of experience.

As transcendental apperception is something prior to experience as a condition that makes it possible, Hegel’s interest in the notion is in its potential to show the sort of dynamic ideality at work in a union of the subject and the object experienced, which transcends the finite determinations of the subject’s understanding. However, to Hegel, transcendental apperception can only inform us about a subject’s subjectivity – how one

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<sup>130</sup> I say “contemplation or recollection” because apperception can be of prior experiences we call upon through our memory or things we imagine.

understands one's thought content as objects experienced – not what the relation of objects (apart from our experience) is to the subject.

In the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel begins a brief and general critique of empiricism, and then moves directly to Kant's critical philosophy, making transcendental apperception his immediate concern. He first tells us:

The I relates the manifold of sensing and intuiting to itself [the I] and unifies it [the manifold] within itself [the I] as *one* consciousness (pure apperception) and, as a result, this manifold is brought to an identity, into an original combination. (E, 115/85)

Here, Hegel understands Kant to mean that pure apperception (transcendental apperception) is "one consciousness," noting Kant's demand for numerical identity. This consciousness is made up of the synthesizing act of the *I* in unifying the manifold and intuitions into one representation of an *I* that experiences them.<sup>131</sup> The manifold of experience is brought into consciousness and wed to that consciousness to make this combination. Hegel clarifies how he understands this synthesizing *I* as follows:

When I say I, this represents the abstract relation to oneself, and whatever is placed in this unity is being infected by it and transformed into it. Thus, the I is, so to speak, the melting pot and the fire by which the indifferent manifoldness is consumed and reduced to unity... With this, the nature of consciousness has, to be sure, been correctly articulated. (E, 116/86)

Hegel uses the metaphor of a melting pot [*Schmelztiegel*] that heats itself to convey the idea that this I is the agency of combination and the vessel of such combination. All the scattered diversity of the manifold is reduced to that which is experienced by the *I* in the singular experience of a self-aware I apart from its thought content, but also in possession

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<sup>131</sup> This latter I, the self-conscious experience of empirical perception, is empirical apperception as opposed to transcendental apperception. Empirical apperception does not play a role in our discussion and so it is not analyzed here. However, one can understand the relation between the two apperceptions as productive. Transcendental apperception has empirical apperception as its product or result.

of it. Hegel's greatest interest in Kant's account of apperception is this synthesizing power to unify self and the content of its thought, leading Hegel to claim that the original synthetic unity of apperception "is one of the profoundest and truest insights to be found in the Critique of Reason" (WL2, 256/SL, 515).

This profundity rests in Hegel's understanding of the notion of spontaneity that Kant introduces into transcendental apperception as the agency of apperceptive unity. Hegel claims that Kant has faithfully portrayed "the very nature of consciousness" (E, 116/86) and that Kant's apperception is "a truly necessary, absolute, original identity of opposites" (GW 305/FK 70). However, in explaining Kant to his students, in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel describes Kant's account of apperception itself as a "barbarous exposition," because it turns the *I* into a sort of container (all pot and no fire), whereby it is "completely indeterminate and abstract" (E, 116/86; VGP3, 339/LHP3, 431). Between the two sentiments of rightfully describing the nature of consciousness, but doing so in such a way as to make the subject of that consciousness abstract, we can see Hegel's general attitude towards Kant's apperception as Kant overemphasizing the subject of apperception at the expense of the power that unifies the apperceived content. This, of course, presupposes that this power has some difference from the subject, even if unified in that subject.

For Hegel, as we will see below, Kant focuses so much on the place-holder aspect of transcendental apperception, that its power only makes a space for perceptions to join to a perceiver. The original target of investigation, by Hegel's reckoning, was to be the *I think*, but what Kant describes was a general, abstract *I*, in which thinking is not its

function, but rather is the gathering of parts of experience through modes of thoughtless mechanical combination, which are then passed on to the understanding (ibid.).

To clear the way for Hegel to make full use of the power within apperception, he wants us to move beyond the receptacle model of the apperceptive self or transcendental subject. As Marcuse notes, the power that unifies thought content to its subject “can no longer be viewed as a faculty of human subjectivity. It cannot even be viewed as a faculty of transcendental subjectivity insofar as we can only gain access to the latter through a regress to the foundational structure of empirical subjectivity.”<sup>132</sup> It is not only the case that our own subjectivity cannot account for the existence of such apperception, but also that the transcendental conditions that Kant presents us with still fail to explain this synthesizing power. Kant’s analysis of apperception begins with a search for the conditions of the union of consciousness with the content of experience. His investigation begins with the empirical subjectivity of self-conscious experience, to the necessary conditions of a transcendental subject as *I think*, which is necessary to make empirical subjectivity possible. Hegel follows Kant’s “regress to the foundational structure” of this subjectivity but finds it goes further back than Kant allows. For Hegel, this structure will regress past (and transcend) the notion of subjectivity itself. We will examine that transcendence in the last chapter, but for now, our goal is to understand why Hegel regresses the structure of conscious unity to a state prior to transcendental subjectivity – the furthest transcendental idealism can regress according to its method of necessary conditions for experience.

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<sup>132</sup> Marcuse, *Hegel’s Ontology*, 33.

This regress takes shape, within the terrain of the extracategorical interpretation, when Hegel changes the Kantian context of the categories by dethroning Kant's ground in first-person subjectivity to show that Kant's necessary conditions for the possibility of experience are not exhaustive of the conditions necessary for experience. Kant's conditions need further conditions to explain their own possibility. Hegel's bid to situate the categories externally to subjectivity (but not to the exclusion of that subjectivity) begins by showing that the transcendental ego cannot be the primary source of the categories' creation, as the apperception itself is just another representation in need of a source of representation. In the *Science*, Hegel paraphrases Kant's first *Critique* as follows:

Accordingly, all that is left on this view is the simple representation "I," a representation entirely devoid of content, of which one cannot even say that it is a concept, but must say that it is a *mere consciousness*, one that *accompanies every concept*. Now, as Kant argues further, this "I," or, if you prefer, this "it" (the thing) that thinks, takes us no further than the representation of a transcendental subject of thoughts = x,<sup>133</sup> a subject which is known only through the thoughts that are its predicates, and of which, taken in isolation, we cannot *ever* have *the least concept*. (WL2, 351/SL, 690)

Before explaining the above passage, Hegel's remark is most likely taken from the following:

Through this I or he or it (the thing) which thinks, nothing further is represented than a transcendental subject of the thoughts = X. It is known only through the thoughts which are its predicates, and of it, apart from them, we cannot have any concept whatsoever, but can only revolve in a perpetual circle, since any judgment upon it has always already made use of its representation. (*KrV*, A346/B404)

Hegel is aware that for Kant (1) we only know of the transcendental subject in tracing thoughts back to it, with such thoughts understood as predicates to a subject; and (2) we

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<sup>133</sup> While Hegel does not cite a reference, I believe he is referring to A109 in *KrV*.

may as well call this subject an x, as we can know no more of it than it is a placeholder for those predicates (intuition, concepts, and the *I think*). It is the idea of the transcendental ego (or subject) as a placeholder that bothers Hegel, as the warrant for such placement is not implicit in the concept of transcendental apperception as an original synthetic unity, which we will see shortly.

In understanding Hegel's concern, consider Descartes's *cogito* for a moment.<sup>134</sup> Descartes attempts to insert personhood into the act of thinking by claiming that the necessity of the verb "to think" implies that some self, expressed as a pronoun, is needed as the agent of a verb. This insertion of the person is what Kant principally is interested in stopping us from doing – the idea that *I think* implies that I exist as a soul apart from my ability to doubt my material existence. Kant's program seems to differ from Descartes in that apperception only implies some agent, but then Hegel thinks Kant errs to move from this unparticular apperceptive self back to the psychological reflex of a first-person perspective. The lack of specificity Kant argues for in transcendental apperception forbids the association of apperception to first-person subjectivity as we cannot determine which *I* is being responsible.

However, inasmuch as Kant wants to identify apperception with a first-person perspective, on this point, he repeats Descartes's limited demonstration that there exists a thought that happens to include the idea of a first-person subject. If the thought of the subject only ever accompanies particular thoughts, it is a byproduct of the particular thoughts themselves. If this is so, then the correspondence of my subjectivity and the apperceptive byproduct of each thought have no discernable necessary connection by

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<sup>134</sup> Descartes, René. *Discourse On Method; and, Meditations on First Philosophy*. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1993). pp. 13-1

examining *either* the thoughts themselves *or* my subjectivity (D, 98/158). My subjectivity simply shows up as another thought, and as that thought, it carries another byproduct that I could not know as *my* apperceptive self except by repeating the same process with the same lack of correspondence between the idea and my subjectivity.

Hegel's commitment to overcoming the metaphysics of subjectivity is recognizing that what is responsible for the synthetic unity of apperception is not some identifiable subject other than *thought itself*. Thought, in Hegel's account, is that which determines the thinking subject, as the subject is only found in thought. This feeds Hegel's desire to move us away from the first-person perspective of transcendental consideration and argue that a truly transcendental project would come to see that the finite subject must be set aside as a byproduct of thought, and our investigation must be into thought itself. Kant suggests we leave that investigation alone because we will never find an explanation besides a psychological reflex whose origins truly rest in our representations. However, if we follow Kant's suggestion, the true agent behind the understanding is also unknown. If it is the case that no true agent is knowable, it is unclear why the inability to imagine this unity as other than a placeholder to understand ourselves as experiencing something somehow demonstrates apperception is a faculty of *our* understanding. This paradox, first pointed out by Fichte, leads the way to understanding Hegel's apperception. In the *Science of Knowledge*, Fichte asks: "that it should be possible for my presentations to be accompanied by the *I think*, that is, that I am what thinks in this thinking. Which 'I' is being spoken of here?"<sup>135</sup> Kant has told us the "I" of transcendental apperception is not the empirical ego and cannot be anything

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<sup>135</sup> Fichte, Johann Gottlieb. *Science of Knowing*. eds. & trans. Peter Heath and John Lachs. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) p. 48.

like an individual soul or person. To insist on an *I* (or the third-person singulars Kant also mentions) and leave that *I* as a representation of some x “entirely devoid of content” (WL2, 351/SL, 690) does not appear to establish an *a priori* ground as much as a philosophical problem – thoughts correspond to what or which subject or subjects. The fact that our understanding only ever provides us more representations of the same *I think* only means that we cannot *imagine* an alternative, not that an alternative does not exist nor that we are incapable of reasoning what we cannot imagine. We can appreciate the admonition against idle speculation regarding the ultimate source of cognition as something unknowable. The task to establish an alternative seems daunting and, by Kant’s account, impossible. However, the appeal to the psychological reflex does not answer what that thing is, but rather skirts the explanation by leaving it in an appeal to the limitations of the reflex rather than the concept itself (ibid.). The transcendental subject is deduced in a series of abstractions that appear to leave no place for it in the agency of thinking except as a receptacle, or space, for the understanding to act. Less and less of an explanation of synthesis emerges and more questions about where sensuous intuitions are housed.

With this agency of thought production uncontained in the apperceptive subject, Hegel begins to reinterpret the *I think*. As John Findlay notes in his introduction to Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, “[t]he subject or Ego is thus for Hegel not what we ordinarily understand by a personal thinker, but the logical function of universality in a peculiar sort of detachment from its species and instances.”<sup>136</sup> This is not to say Hegel finds human subjectivity an inappropriate demonstration of the *I think* but rather what we ordinarily

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<sup>136</sup> Findlay, John. “Introduction.” *Phenomenology of Spirit*. trans A.V. Miller. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). p. xi

understand about the personal thinker is not that thing which makes up this synthetic *a priori*. As mentioned earlier, the Cartesian performance of the subject cognizing an object is not our ideal model of how thought and being come together, as the thinking that makes up that concept of thinking is itself another concept in relation only to other concepts. The concept of thinking circles in its own subjectivity and implies no other subject than thought.

The lesson Hegel wants us to understand from the inability of subjectivity to grasp that which is outside itself is to stop approaching reality in terms of a subject's struggle to access an exterior reality. Conversely, as we will see in the following sections, Hegel will not argue for a sort of solipsism, because the subject that wants to crown itself lord over all that is thought is usurped by the thinking itself. The *I think* remains for Hegel, but as "the logical function of universality" – a structure of reality distinct from its instantiations. To the degree that this gives the impression that Hegel is going to give us a form of subjective coherentism, the thinking Hegel has in mind as the basis of reality is not like the finite thinking of human cognition. For Hegel, what the originary *I think* is and does makes no sense through the examples of finite cognition.

If the transcendental ego cannot explain its ground (and thereby, according to Hegel, neither the origin of the conditions for possible experience) and transcendental apperception is not the true synthetic *a priori*, where would Hegel like us to begin? Hegel attempts to answer this in finding something devoid of determinations and absent of contingency. Under what appears to Hegel as arbitrary stopping points in the Kantian regress of *a priori* conditions, Hegel presents a new proposal in the *Science*: "...if no presupposition is to be made, if the beginning is itself to be taken *immediately*, then the

only determination of this beginning is that it is to be the beginning of logic, of thought as such” (WL1, 75/SL, 48). If the *I think* does not exhibit a known subject, in this circularity to affirm the being of the subject that invariably collapses into the thought of the subject, what always remains is thought. The attempt to objectify the subject or the content of its thought is not a false start simply because our knowledge is knowledge of what we experience. The method is flawed because it presupposes there is or must be some means for a subject to grasp an object or for an object to be a subject.

Rather than struggle with these presuppositions, in setting aside the subjective agency of thinking to focus on thought, we have warrant to be initially indifferent to subject/object relations and Kantian concerns about grounding empirical egos in transcendental conditions. For Hegel, to escape the metaphysics of subjectivity is to deny the supremacy of first-person subjectivity and to dispense with any notions about subjectivity being the proper first principle of metaphysics. Instead, he turns to the source of thought as such, which “must not be mediated by anything or have a ground, [and] ought to be rather itself the ground of the entire science” [ibid.]. In more Classical terms, Hegel suspects the presence of an unconditioned condition, unmoved mover, or uncaused cause long abandoned by the philosophers of his time. He does not want to repeat the Scholastic and pre-critical philosophies, but his ambitions are, in many respects, identical to them, even if his metaphysical content and mechanics differ. However, Hegel is looking to use an uncommon source as the beginning of our investigation, which cannot be determined by any perceived end other than the mere willingness to see where this thought experiment goes. For Hegel, there is only one seemingly appropriate candidate to

begin that experiment – immediacy (or thought as such). This thought as such, as we first encounter it, is devoid of determination and:

...must therefore be simply *an* immediacy, or rather only *immediacy* itself. Just as it cannot have any determination with respect to an other, so too it cannot have any within; it cannot have any content, for any content would entail distinction and the reference of distinct moments to each other, and hence a mediation. The beginning is therefore *pure being*. (ibid.)

Pure being, further explained in Section Four, is defined here as an immediacy without any reference to anything outside itself and no characteristics internal to itself. For Hegel, philosophy must start here. This is the true *a priori* ground from which all comes forth. This immediacy of simple *isness* (pure being), then, reveals how either subjectivity or objectivity emerges, as well as our encounter with self or world. This unmediated isness is the condition for all that is conditional, the motion that moves all else, and the cause of all that is caused. However, Hegel's approach is not that we simply begin with immediacy because of this problem in Kant's notion of apperception. It is the problematic nature of Kantian synthesis (which places that power within the understanding as an act of combining)<sup>137</sup> that points us to the immediacy of pure being as the authentic source of synthesis, as it is the immediacy of pure being that brings forth synthetic unity in creating differences to be reconciled. This immediate whole, from which all parts usher forth, is the proper first condition from which all analysis of experience must conform. The conditions for the possibility of experience begin within this immediacy.

Hegel expects the synthetic *a priori* of transcendental unity not to be a first-person consciousness that combines diverse things (or one of the faculties of that

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<sup>137</sup> As we have discussed that the subject is never found to exist simply because of the thought of it, we can see that for Hegel, locating such unity in the understanding, when we cannot establish the existence of a first-person understanding, is methodologically unsound. All that is considered must first be explained out of the immediacy of pure being as that is the one ground always first presupposed.

consciousness), but the act of distinguishing some whole into relatable parts – a process of reality itself that is not reducible to the understanding.<sup>138</sup> Kant, however, aims to restrict our analysis of synthesis precisely to the understanding. We can see this restriction in the very definition he provides for synthesis. Synthesis, in “its most general sense” [*in seiner allgemeinsten Sinn*], is “the action of putting different representations together with each other and comprehending their manifoldness in one cognition” (*KrV*, B130). We can see that synthesis is the unity of diverse representations into an experience of comprehension. In B130, Kant continues to place the power of synthesis squarely within the understanding by explaining that the power of the synthetic *a priori*, “is an act of the spontaneity of the power of representation,” whereby:

...all combination, whether we are conscious of it or not, whether it is a combination of the manifold of intuition or of several concepts, and in the first case either sensible or non-sensible intuition, is an action of the understanding. (*KrV*, B130).

Kant’s claim is that irrespective of our awareness of it, whatever unity we experience in any way – be it of intuitions or concepts or their integration in any and every object – is an act of understanding. There is no synthesis apart from the understanding’s power of representation. Transcendental apperception, as the original synthetic unity of concept, intuition and *I think*, must be an act of understanding. The attempt to reach further back merely turns up the same content for the understanding, and, therefore, the attempt to reach for a further ground “can only revolve in a perpetual circle” (A346/B404). Because any judgment about such unity “always already made use of its representation,” such unity only turns up as a transcendental condition for our representations (*ibid.*). As Kant

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<sup>138</sup> See Chapter Two, Section Three, to recall Hegel’s argument that the understanding makes distinctions through a process of negation and not combination. It is the understanding that renders parts from wholes, and not the understanding that takes parts and conjoins them.

defines synthesis as the wedding of representations to a subject, we will never step outside this process, and as transcendental philosophy restricts us to representations, the unity of manifold, perception, and apperceptive self is the only knowable notion of synthesis available to us. This lack of availability in transcendental method to trace the origin of thought any further leads Kant to insist that all combination is an action of the understanding, as is true with any synthetic unity, whether it is understood as a faculty or a condition of possibility, as it applies to experience as a function of a discursive intellect. If this is so, we are again examining our cognitive performance, and not treating the concepts as they are in themselves.

As with the phenomenal/noumenal distinction, Hegel finds the scope of *a priori* synthesis too limited in Kant's exposition and argues that this limitation is not only lacking necessity but also invites supplementation in an alternative interpretation of the productive imagination. In Hegel's alternate interpretation, Kant mistakes true *a priori* synthesis as a product of the understanding, but should rightly be understood as a feature of the creative process of reality itself.<sup>139</sup> Experience leads us to the *I think*, but the *I think* leads us nowhere except to the notion that *thoughts exist*. Transcendental conditions will not ground transcendental consciousness as this consciousness is assumed to be the ground of all we could know. Hegel finds Kant's circularity, generated by transcendental method as opposed to metaphysics, as good warrant to fault Kant's method. If we follow Hegel's claim that all starting points to investigation prove arbitrary and invariably lead us to immediacy (pure being), synthetic unity rests in more basic concepts such as

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<sup>139</sup> This is addressed in the next section on the productive imagination and furthered in the discussion of intellectual intuition.

becoming in general as opposed to a combination of diverse things in an act of self-conscious

### The Productive Imagination

Hegel delves into Kant's account of the productive imagination because Hegel believes that Kant's concept of the productive imagination can be freed of its first-person singular consciousness, and placed in the realm of being itself. Kant describes the productive imagination as our most primordial condition regarding our knowledge production, arguing that "the principle of the necessary unity of pure (productive) synthesis of imagination, prior to apperception, is the ground of the possibility of all knowledge, especially of experience (*KrV*, A118). According to Kant, the imagination is "the ability to represent an object in intuition even when it is not present" (*KrV*, B151). In the *KdU*, Kant refers to this ability as *hypotyposis*, which means to sketch (*KdU*, 5:352). The ability to sketch (or imagine) cognitive content carries a distinction between its productive and reproductive aspects. The reproductive imagination pertains to recollection. It "brings back to the mind an empirical intuition one has already had."<sup>140</sup> Any object I experience can be sketched again to picture what I experienced before or combined with other sketched objects for some new imagined scenario or object. I can picture a bad haircut I received to remind me of why I will not go to the barber who gave it to me. I can recollect those unique features of someone's face such that, although I may

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<sup>140</sup> Kant, Immanuel. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) p. 60.

not have seen the person in years, the image in my mind is similar enough to the image before me, and as a result, I recognize the person. The reproductive imagination borrows from prior representations of objects but does not determine those objects themselves. It is a “derivative presentation (*exhibitio derivativa*).”<sup>141</sup> I cannot *reproductively* imagine the sight of an actual face I have never seen because all the content the reproductive imagination renders is borrowed content from memory.

If the imagination can render images, it creates or produces, as Kant notes when he tells us that “insofar as spontaneity is involved in such a synthesis [of intuition, concept and apperceptive self], imagination includes a productive element” (*KrV*, B151). In the case of the reproductive imagination, the creation of images takes place contingently on prior images. Those prior images, however, are rendered by the faculty of the imagination as well. We need to account for this productive aspect of the imagination if we are to give an account of how we have any presentations from which to derive representations, or we are left in the realm of the finite understanding as opposed to being.

The productive imagination is what Kant calls the *exhibitio originaria*, the original presentation of an object that precedes experience (*KrV*, B151). As prior to experience, this original presentation is not our manipulation of images by way of combination (as it is in the reproductive imagination). That there is *something there at all* is a productive imagining of something existing in space and time. The creation of the object existing in space and time is accomplished through this figurative synthesis [*figurative Synthese*], in which a figure is created for further determination on the part of

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

the understanding (*KrV*, B151). The reproductive imagination, with its borrowed content, has contingent conditions we can observe. It proceeds from empirical data rather than precedes it. The productive imagination, however, traces back to the pure productive power of spontaneity (discussed in the following section). Of course, for Kant, the power of the productive imagination is not to suggest that the imagination is responsible for everything that exists. Rather, it is the sensible given that is combined to give representations to ourselves. It is our subjective sensibility that is affected, and this sensibility does not create its content, but, in turn, is affected by the manifold.

Hegel's view of the productive imagination aims to wrest Kant's notion of spontaneity from the transcendental scheme in an attempt to place such spontaneity, not merely within the conscious subject, but in nature as well, as a knowable precondition for the production of reality in addition to the production of experience. Hegel's general argumentative structure begins early on in *Faith and Knowledge*, whereby the transcendental subject requires the spontaneity of the productive imagination to make a space and a moment for such a subject to be imagined as the source of the experience. The productive imagination requires none of these preceding aspects to function or exist. The productive imagination is discovered through transcendental analysis of these combined items in cognition, but they do not condition the imagination. In *Faith and Knowledge*, Hegel writes:

The productive imagination must rather be recognized as what is primary and original, as that out of which subjective Ego and objective world first sunder themselves into the necessarily bipartite appearance and product, and as the sole In-itself. This power of imagination is the original two-sided identity. The identity becomes subject in general on one side, and object on the other; but originally it is both. (GW 308/FK, 73)

Hegel argues that we must see the imagination as the very source from which any notions of self, the world, or any data about these that we encounter must come. These ideas, that of subjective Ego (or transcendental apperception) and objective world (the total of all possible representations) are made possible by the productive imagination. For Hegel, it should not follow that apperception is “the unified activity of combination and recollection on the sensible given.”<sup>142</sup> Sensibility (or the sensuous manifold) cannot be a precondition for “what is primary and original.” If we are to commit to this primacy of the productive imagination, transcendental apperception is the identity (synthetic unity) of a “bipartite appearance” of subject and object as made distinct from the productive imagination. The distinction between subject and object is not one of subjective self and sensuous object, but two modalities of the same imagination. Every object of experience reflects a subject to experience that object, and every subject must have some object in relation to it to be understood as the subject. Because Kant’s method works backward from experience to the spontaneity of the imagination as the ultimate condition for representability, the imagination, as noted above, is that thing from which all distinctions can come.

Transcendental apperception allows us to discern these two modalities of the imagination as singular things, with the “subject in general on one side” and the “object on the other,” but Hegel sees the need for transcendental method to correct its earlier claims about the origins of the content of the understanding in the sensible given – once Kant’s critique reaches the productive imagination. The imagination, by Hegel’s reckoning, is not bound to the intuition/concept requirement and yet production of

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<sup>142</sup> Longuenesse, Beatrice. *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*. trans. Charles T. Wolfe. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998) p. 394.

something does come forth. Hegel wants to probe the depths of this as a possibility for the formation of reality, as he sees no need to tie the imagination explicitly to our subjective cognition. Hegel alleges that Kant's own account "shows that the Kantian forms of intuition and the forms of thought cannot be kept apart at all as the particular, isolated faculties which they are usually represented as," because the synthetic unity of the productive imagination "is the principle of intuition and of the intellect." (GW, 305/FK, 70). Hegel is not maintaining that there is no difference between intuitions and concepts but rather his point is that *the form* of both is more similar than Kant admits. The form, understood as what is essential in the role they play in cognition, carries out the same purpose with the same content from the same source – an intelligible grasp of what is. Concept and intuition are two sides to the content of the productive imagination.

While Kant would also maintain that concept and intuition jointly serve to make things intelligible, he does not seem to locate the ultimate source in a productive imagination outside our faculties of thought. Kant makes the synthetic *a priori* "look as if by nature posterior to the opposition" of concept and intuition, reflected in his consistent identification of synthesis as combination instead of an emerging distinction of something holistic. What Kant should have seen, according to Hegel, is that "the synthetic unity is undeniably the absolute and original identity of self-consciousness" (GW, 306, FK, 71). However, given the displaced status of the transcendental subject, it is unclear whose self-consciousness this absolute ground for all representations belongs to, if anyone in particular at all. While Kant fixes the scope of transcendental philosophy to human cognition, he gives us what he calls an "archetype" of intellection generally. It is meant to be only a theoretical model because we do not possess it – not because it

could not exist. According to Kant's epistemological framework, we could never verify that such an archetype is a matter of fact. What stops him from saying this intellection exists is that no known being could ever think *in general*, because every being must think according to its ability. However, if our minds cannot serve as the ground of our presentations (not to be confused with our representations), we would be looking for something other than our minds in our search for what is self-consciousness. Hegel's account of the creative power of the imagination transcends transcendental subjectivity and the human imagination, whereas Kantian apperception or imagination leaves our investigation at the level of finite consciousness. For Hegel, the imagination escapes transcendental conditions through a transcendental rationale, because as Marcuse notes, we cannot gain access to transcendental subjectivity except through "a regress to the foundational structure of empirical subjectivity."<sup>143</sup> However, this regress moves further back than apperception and the faculty of human imagination. The regress shows the spontaneity of being is the only candidate for the etiological starting point. Again, pure being is the true first condition of possible experience. Pure being is the transcendental condition from which any transcendental conditions would find their explanation and justification from. Having discovered the appropriate ground of transcendental philosophy, we can begin to move away from the concerns of explaining first-person subjectivity to understanding pure being apart from the *I think*.

### Intellectual Intuition and Thought as Such

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<sup>143</sup> Marcuse, *Hegel's Ontology*, 160.

It is unfortunate that the term ‘intellectual intuition’ barely keeps a stable meaning through the history of German Idealism. Kant’s notion of such intuition being only available to a divine creative power (*KdU*, 28: 331) is quickly abandoned in Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre*, where it is taken up under the same moniker as something more like a self-evident, necessary apperception<sup>144</sup> Kant’s context is a theoretical consideration of what might make nature teleological – something that could create nature as intuitions of its intellect, thereby crafting the world with no constraints save its design. Hegel’s account of intellectual intuition will take its inspiration from this investigation of the causality of nature, but he will remove Kant’s constraints on what we are rationally permitted to think about nature. Hegel aims to resituate the productive power in the union of concept and intuition in our world as opposed to our experience. The productive power of finite consciousness is then placed into the intuitive intellect to be recognized as the agency of nature’s creation.

In the *KdU*, after an account of aesthetic judgment, Kant turns his attention towards teleology to determine how we should best govern our ideas for nature in the absence of access to nature’s design. While Kant argues that we can expect that nature has some purposiveness, since we did not make the objects themselves (but sensuously intuit them), we can only speak of our interactions with them – never as what they are meant to be in themselves. Kant sees that, in the absence of some account of purposiveness, we would not be able to discern why anything should be any one particular way as opposed to another (*KdU*, 20:203). In other words, we risk error when we assume the purposes of things and nature as a whole, and so a grasp of purposiveness

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<sup>144</sup> Fichte, *Science*, 46.

is beneficial to stop us from overstepping the bounds of reason in our judgments of nature (*ibid.*). Kant's investigation into the purposiveness of nature is meant to be a cautionary account of how to responsibly impose purpose on nature that respects both the possibility of some creative agent in nature and our inability to affirm that this being actually exists.

Given the power of the imagination to delude us, Kant tells us that it is "necessary for the human understanding to distinguish between the possibility and the actuality of things" (*KdU*, 5:402). For Kant, we cannot distinguish between the possible and the actual without "two entirely heterogeneous elements...[the] understanding for concepts and sensible intuition for objects corresponding to them" (*KdU*, 401-2). Sensible intuitions keep the understanding in check, as they are the receptive aspect of cognition that gives us the external constraint to our subjectivity. Things become falsifiable with an external constraint to check our judgments against, and thereby possibility can be distinguished from actuality. However, Kant refers to another kind of understanding that is not only exempt from this heterogeneous structure, but also that "we cannot form any concept at all of the possibility of such a world" except by presupposing the existence of an intuitive understanding as "an intentionally acting supreme cause" (*KdU*, 5:399). While we cannot know that there is an intuitive understanding, such intuition "is the ground of objects, and not the consequence of objects." (*KdU*, 28: 331). This divine agency, which Kant describes as a regulative idea (one we are rationally compelled to hold but cannot demonstrate), should sound very close to the productive imagination discussed in the previous section. It is this close association between the productive spontaneity of the imagination and an intuitive understanding that tempts Hegel to argue that they are two aspects of the same rational agency. In the *Critique of Judgment*, the

ultimate ground of our experience is not the apperceptive self or Kant's description of the productive imagination, but an idea that there should exist an intuitive understanding, even though we will never know whether it exists.

The most apparent part of Kant's explanation of intellectual intuition that anticipates Hegel's view is as follows:

...a faculty of a complete spontaneity of intuition would be a cognitive faculty distinct and completely independent from sensibility, and thus an understanding in the most general sense of the term, ... an intuitive understanding ... a job that our understanding can accomplish only through the correspondence of natural characteristics with our faculty of concepts, which is quite contingent, but which an intuitive understanding would not need. (*KdU*, 5:406)

Here Kant explains that if sensibility did not bind intuition, we could imagine an intellect much like the pure power of the productive imagination – a complete spontaneity of intuition. Whereas our spontaneity is not *completely* spontaneous because it is contingent on the sensuous manifold, we can contemplate a complete spontaneity and wholly productive imagination as the originator of its intuitions. With this notion of spontaneity, we should be able to rephrase this to the insight: *Understanding in the most general sense is a faculty of the complete spontaneity of intuition.*<sup>145</sup> This most general element of determining has both content (intuition) and form (concept) in its *presentation* as opposed to *representation*. Hence, only our understanding encounters the phenomenal world as a combination of intuition and concept at the level of representation. A general understanding grasps both concept and intuition prior to their representational distinction

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<sup>145</sup> If we were to ask why Kant does not describe what understanding is in these terms, it is obvious enough that his critical program is concerned with the discursive understanding of human intellection. But if human understanding is a species of understanding in general, and if we wanted to understand the origin of that species, I do not think it is misguided to point out that Kant has shown that ultimate origin here. That he is not interested in incorporating it into his transcendental program makes sense – it is not something one can discern in one's experience. We don't experience this general understanding within the critical program, so leaving it as a hypothetical (even a necessary one) does not commit us to alter the rest of the critical program.

from the original material in one intellectual intuition. This would be the true (complete) notion of the productive imagination.<sup>146</sup> Given the singular nature of an intuition (that it is a whole), an intellectual intuition would be an unmediated whole for the intellect – the thing in itself.<sup>147</sup> In contrast, our understanding has only fragments to work with. As discursive, our understanding arranges and rearranges the parts of an object concerning possible judgments. We may experience wholes, but we understand them by their predicates or parts. We make determinations. Hegel agrees with Kant that we need a “determinate form of the whole” “which must progress from the parts...to the different possible forms, as consequences, that can be subsumed under it” (*KdU*, 5:406). Hegel abides by Kant’s principle but insists that while the discursive understanding experiences this as a limit to the data of determinations, reason finds a logically necessary regress to some formal condition from which all determinations point towards. It would be philosophically irresponsible to not follow this regress to its conclusion. For Hegel, Kant is wrong to describe intellectual intuition as merely theoretical, as there must be (as opposed to being compelled to believe) an intuition free from the context of part to whole. As we will see in the following section, Hegel maintains that in the absence of

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<sup>146</sup> However, Hegel denies we have such an understanding just as much as Kant does. Where Hegel and Kant differ is not on whether we possess an intuitive intellect, but whether an intuitive intellect exists. One would be mistaken to believe Hegel thinks (let alone argues) the human mind is the intuitive intellect.

<sup>147</sup> As an unmediated whole, however, this is not something we could ever understand. It would have no discernible predicates, and no difference between any other possible object. There would be nothing inherent in such a thing by which we could tell it was one thing or another. As this is so, such an unmediated whole is ill-conceived as the thing in itself. It would better be described as the *everything in itself*. I mention this because the next chapter will focus on that unmediated whole as the unconditioned from which all determinations of reality come forth, but this is not to say that whatever ‘fall-off’ there is from that whole is a ‘thing in itself’ in the sense of a phenomenal/noumenal distinction. In a more Spinozistic sense, Hegel’s view is a monism much closer to modes and attributes of one substance.

such an intuition, there could be no determinations. Since we have determinate objects, this intuition must exist.

Kant does consider Hegel's interpretation far earlier than Hegel had himself. In Kant's remarks about intellectual intuition, Kant's willingness to consider reason on a cosmic scale (albeit as a theory of unverifiable speculation) foreshadows Hegel's interpretation:

...it is still at least possible to consider the material world as a mere appearance, and to conceive of something as a thing in itself (which is not an appearance) as substratum, and to correlate with this a corresponding intellectual intuition (even if it is not ours), there would then be a supersensible real ground for nature, although it is unknowable for us, to which we ourselves belong...and the material world would thus be judged in accordance with two kinds of principles, without the mechanical mode of explanation being excluded by the teleological mode, as if they contradicted each other. (*KdU*, 5:406)

While Kant appears to insist that we cannot rest content with a mechanical explanation of our universe, even if unknowable, we must assume a purposiveness within nature (*ibid.*). Nature, as strict materiality, gives up no secret concerning what ultimate intelligibility it may have. However, the teleology Kant considers does not interest Hegel nearly as much as this model of intellection that Kant portrays in this archetypal understanding. That we have no option but to conceive of nature as purposive does not draw Hegel into further consideration of this problem on empirical laws but into what this optionless inference about original intelligibility tells us about thinking generally.

For Kant, reason demands systematic unity irrespective of the content of its consideration – the empirical world, the relations of proofs, postulates, theorems in geometry, and the rules of inference in a unified body of logic are some examples. In *KdU*, Kant outlines how the origins of such a unity may be possible, and even more, argues that we must believe this possibility is at work in our world, even if we cannot

know it to be so. However, with so much of our understanding now riding on this regulative idea, Hegel wants to look more closely to see if it is indeed merely regulative. Its role as a condition for our cognition seems so large that it would be odd, to Hegel, to rest on the claim that our discursive intellect forbids us to know such a thinking exists.

Turning to focus on Hegel's appropriation of Kant's account of intellectual intuition, it is important to clear up a misconception on just what Hegel claims to discover. Hegel is quick to qualify that *what* has been discovered (as opposed to the importance of its discovery) is a rather mundane affair of the world. One may suspect that Hegel grants us the power of intellectual intuition described in Kant's account in the *KdU*. However, one is mistaken to think Hegel believes we possess this sort of intuitive understanding as Kant describes it. Very early in the *Science*, Hegel hurries to make clear that an intellectual intuition "cannot be anything else than a first, immediate, simple determination...[of] mere being" (WL1, 78/SL 55). In this context Hegel does not refer to pure [*reinen*] being, but rather mere [*bloßen*] being. For all of Hegel's talk about the Eternal, the Absolute, and the Divine, Hegel wants us to understand that he is committed to the idea that our investigation into the scope of cognition allows us to get no more carried away than what we discern through a discursive understanding (albeit joined by reason).

Hegel's commitment to the discursive understanding is seen in his approach to the immediacy implicit in our experience. This immediacy is only knowable to the degree that it somehow shines forth through that experience either by what is understood or reasoned. Hegel explicitly conditions our knowledge of intellectual intuition (and the intuitive intellect) stating that "the only legitimate consideration is how such an absolute

enters into *discursive* knowledge and the enunciation of this knowledge” (ibid). The degree to which the notion of intellectual intuition makes sense needs to be restricted to what the finite understanding can grasp and what reason discerns from that grasp. Our intellect grasps this in terms of just determinate *isness* – despite “whatever richer name be given to it than is expressed by mere being” (WL1, 79/SL, 56). That is, whatever intuitions may arise, intellectual or otherwise, they are determinations. In Chapter Two, we saw the role of the understanding (in contrast to reason) that Hegel adopts is that of the discursive intellect that Kant describes. Whatever shows up to be understood is understandable precisely because our understanding determined it. The truly unmediated, uncaused cause or unmoved mover, would be something so incredibly nondescript and immediate that it becomes misleading to say even it *is* because *is* already determines what is before determination – mere being.

In *Faith and Knowledge* Hegel tells us the “intuitive intellect is at bottom nothing else but the same Idea of the transcendental imagination” (GW, 316/FK 89).<sup>148</sup> This is obviously not possible for Kant, as the intuitive intellect is a regulative idea about a supersensible agent, and transcendental imagination is a necessary condition for producing images. However, once Hegel reduces the productive imagination to the pure spontaneity of creativity itself, the imagination is no longer a sole feature of finite cognition. As the intuitive intellect would be the unconditional ground of all production of reality, and the productive imagination is seen to be this ground as well, the distinction is only in name. Hegel shifts Kant’s productive imagination from the representational

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<sup>148</sup> The transcendental imagination is interchangeably used with the productive imagination (by Hegel), and so what was described in the prior section on the productive imagination, we are now told, is the same subject of Kant’s discussion of transcendental imagination.

level to an archetypal intellection responsible for the presentational realm. If, according to Hegel, all representations are combinations of intuition and concept, and all intuition and concept are produced from some primordial datum – that datum is best described as the first determination of pure being. This first determination of pure being is the self-differentiating oneness of reality (WL2, 274/SL, 531, WL2, 283/SL, 539). As a result, we have an ontology emerging in which features of the production of reality itself are manifest in the very thinking of thoughts (an Absolute Idealism), albeit not our own thoughts except to the degree that they are derivative of the original intellectual intuition.<sup>149</sup>

Hegel's most explicit account of this notion of intellectual intuition is found in the *Encyclopedia*. Hegel argues:

When beginning with thinking, we have nothing but thought in the sheer absence of any determination of it [*in seiner reinen Bestimmungslosigkeit*], since for a determination one and an other are required. In the beginning, however, we have as yet no other. The indeterminate [*Bestimmungslose*], as we have it here, is the immediate, not the mediated absence of determination, not the sublation of all determinacy; but the immediacy of the absence of determination, the absence of determination prior to all determinacy, the indeterminate as the very first. But this is what we call 'being'. It is not to be sensed, intuited, or represented; instead it is the pure thought, and as such it constitutes the beginning. (E, 182/137)

For Hegel, in our search for the origin of the unity of concept and intuition, we discovered the notion of spontaneity. In spontaneity, we found the idea of an unconditioned immediacy. In understanding the unconditioned, we realize that as it is the ground for all determinations, it is “the sheer absence of any determination.” (ibid.).

Hegel claims this absence of determination has no mediation, as it is the condition for the

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<sup>149</sup> In what way, if at all, they will correspond to some world outside thought (assuming facts and contingent events are that sort of ‘outside’), is set aside for later. I suppose the great Hegelian hope is that somehow this structure under investigation will show itself to be something we can discern at work in our experience, or factually reason is applicable to it.

possibility of any mediation. As unmediated: “the indeterminate [*Bestimmungslose*]...is the immediate” (ibid.). As immediate, it is a singularly undetermined whole which fits Hegel’s understanding of an intuition – an intuition that is so featureless that one may equally call it pure thought as much as pure being, as it is simply pure *isness*.<sup>150</sup> This pure *isness* is that from which all distinction can be made. It is the birthplace by which subjectivity is distinguished from objectivity, and vice versa, as well as that which makes possible a distinction between concept from intuition (ibid.). If one were looking for some ultimate, original synthetic unity, it would be that first determination of being, and that first determination of being would be an unconditioned intellectual intuition that Hegel identifies as the result of the productive imagination.

Receptiveness to Hegel’s theory comes with balancing a desire between comprehensiveness and conservative speculation. Critics of his theory of cognition often will use conservative principles to chastise Hegel’s attempt at comprehensiveness. However, they only hamper the legitimate potential at a more comprehensive explanation. What is most apparent is that Hegel moves the discussion from the description of human thought in Kant’s project to that of thought generally. I have been contrasting the idea of thought generally versus our species of cognition to give credence to the idea that our species of cognition can understand something significant from its genera despite its limited perspective as a species of that genera. In appreciating Hegel’s theory of cognition, one should not assume that thought generally should take the model of our discursive understanding. Hegel shares Kant’s conviction that if we want a

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<sup>150</sup> In the passage above, Hegel does say “this is what we call being,” but follows with saying that this being is also pure thought. In this level of indeterminacy, whichever term is used will refer to the same reality.

responsible theory of cognition, whatever model is presented to us must be one we can experience. In Kant's program, at least he provides something that seems like it is open to empirical investigation in such a way that our representations of objects invoke only a manifold and self—the world of experience and the one who experiences it. Although Hegel's description of intellectual intuition mirrors Kant's account of how we formulate representations, Hegel's claim differs in that we cannot assume this process is a merely human one. We do observe reality itself, organizing itself, identically to the idea of intellectual intuition.

### Conclusion

Hegel's critique of first-person subjectivity leads us to account for the origin of our knowledge acquisition in a productive imagination irreducible to that subjectivity. Determinate being comes from some whole prior to the sensuous manifold – an intellectual intuition. However, Hegel's use of intellectual intuition provides us with only a meager claim that we understand what being is from a direct awareness of thought is and what thought implies about being. Hegel does not claim that all our knowledge is somehow secured by some immediate relation of our sensory intuitions to immediate intellectual ones. It is not that I know my beagle is beside me because I have immediate access to the intellectual intuition of my dog. What I know is that my encounter with this dog gives me the opportunity to affirm that *something* determinate is there because I know what being is. Perception is still necessary to give further determinations of what that something is. Our discursive intellect can misperceive in a number of ways. Our propositional considerations of what the object is may go wrong. There is no guarantee

that we have judged the situation correctly precisely because we have no immediate intellectual intuition of the dog – only that whatever is there is somehow real.<sup>151</sup>

Hegel aims to trigger the insight that all notions relating to ourselves are just that – notions. We are, in fact, asked by Hegel to be more critical of our capacity to be objective. In Hegel's approach, we are not to privilege any one particular viewpoint in a critical investigation, but to strip away each presupposition we find – not so that objectivity is accomplished once all presuppositions are stripped away (this is not possible), but to initially observe reason in the act of doing away with our opinions of the objects of thought to examine the thinking itself in those acts of subjective bias (which is inherent in every act of human understanding, but not necessarily debilitating to objective judgment).

Our next chapter is a thorough departure from Kantian themes and associations made between Hegel and Kant. As we will see in Chapter Five, through the overcoming of the metaphysics of subjectivity, and tracing what Hegel takes to be the true origins of apperception to intellectual intuition, we now have a way to analyze the identity of thought in being and our grasp of this identity.

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<sup>151</sup> This does not imply that whatever can be thought is real in a way that a square circle (or the existence of non-existence for that matter) exists because I can make utterances about it. The move from utterance, to intelligible utterance, to proposition, to true proposition, however, is far outside the scope of this chapter. Nonetheless, even in the case of the square circle, existent or not, Hegel's point would be that there is an intuition of being in the mere idea – as coherent or incoherent as the idea itself is.

## CHAPTER 5 BEING THOUGHT AND THINKING BEING

In this last chapter, I analyze the culmination of Hegel's move away from Kantian themes into Hegel's unique vision of the what he refers to as "the oneness [*einheit*] of identity and difference" in thought and being (WL2, 41/SL, 358). Hegel's final argument presented here is that the true synthetic *a priori* is the immediacy of being, which is simultaneously the immediacy of thought. What is troubling about this claim is that Hegel also maintains that thought and being are both identical and different, and so the first half of this chapter is dedicated to explaining Hegel's notion of identity to understand whom it incorporates difference. Having discussed difference in Chapter Two, I first examine Hegel's notion of identity as it applies to this immediacy of thought and being. After explaining the structure of identity, and its ability to exhibit difference within that structure, I turn to examine both thought and being regarding how they are identical yet different. Lastly, I will explain how Hegel understands this identity to manifest itself in both concrete existence and our knowledge through Hegel's absolutes (Absolute Knowledge, Absolute Spirit, and Absolute Idea).

### Hegel on Logical Identity

Chapter Two discussed the distinction between difference and diversity. Understanding the identity of the identity and difference of thought and being leads us to discuss identity

before we can turn to a discussion of thought and being. Hegel's notion of identity is both unconventional and heavily criticized in the Anglophonic tradition of philosophy. I will address the most common concerns when discussing being, but will first make clear the role Hegel does and does not assign to identity in his logic. I will first address what Hegel calls simple (or formal) identity and why he finds it problematic. However, problematic does not mean entirely wrong. Hegel never rejects that in  $A=A$ ,  $A$  does, in fact, have self-sameness and that identity does obtain. What he does reject is the idea that the simple  $A$  can be understood as an identity if difference is not already present.

Hegel's analysis of identity ( $A=A$ ) begins with a criticism of "the principle of identity" as the "first law of thought" (WL2, 41/SL, 358), which is meant to suggest in logic identity the absolute foundation from which all other logical determinations issue. For instance, we cannot have a law of contradiction if there are no identifiable things to contradict one another (WL2, 43/SL 360), and we cannot have negation or conjunction unless we can have individual identities to negate or conjoin. Calling identity the first law of thought expresses the idea that every law of formal logic presupposes this one law, that  $A=A$ . We want this principle to indicate self-sameness – or less formally, that the individual thing is that thing in some particular time and place. We think of identity as uncompromisable (or absolute) because when we think of what we mean by self-sameness, that self-same identity cannot be anything other than what it is in light of our defining identity as  $A=A$ . For Hegel, this sense that identity should grasp self-sameness is on the right track. However, a logic cannot build itself on this principle, as this principle has a precondition inherent to it, namely contrast or opposition, as we will see shortly. Hegel rejects the "absolute" or foundational aspect of formal identity, not the sense that

led to express it formally. He is quick to note that this first law of thought, far from being the foundation of logic or reason, is “at first no more than the expression of empty *tautology*” (WL2, 41/SL, 358). What we first notice is how little  $A=A$  tells us about identifying things. What we should notice next, however, is that structurally, there is already something reflexive about it, and this reflexivity will prove to be valuable in grasping identity’s presupposition of difference, as we will see shortly.

Before we can discuss the role of difference in identity, however, we should recall the role of the understanding, as Hegel places formal identity as a principle *for the understanding*.. As we saw in Chapter Two, the understanding works in a way unique from reason to make positive determinations. As it combs through (abstracts) whatever data is present in reality (the concrete), the understanding isolates features to be individual objects to be understood. This introduces plurality and presents a world of diverse items. At the level of the understanding, however, any particular datum is not the total of reality but was pulled (abstracted) from something else. The understanding identifies objects as singulars and will not regard the object any other way than determinate. This abstractive power within the understanding to individuate leads us to misconceive identity in the first place. In other words, the understanding does not free an object from a context just because of its ability to introduce a definite article. “The” coffee cup is indeed the coffee cup, but not merely from its own identity, but because of what distinguishes it to allow it to be a coffee cup apart from whatever else exists. Formal identity neglects the process it took to allow the definite article, which is what makes formal identity problematic.

Hegel maintains that identity is none other than absolute difference (WL2, 40/SL, 357). As absolute, it has a positive identity of distinguishing itself from its other. In that process of determination, where the understanding gives us diverse determinations with qualitative differences, we should see that “the negative of every determinateness is just as necessary as that determinateness itself” (WL2, 37/SL, 355).<sup>152</sup> Simple identity is crude and over-simplistic in its omissions (E, 236/177). It is difference that makes identity possible. This simple identity from the understanding will not do as a critical logical principle because any articulation of identity has an inherent opposition. The negative opposition to each determination is prior to, and makes possible, the simple identity that common logic claims is logic’s first principle. Simple identity is an inappropriate first principle of logic as the contrast afforded by opposition makes identity possible in the first place. As Hegel puts it, the problem with the identity of the understanding is that its mere positive formulation comes to us “lacking [...] the awareness of the negative movement as which, in these claims, identity itself is displayed” (WL2, 41/SL, 358). We focus on the positive results of the understanding – rendering determinate objects that we can identify. We take these determinations to be the confirmation of what identity is, as this is what we experience as we identify things. We refer to individual things and intend identity to keep to what is referred to. However, we forget that the identity of these determinations is abstracted, and that process of abstraction is lost in the simple identity of  $A=A$ . All external references are neglected, and in “common logic” this neglect is precisely what is desired of the principle of identity. This emphasis on the results of the understanding’s movement from what is to

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<sup>152</sup> In the context of opposition or comparison, Hegel defines ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ as ‘alike’ and ‘unalike’ (WL2, 50/SL 368).

what is understood forgets the separating transition; it assumes an identity of immediately determined prior to our determinations, which contradicts its own rules of logic. An unmediated mediacy or an undifferentiated differentiation is nonsense to the understanding's logic. By the understanding's own rules this sort of simple (immediate) identity cannot coherently be expressed. Moreover, simple identity shows the necessity of opposition as a precondition, and opposition is a moment of negating what is unmediated to allow distinction, and thereby identity. However, Hegel is not arguing that we should reject that  $A=A$ . His objection is to the train of thought claiming that identity is only this positive expression of self-sameness because what we are ultimately talking about when we talk about the identity of something is that positive aspect. Hegel objects to this train of thought because the train violates its own premises. It relies on difference within the simple to explain what is meant to have no difference. Rather than discard the legitimate (albeit partial) insight into the positive aspect of identity, Hegel aims to show how identity (as the positive element) can unite those positive and negative moments of determination. Thus, the term "identity of identity and difference" is intended to represent the positive expression of some determination, and the determining process which also constitutes its identity but is not that determinant result itself. This leads to a discussion of opposition, as opposition is the unity of difference held in contradistinction.

It is in the concept of opposition that Hegel's notion of identity is best understood. In his account of opposition, Hegel provides a sufficient explanation of what he has in mind regarding identity. When we think of opposition, we might think of it regarding incomparable negativity and mutual exclusion. Hegel's emphasis on the notion of opposition rests instead on its ability to unify:

Opposition is the unity of identity and diversity; its moments are diverse in *one* identity, and so they are *opposites*. *Identity* and *difference* are the moments of difference as held inside difference itself; they are *reflected* moments of its unity (WL2, 50/SL, 368).

Here opposition is not seen as the separation of two things but as a way of binding what is diverse. If I talk about the difference between an apple and an orange, I am talking about that which jointly sets them apart from one another. The moment when consideration falls on the orange, it holds the orange as one object among a diverse many. The same applies to the apple. The moment the apple is opposed to the orange, that opposition is an identity of identity and difference because the apple and orange are identified and identified as not qualitatively identical to each other. Even the identity of either the apple or the orange, in opposition, is a moment of difference, because in the context of the unity, neither is the same. Each is a reflected moment of that oppositional unity.

Hegel later uses this notion of oppositional unity to articulate a oneness of thought and being (their identity), but if opposition is a unity of what is merely a relation of diversity, opposition itself does not get us the oneness of identity Hegel is after. For instance, my beagle and I are opposable, and we certainly are not the same. If he means there is a unity of thought and being because they have a reciprocal relationship in determining one another, he may be able to show that while they are indeed different, this notion of opposition paves the way for understanding how diverse things (which thought and being would be) are unifiable. This would mean that thought and being are not the same, but that they bear a discernible relationship to one another, and this relationship is the identity of the two.

The nature of identity in oppositional unity retains the formula of simple logic but places the most significant importance on the copula. The true principle of identity is not in the subject (A) in (A=A), but in the identifying act of the copula (=). The subject of each side of the copula may be the same as the singular (A) but the form varies between the two. The first (A) has no relation to anything else, and the second is a structure for comparison (A=A), even if what is compared is the subject to itself. Identity, as a logical principle, is a subject/predicate relation in which the subject is both subject and predicate. Such self-referential identity “not merely has but is the predicate.”<sup>153</sup> The simultaneous subject as the predicate is unified, and known as a unity, through the copula. Of course, the idea that the copula should be understood as the principle of identity will seem strange because the copula can be introduced into any scenario of relating things that are not identical. In fact, Hegel’s claim about the identity of thought and being admits that these two things are different and yet share an identity. Identity presupposes difference, and it is the power of the copula to unify difference which provides the logical structure from which identification is possible.

A good deal of literature devoted to the criticism of Hegel’s notion of identity, in relation to being, assumes that Hegel’s analysis of the identity of being in general must function as an identity of determinate being. For Hegel, healthy common sense [*Gesunder Menschenverstand*] correctly regards the objects of our experience as individual (A)’s, but, for Hegel, this common sense understanding of being should not be brought from the realm of determinate being into the formal realm of being in general. Healthy common sense has its proper domain in the objects of our experience and this is

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<sup>153</sup> Mure, *Study of Hegel’s Logic*, 170.

the limit of its functionality. The distinction between the common sense identity of determinate being and the formal identity of being in general is easy to collapse when trying to assess the merit of Hegel's claims about the identity of being(s) – particularly as scholars frequently attempt to judge Hegel's formal identity from the perspective of determinate being. There is a longstanding tradition beginning with Bertrand Russell and G.E. Moore that insists Hegel's identity theory must be demonstrated through determinate being.<sup>154</sup> Within the analytic tradition, Hegel is understood to claim that the determinate object of  $A=A$  has some difference between the first  $A$  and the second, as if all identity claims are secretly  $A_1=A_2$ , and Hegel's problem is that  $A_1$  is not  $A_2$ , while Hegel's identity wants to treat them as such. Reynold Siemens, relying on Russell's discussion, claims Hegel ignores such statements as “The morning star is the evening star,” and “Scott is the author of *Waverly*.”<sup>155</sup> Siemens claims that while all of “these are all to be represented by 'x = y,' [n]one of them instantiates the law of identity.” The general idea is that these are not two things that ‘in reality’ are one thing, so we cannot use  $x = y$  as the law of identity. If we cannot use  $x = y$  as the law of identity, then identity is not comprised of difference, as all instances of difference would claim that  $x$  does, in fact, equal  $y$ .

In Siemens analysis of Russell, and in Russell's analysis, discussion of being becomes a discussion of likenesses between two seemingly separate determinate objects. Once this is made to be Hegel's claim for identity, one simply need show that the seemingly different was not different, and so we have the simple identity Hegel attempts

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<sup>154</sup> See Russell, B. "On Denoting," *Mind*, New Series, Vol. 14, No. 56. (Oct. 1905), pp. 479–493. See also G. E. Moore's , "Identity." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, v. 1 (1900-01) pp. 117-142.

<sup>155</sup> Siemens, Reynold L. “Hegel and the Law of Identity.” *The Review of Metaphysics*. Vol. 42, No. 1 (1988), p. 106.

to deny after all. Bertrand Russell brings up a difficulty,<sup>156</sup> which Hegel would describe as formal identity (or simple identity) that some, such as Siemens, find to be a formidable diagnostic as to how confused Hegel has become on the matter. We have Walter Scott, and we have the author of *Waverly*. Walter Scott is the author of *Waverly*. If we did not know that Scott was the author of *Waverly*, we are likely to assume that the two are separate individuals. We have some descriptions of Scott and some descriptions of the author of *Waverly*. When we find out they are the same person, we conjoin descriptions from two seemingly separate persons. Because of these sorts of instances, some of us are tempted to think that “Scott is the author of *Waverly*” is some combination of two separate things. Russell claims it would be absurd for us to maintain that Scott is different from the author of *Waverly*, and that simply because there are two different ways to describe the same determinate being, there is no difference in the referent of both descriptions. This is true for the *gesunder Menschenverstand* of determinate beings, but that is not Hegel’s subject matter in his discussion of identity or indeterminate being. If applied as some critique of Hegel’s identity, it confuses Hegel’s true aim. Hegel’s argument is not that difference is implicit in identity because one thing expressed two ways already implies difference. As we have seen, Hegel’s argument is based on the claim that there can be a symmetrical tautology ( $A=A$ ) or an asymmetrical relation ( $A=B$ ) because there is something that makes comparisons possible in the first place, which presupposes difference, but is also a condition for self-reference.

Both Russell and Moore insist that any theory of identity made contingent on difference jeopardizes the very logic behind our intuitions of identity. For Moore, Hegel’s

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<sup>156</sup> Russell, “On Denoting,” 481.

claim that there is difference in identity must mean this in the context of a subject/predicate distinction that allows for a this to contrast a that.<sup>157</sup> However, if this is what Hegel means, according to Moore, Hegel fails to capture what we mean by identity. Hegel fails because identity, even expressed as difference, still aims at something more like “This is identical with itself,” whereas what Hegel has given us is: “In order for A<sub>1</sub> to be A<sub>1</sub>, it must be A<sub>2</sub> as well.”<sup>158</sup> For Moore, this position is obviously absurd because this commits Hegel to claim that “the thing must be different from itself in order to be identical.”<sup>159</sup> Moore’s difficulty, like Russell’s, is that he does not follow Hegel’s stated train of thought.

The problem with objecting to Hegel’s identity in this way is a problem of ignoring or misunderstanding where this level of identity obtains in Hegel’s philosophy. The consistent assumption made by Moore and Russell is that an identity of identity and difference is contingent upon determinate objects, as if identity arises from the combination of a subject and its predicates or from subject to subject. Their objections use and critique only relations between determinate objects, as if Hegel were claiming our analysis of identity must be modeled on comparisons and indices of determinate objects. Siemens joins Russell and Moore to ask Hegel “What reason is there for saying that the two singular terms in an ‘A is A’ statement must pick out different things?”<sup>160</sup> This question is the hallmark of a discussion very different from the one of Hegel’s identity. According to Hegel, identity does not necessitate the idea that two singular terms pick out two different determinate things in an ‘A is A’ statement because an

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<sup>157</sup>Moore, “Identity,” 119.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Siemens, “Law of Identity,” 113.

identity of difference happens before singular terms are possible. The formal structure of the copula precedes that which is determined. This expectation that identity picks out is not a formal principle of logic, but the demand that a mental act of associative mixing and matching is better suited to express formal identity. This sort of identity would only reveal how humans recognize the individuality of determinations. It would not explain the notion of identity apart from its utility in our cognition.

### Pure Being

In our movement away from the simple identity of the understanding, we must return again to the pure being discussed in Chapter Four. It is in pure being where we grasp how identity functions prior to the world of determinate objects. Pure being, a utterly undetermined immediacy (or “indeterminate immediate”), or “being without quality” (WL1, 82/SL, 58), may not initially seem helpful to understand being. The understanding grasps determinate being. However, if we try to understand what sort of immediacy this indeterminacy is, the task is impossible. Pure being gives the understanding nothing determined, as the understanding makes the determinations itself for reason. For example, if I try to imagine an undetermined coffee cup, I begin to subtract its various predicates because those are determinations by which I grasp the cup as this singular cup before me. I would get to a point where there is nothing left of the cup *per se*, but this would present to me neither the cup nor pure being. While we cannot imagine (or understand) being without quality, the concept is not devoid of reason. In fact, for Hegel, the existence of any determination necessarily implies this “being without

quality” as its ground. However, this pure being is just as equally a pure nothing because, in this sort of immediacy, we never experience pure being even if our experience presupposes it. With pure being as indeterminate immediacy, Hegel describes it as a *not-nothing* (WL, 292/SL, 411). There is initially no more to say about it than it is not not. In doing so, we are describing it as a ‘negation of negation’ (ibid.). Positive being (determinate being) conceptually posits its opposite – it is already a distinction among differences. Hegel claims that in pure being, there “is nothing to be intuited in it...even if our intuition of being ushers from it” (WL1, 82/SL, 59). As being without quality, pure being defies representation, and thereby it also defies the understanding.

A problem in understanding pure being emerges from our inability to intuit it. In pure being, there is nothing there, and yet something arises from this nothing. Determinations are made, but to say what they are made of is already to speak of pure being as determinate being. We want to analyze something unmediated, but all of our references to it would presuppose mediation. That we do not understand pure being is not to say that the notion of pure being is unintelligible. This inability to understand indeterminate immediacy, while retaining the ability to conceive it, provides a valuable insight -- immediacy is always mediated, but such immediacy is not wholly cancelled in the mediation. This is similar to being’s disclosure to reason akin to Chapter Three’s discussion of the category of finitude. Within the static determination lies the dynamic ideality. Pure being is the animus of determinate being, grasped in its artefactual nature as that which transcends the finite category but is not transcendent to it. However, this ideality is lost on the understanding as even a mediated immediacy always presents itself as a determinate mediation. The inability of the understanding to grasp the essence of

being as a mediated immediacy shows us that, unlike the Kantian approach to transcendental conditions, the mechanics (or finitude) of the understanding is not going to be the proper lens from which to discuss the intuition of being because it ignores the ideality of pure being within determinate beings by its very nature – to render discrete determinations. Finitude is incapable of serving as the proper tool for an investigation into being because of its intracategorical deficiency to do anything apart from grasping determinate being, which pure being is not.

In Hegel's attempt to avoid a pre-critical metaphysics at the same time as revealing our relationship to being, he shows the method of genesis from immediacy to determinate being "without reverting to metaphysical substrates."<sup>161</sup> It may appear, however, that having described pure being as that from which our determinate reality springs forth, pure being must be a metaphysical substrate. However, if we recall Hegel's description of the productive imagination in Chapter Four, the spontaneity of immediacy, as opposed to traditional substance philosophy, marks the transition from coming to be and ceasing to be. The process (or method of being) is simultaneously productive and reproductive, and being's reproductive role is vital to understanding how Hegel's ontology is not a pre-critical reiteration of substance metaphysics.

Rather than some underlying substance apart from determinate being, what being produces is that same reproduced indeterminate immediacy of being as made determinate.<sup>162</sup> Pure being is not the substance of determinate being, as if we had one type of being as essence and another type as something other than that essence. Pure

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<sup>161</sup> Nuzzo, Angelica. "Thinking Being: Method in Hegel's Logic of Being." *A Companion to Hegel*. eds. Michael Baur & Stephen Houlgate. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2011) p. 122.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

being is simply the undetermined being of determined being. The identity of such determinate being is still always the same immediacy from which it was produced because there is no being apart from what immediacy is determined. Pure being and determinate being are simply greater or lesser organizations of immediacy. No pure being exists that is otherwise than determinate being. There exists no other undetermined immediacy except determined mediation because there is no other source except pure being, and the product of pure being is nothing other than a reproduction of itself. Instead, which we will discuss shortly, we see in Hegel's logic the spontaneous generation of reality and its ability to organize itself through Hegel's absolutes – Absolute Knowing, Absolute Spirit, and Absolute Idea. Hegel's account of being, as seen in its method of development (or history), shows us that the prior substance ontologists take as the essential undergirding of the reality we encounter is nothing other than the reality we encounter. There is no undergirding - only an infinite back and forth from being to nothing in the process of becoming.

### The Oneness of the Identity and Difference of Thought and Being

Having discussed pure being, we should examine the role Hegel gives to pure thought, or thinking as such, to grasp in what sense thought and being share an identity and difference. Recalling our examination in Chapter Three, thought, in its most general sense, is “to be taken in the absolute sense of *infinite thought*, not as encumbered by the finitude of consciousness; in short, *thought as such*. (WL1, 69/SL, 41). Thought as such is not the sort of discursivity we experience, as it precedes that discursivity as the logical structure of whatever exists, apart from our minds thinking things. Thought as such, by

Hegel's definition we saw in Chapter Three, is identical to pure being. Pure being "is not to be sensed, intuited, or represented; instead, it is pure thought" (E, 182/137). Hegel makes a similar remark about thought as he does with pure being:

When beginning with thinking, we have nothing but thought in the sheer absence of any determination of it [*in seiner reinen Bestimmungslosigkeit*], since for a determination one and an other are required. In the beginning, however, we have as yet no other. (E, 183/138)

If we try to pursue our philosophic investigations after we have discovered that thought alone is the origin of experience, such thought lacks all determination, and therefore all predication. Strictly speaking, nothing exists to properly call a subject either. Both subject and predicate would need to stand in relation to something else – "one and an other are required" (ibid.) If our beginning tries to start with thought, there is no other. As in the discussion of pure being, pure thought is in the identical situation because it is the undetermined immediate just as pure being is. As much as it seems problematic to claim that thought and being are identical, this notion of undetermined immediacy should also make us wonder in what sense we have a difference between thought and being except in name. Before we can discuss what this identity of thought and being is, then, we must address what it means to have an identity of the identity and difference. Such an identity is the more appropriate way to express Hegel's intent in the notion of the identity and difference of thought and being.

Having briefly discussed identity, difference, thought, and being, we can now turn to how Hegel understands them as unified. Difficulty exists in Hegel studies about how to understand (and interpret) the term *einheit* - *unity* or, given the root and suffix, literally, *oneness*). The abstract noun, as something other than what it characterizes (such as the

goodness of a good act), is also, in the case of the oneness of thought and being, meant to be that which it characterizes (a oneness as an identity and not a mere combination). In my interpretation of Hegel, at the core of this notion of oneness, thought and being express their oneness as both a combination of two diverse things and as simultaneously being both of those things. In contemporary English scholarship, this dual role interpretation of oneness (as the combination and that which is combined), has united several diverse viewpoints in a series of articles, beginning with Stephen Houlgate's *Thought and Being in Kant and Hegel*.<sup>163</sup> The article generated a fruitful debate for seven years between Houlgate, Simon Lumsden, Joseph Flay, Errol Harris, and Robert Williams. Here, however, I will principally examine Houlgate's position and Flay's criticism. Houlgate's general argument is that thought and being obtain an identity out of necessity, when one understands both correctly, and my interpretation closely resembles his.

In an attempt to explain the unity of thought and being, Houlgate contrasts Hegel's position from Kant, in that, while it is true that "our knowledge of objects is inseparable from our knowledge of our own categories and thought-determinations....," we are wrong to agree with Kant that "the determinations of being in itself could be thought to be utterly other than the determinations of thought."<sup>164</sup> Houlgate sees Hegel's aim as not to figure how our representations mirror a predetermined given, but "to determine whether consciousness fully grasps what its conception and its experience of its object actually entail."<sup>165</sup> Regarding this dissertation, Hegel aims to show how we can

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<sup>163</sup> Houlgate, Stephen. "Thought and Being in Kant and Hegel." *The Owl of Minerva*. Vol. 21, No. 2 (1991).

<sup>164</sup> Houlgate, "Thought and Being," 133. As with Hegel, my interest in Houlgate is not how adequately Kant is represented, but rather what the view is that is contrasted to Hegel's.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

grasp the dynamic ideality of our representations through the knowledge that the categories cannot categorize apart from what is. Consciousness will grasp the identity of thought and being in the process of cognition and discover that these determinations of being are indeed *of* being. As Houlgate explains, we come to understand through Hegel that “consciousness does not merely represent what being is ‘like,’ but rather consciousness thinks being itself in thinking the category of being.”<sup>166</sup> The finite categories are marked with their infinite ideality, and once we grasp this we know that “consciousness recognizes that it has no way of distinguishing being from the thought or category of being, and that the two are thus identical.”<sup>167</sup> Knowing can know that which it knows (as knowledge) is knowledge of something that somehow *is*. However, at the level of finite consciousness, or our experience, Houlgate’s claim may appeal to subjective indispensability to justify itself – the idea that we are helpless to think otherwise and that inability is our assurance that there is no otherwise. If this were so, Hegel will leave us with the same metaphysics of subjectivity he attempts to escape. When we move into Hegel’s absolutes in the next section, we will see that the context of this no other way is, in fact, a feature of reality itself and not simply idiosyncratic to our cognitive abilities.

To a large body of modern Hegel interpreters, Houlgate’s position regarding a necessary and literal oneness of thought and being proved undesirable, and elicited several responses to soften the claim that there is an actual identity of thought and being as opposed to something more like shared features between thought and being. However, such criticism tends to immerse itself at the level of simple identity of determinate

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

objects, which is not the logical identity we have discussed. Hegel does claim that thought and being are inseparable, which can suggest that he only has the combination of two diverse things in mind (WL1, 84,/SL, 60). Joseph Flay, for example, understands this inseparability as an independence of each, where thought and being are related, but not identical, to one another.<sup>168</sup> Flay's alternative to Houlgate is to internalize the unity of thought and being to "the relation between ourselves and things we know."<sup>169</sup> For Flay, Houlgate fails to consider duly:

- (1) the otherness and independence attributable to *relata*, in this case to *things* in respect to *thought*...
- (2) the otherness present in the nature of the *relationship* between thought and things.

Flay's accusation is that Houlgate cannot ultimately respect true difference because this identity must be a relation and not the content related. For Flay, Hegel's unity of thought and being is the shared relationship between them. As *relata*, whatever is in relation to something cannot be that same thing without difference. For instance, if thought and being were identical in the sense of having no difference, then we would have no discernible difference, and there would be just as much (or as little) sense to call thought or being. Otherness has to remain somehow if there is to be a difference, for example, between a chair and my idea of a chair.<sup>170</sup> The *relata*, thought and being, are independent and other to each other. Conversely, while recognizing the independence between the two, my idea of the chair is *of* the chair. Therefore, while my idea and the object itself are

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<sup>168</sup> Flay, Joseph. "Hegel's Metaphysics." *The Owl of Minerva*. Vol. 24, No. 2 (1993) p. 151. This position has its own problems which I'll discuss below.

<sup>169</sup> Flay, "Hegel's Metaphysics," 150.

<sup>170</sup> This point is addressed by Gabriel Markus in *Transcendental Ontology: Essays in German Idealism*. (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), p. xii.

not the same, there is a relation between the *relata* that looks like it shares some identity between the two. The *relata* are diverse; the relation is identical.<sup>171</sup> Flay's concern with Houlgate's approach (in which Flay seems to take "consciousness" to be solely our consciousness) is that while we must "*think* being in a certain way," that way is not determined by our thinking. Rather, it is the relation of the *relata* independent of our consciousness. Unlike Houlgate's approach, which focuses on how consciousness interacts with its categories, Flay focuses more on the structure of relating *relata* than on the content being related. As with the extracategorical interpretation, Flay claims that, "[the] categories structuring *how* we think are not the property of ourselves and our consciousnesses; they belong to the *relation between* ourselves and things we know."<sup>172</sup> The necessity to this identity of thought and being does not lie in a particular quality or faculty of our cognition but rather fixes the nature from which such faculties operate in the first place. Flay suggests this necessary relation belongs neither to our subjectivity nor to objects themselves, but to the reciprocal conditions thought imposes on being and being imposes on thought.<sup>173</sup> However, the categories, even as understood by Houlgate, are not ours, and nor is consciousness reducible to our consciousness. Nonetheless, Flay fears that if being is not the domain of the *relata*, or that conscious thought has no imposition from its relation to being because they are identical, thought loses its ability to be objective as each thought is of what must exist by thought being identical to being.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Flay, "Hegel's Metaphysics," 146-147.

<sup>172</sup> Flay, "Hegel's Metaphysics," 150.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

In response to Flay, Hegel grants difference to thought and being by recognizing them as moments in a logical unity (WL1, 84/SL, 60).<sup>175</sup> In this respect, we do have thought and being expressed as two diverse moments. This is not to say that they are independent of each other as Flay's relational account maintains.<sup>176</sup> One can deny that Hegel has correctly understood this relation of thought and being generally, but he does not understand the relationship as one of independent objects. Focusing on the relation, as Flay does, will cause the *relata*, as thing one and thing two, to be limited by the finite understanding and squarely placed in the realm of determinate being alone. We would also create the problem of thirds (third man argument), where a third diverse object is introduced (the relation) as the container for the prior two, causing an infinite regress to unify the unity of the unities.

In a similar manner to the problem of thirds, the focus on the identity (or oneness) of thought and being regarding relations, either internal to something or externally related to that something, invariably disregards the content related. If thought and being are an external relation, their unity is a combination that is neither thought nor being. If thought and being share an internal relation, their identity is an equivalence that makes them indiscernible. The difficulties here stem from importing expectations of empirical experience into logical 'space.' The notion of identity in the critiques of Russell, Moore, and Flay expect spatial metaphors to do the work of actual spatial relations, and temporal metaphors ("moments") to function like our experience of chronological time. It is fair enough to expect an explanation from Hegel as to what these

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<sup>175</sup> Houlgate, Stephen. "A Reply to Joseph C. Flay's 'Hegel's Metaphysics'." *The Owl of Minerva*. Vol. 24, No. 1 (1992), p. 160.

<sup>176</sup> Flay, "Hegel's Metaphysics," 151.

spatial and temporal terms are a metaphor of, but that is a far cry from the complaint that Hegel's notion of identity is wrong because it does not conform to our perceptions of determinate objects. Somewhere along the way, the discussion sidetracked from thought thinking thought to particular beings thinking particular thoughts. The underlying difficulty here, as with Russell and Moore's attempt to critique Hegel's notion of identity, is in trying to discuss being in general from how being and thought are determined within our empirical perception. Again, the attempt to discuss identity as an identity of determinate objects is a discussion about simple identity – which Hegel grants functions as the above critics maintain. However, by the interpretation presented here, these critics are arguing against a position that does not belong to Hegel.

At the beginning of this chapter, I discussed an immediacy that Hegel maintains is equally pure thought as it is pure being, as all thoughts and beings are determinations of this indeterminate reality. When we treat this immediacy as a simple identity, we misunderstand it because this kind of identity is a category of finite determinate things, and there is here no determinate thing to identify. When we treat this immediacy as a difference (besides repeating the same error just mentioned), the only thing it could be different from is its own immediacy. There would then be no difference. However, the understanding cannot grasp identity and difference here, but logic can find a concept that unifies thought and being in such immediacy, and can speculate that such unity affords (and is) the difference between the two in the realm of determinate being and thought. By this, immediacy does not cause objects to be intelligible, and is not to be understood here as potency in the Scholastic sense. It never exists except as already determined, and once determined it is no longer immediate. There is no representation (and representation is all

the understanding has to work with as data) that is not this amalgam of immediacy-determined-as-intelligible-being. This may be what Houlgate means when claiming that we are bound to this concept for all our acts of understanding. The perpetual instantiation of the concept of this identity, and any attempt to think otherwise fails, not because we are trapped in an inescapable cognitive scheme, but because when we try to understand our understanding (as opposed to merely looking at what we do when we understand), this immediacy-determined-as-intelligible-being is always both what we initially understood and, as a concept, the explanation of why it was understood at all. It is the condition and satisfaction of the condition for all inquiries into the *structure* of rationality. The healthy commonsense notion of identity, fully endorsed by Hegel, captures the identity in our encounters with determinate being. The identity of the identity and difference captures the structure of thought and being's oneness.

### The Discovery of Absolute Knowing

We have discussed how thought and being can be described as identical with this identity being an identity of the identity and difference between the two. We have not discussed how we come to experience this identity as that identity. The method by which we understand this identity as an identity of identity and difference is an instance of what Hegel refers to as Absolute Knowing [*das Absolute Wissen*]. Before we define Absolute Knowing, it is important to note that for Hegel, "absolute" or "the Absolute" [*das Absolute*] only ever means "whole" or "complete." Hegel has three principle absolutes –

Absolute Knowledge, Absolute Idea, and Absolute Spirit.<sup>177</sup> We need a rudimentary understanding of these three absolutes to understand our encounter and relation to the identity of thought and being. As we can see in the three terms, the Absolute functions in each as an adjective, as John Burbidge notes, “even Absolute Spirit is not an entity but that dynamic considered from all sides and in all respects.”<sup>178</sup> My interpretation respects this line of analysis and rejects the notion that an entity fits Hegel’s descriptions of the absolute.

As knowledge of Absolute Spirit and the Absolute Idea require Absolute Knowing, we will begin with Hegel’s understanding of Absolute Knowledge and our means of participating in it. In Hegel’s lectures to his students, he explains that Absolute Knowledge is: ‘to know opposition in unity, and unity in opposition – this is Absolute Knowledge; and science is the knowledge of this unity in its whole development by means of itself’ (VGP3, 624/LHP3, 549). Here, Hegel equates Absolute Knowledge with an insight into oppositional unity. It need not be an argument or judgment, and is more a state of self-conscious awareness (a “seeming inactivity” [*scheinbare Untätigkeit*]), the knowing subject understands that one has indeed grasped the oppositional unity of the thought and being of what is considered (PG, 414/PS, 490). Because there is no more to the object<sup>179</sup> than its oneness of opposed form and matter (the identity of thought and being), what is known about the object is complete. It is Absolute Knowledge. This seeming inactivity in Absolute Knowledge is, as a kind of awareness, not the justification

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<sup>177</sup> These three absolutes are explained below.

<sup>178</sup> Burbidge, John W. “Hegel’s Absolutes.” *The Owl of Minerva*. Vol.29, No.1 (1997). p. 26

<sup>179</sup> As a reminder from previous chapters, “object” is not to be understood as strictly an empirical object, as subjects can become objects of our consideration as well.

that such knowledge has occurred, or how it occurs. Such justification is the business of the science of logic as opposed to Absolute Knowing.

Hegel continues the passage arguing that the science of logic should be seen as the knowledge of Absolute Knowledge's "whole development" – knowledge of the mechanics of Absolute Knowledge. The science does not discern the content that is absolutely known, but provides a method to understand what something is and what something is not, the opposition in unity and the unity in what is opposed (or more simply the thing and its context). When philosophy becomes the science of logic, its internal logical development exposes this method of reality unfolding under such opposition, as seen in the deconstruction of the metaphysics of subjectivity towards an extracategorical dynamism that transcends subjectivity in the realm of logic. In its investigation of the source of the categories, the analysis of logic finds the dynamic ideality of immediacy from which thought and being distinguish themselves. The science of logic, then, is the science of absolute (objective or comprehensive) knowing – when we have set ourselves aside to let logic observe its own method. Again, the science of logic is not the content of subjective experience but the structure from which we may claim knowledge of being as being intelligible. In the practice of this logic, we come to know that for whatever is encountered in our experience, the success of our cognition is proportionate to the grasp of the "opposition in unity, and unity in opposition" in the matter at hand (ibid.). What this means for us, regarding the identity of thought and being exhibited in Absolute Knowing, is that, as Houlgate notes:

understanding being properly is not a matter of gaining "access" to being that is *other* than it, of gaining the right "perspective" on being, or of building the right "bridge" between itself and being.<sup>180</sup>

The science of logic reveals that our thought is not alienated from being, but rather one modality of being itself – or just as true, that being is another modality of thought. This identity of thought and being shows that talk of access and bridges misunderstands thought's relation to being and vice versa. For finite thinking, there is the task of securing the truth of one's judgments about what exists and what can be known of it, but that task cannot infringe upon the intelligibility inherent in being. As we have seen, such a denial would require a certitude that would necessitate the intelligibility of being. Such a state would have to rely on a self-contradiction, and would be irrational.

Absolute Knowledge is the true insight into the matter of hand. It is, in a sense, inert data to be had or utilized. Absolute Knowing, as act, is a form of agency Hegel attributes to Absolute Spirit. First, Hegel defines spirit as "reason that knows itself" and "intelligence as knowing."<sup>181</sup> Spirit is the self-conscious animus of reason that puts the understanding to task to maximize comprehension of the matter at hand. It knows what it is and has intentionality in its operations. Mere spirit, however, is not the perfection of that desired maximal comprehension, as a reason that knows itself grasps its nature. Absolute Spirit, however, is that all-encompassing reason that has all that is intelligible to know in relation to itself. Hegel writes that Absolute Spirit:

knows its object as its own self. They no longer fall apart into the antithesis of being and knowing, but remain in the simple oneness of knowing; they are the True in the form of the True, and their difference is only the difference of content. Their movement, which organizes itself in this element into a whole, is Logic. (PG, 40/PS,22)

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<sup>180</sup> Houlgate, "Thought and Being," 58.

<sup>181</sup> Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit: 1827-8.* trans. Robert R. Williams. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). p. 200.

Absolute Spirit so intimately grasps its object that its discovery of the full comprehension inserts the spirit into its object, and, conversely, the object becomes a part of Absolute Spirit. To better understand this relationship, we need to pause here to examine another passage from the *Science* to understand in what sense Hegel means that Absolute Spirit and its object “no longer fall apart into the antithesis of being and knowing” (ibid.). Hegel tells us that Absolute Spirit is “the true nature of God” (WL2, 463/ SL, 626) – the intuitive intellect from which intellectual intuitions emerge. Absolute Spirit, then, can be seen as the author of all that is and holds its object “in the simple oneness of knowing” because the object only exists as an extension of that Absolute Spirit and is only intelligible by the intelligibility within Absolute Spirit. The difference between Absolute Spirit and what it contemplates “is only the difference of content” (PG, 40/PS, 22). Regarding the identity of the identity and difference of thought and being, Absolute Spirit is the identity of itself and its object, differing in content but identical in what they are in relation to each other. Later Hegel tells us that Absolute Spirit, “finds, on the one hand, existence in the shape of Thought and comprehends it, and, conversely, in its thinking it comprehends existence” (PG, 412/PS, 488-489). Hegel claims Absolute Spirit is a comprehending reason that must discover the scope of its comprehensiveness. Hegel claims that there is a comprehensive knowledge that can be directed absolutely towards both anything and everything. Yet, Absolute Spirit must “find” or realize that it encounters existence in the shape of thought. It must actively comprehend instead of contemplate all that is already known, and only in its present agency, “in its thinking” does it comprehend existence (ibid.). There seems, then, a limit to Absolute Spirit – its scope of comprehension entails a search to assimilate its awareness of what it is in the

products it renders intelligible. This limit is relevant to consider when we want to discuss the degree to which we participate in Absolute Knowing. It allows us to understand the true limits of finite thought in the aftermath of a post-Kantian abandonment of subjective consciousness as the model of cognition. We will see in the next section that it is not the case that all of reality is twisted to conform to Absolute Knowledge or Absolute Spirit. These two absolutes work within a framework from which they too are a part. The Absolute Idea is the ultimate check to all-knowing and willing, as it is the Absolute Idea that is the only one thing that exists, from which all is a proportionate manifestation or modality or instance.

Absolute Knowing is the comprehensive grasp of whatever the matter is to comprehend. Absolute Spirit is the world animus (or “self-movement”) that aims to understand itself amid all the differentiation that may exist (WL2, /SL, 348). The scope of this differentiation is the Absolute Idea. The Absolute Idea is the pure undifferentiated thought and being from which all determination comes, is comprised of, and returns to in its coming to be and ceasing to be. The Absolute Idea is the totality and horizon of that which exists and could exist. It is both the original pure being (WL2, 548/SL, 735) and the concluding “final stage of the logical process that proves itself to be at once the truly first and the only entity that is through itself alone” (E, 246/186). First, we need to have a general understanding of what an idea is. For Hegel, an idea is an “adequate concept” – the concept of what the thing is mirrors (or adequates) what the existent is (WL2, 441/SL, 670). The concept, then, is the truth of the object – that the object adequately is conveyed in its concept.<sup>182</sup> This adequation itself, however, is not the concept or the object, as an

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<sup>182</sup> The truth of the object is very different from the object itself. It helps to bear this in mind so as to not confuse oneself as to whether all of Hegel’s reality is reducible to concepts or “the concept of

adequate concept differs from a mere concept. An idea is the unity of both the existent and its concept, thereby not strictly just another kind of concept. The idea is both the concept and the reality to which the concept refers.

The Absolute Idea is the comprehensive unity of all adequate concepts and their existents. It is “the sole subject matter and content of philosophy” because “it contains all determinateness within, and its essence consists in returning through its self-determination and particularization back to itself...” (WL2, 548/SL, 735). Both the concrete existents and the construct within which they exist *are* the Absolute Idea and not merely belong to it. As Hegel describes, it is, therefore, “*being, imperishable life, self-knowing truth, and is all truth*” (WL2, 565/SL, 752). The Absolute Idea is both the condition and satisfaction of all that is and is possible regarding both knowledge and existence. As Angela Nuzzo remarks, the Absolute Idea “the same absolute horizon that ‘pure being’ is at the beginning of the process.”<sup>183</sup> The immediacy allows determination and is the being and intelligibility of those determinations. It is also in some way self-knowing, as whatever consciousness exists, no matter how diverse its forms, is a partial shape of the absolute.

For Hegel, in a very literal sense, the Absolute Idea must still be realized through Absolute Spirit via Absolute Knowing in the seeming paradox of being an uncompleted absolute. In the last paragraph, we saw Hegel claim that the very essence of the Absolute Idea is “returning through its self-determination and particularization back to itself” (WL2, 565/SL, 735). It is a historical process that consistently gathers up the total of all the determinations that have come to be, what determinations currently exist, and what

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concepts.” It is not.

<sup>183</sup> Nuzzo, “Thinking Being,” 121.

that relationship says about the evolution of Absolute Spirit. Thought permeates “the sphere of being,” to realize that “nature and spirit are in general different modes of exhibiting” the Absolute Idea (ibid.). The identity of thought and being is the self-determining particularization of the Absolute Idea – Hegel’s imperishable life within the world of determinate being.

As we have seen, Hegel describes the self-understanding of Absolute Spirit as procedural. “The” absolute has no infinite duration as one giant intellectual intuition. The absolute is always fleeting and re-emerging because it is only intelligible as determinable-- in the context of determinate being. Far from an abstract concept, the absolute (and “the infinite” for that matter) is thoroughly existential. It is not the substance of all things but all the particulars of all things. Hegel is clear on this point when, in the *Phenomenology*, he explains that Spirit “is not a meaning, is not what is inner, but what is actual” (PG, 391/PS, 465). For Hegel, the word “spirit” may tempt us to think that Spirit is the essence of what is, but this is not the case because, he reminds us, a “simple, eternal essence would be Spirit only as a form of empty words” (ibid.). As Spirit pertains to what is actual, no actual simple, eternal essence would suffice for the role of Spirit, as Spirit is always only that of concrete existence. To the degree that the absolute “is,” that “is” takes place in the sphere of being. (WL2, 565/SL, 752). The Absolute Idea “has a *restricted content*” as its content is only that which exists (ibid.). To the degree that the absolute becomes a subject matter, it is a determinate, mediated matter – a finite absolute just as, in Chapter Three, we saw the dynamic ideality of the true infinite within its finite conceptual determination. What is absolute is only absolute for the time it existed as that concrete whole, which is always passing into history, known

only historically (recollected particularity) as absolute, and emerges into the present to negate the prior absolute, and crumble as it did before. We will address how this may or may not affect the revisability of Hegel's claim to a fixed method to grasp the identity of thought and being, but what is most important to understand about Hegel's absolutes is their dynamism and perpetual mutations and self-surrendering from what they were to what they are to what they will be. The quality of the absolute and the infinite is to perish in its content, but its structure will forever remain and persist according to its precondition for all that may come to be.

### Being Thought and Thinking Being

As Hegel concludes *Science*, he begins to bring his logic to life in the notion of the Absolute Idea, as discussed above. Assessing the ultimate value of Hegel's science requires insight into the importance Hegel places upon us in the act of intentional human agency - where logic becomes practice and reason meets will. Regarding the Absolute Idea, Hegel describes a seemingly mechanical process that becomes more and more a matter of rational agency:

...as it runs itself as subject matter through the totality of its determinations, builds itself up to the entirety of its reality, to the system of science, and concludes by apprehending this conceptual comprehension of itself, hence by sublating its position as content and subject matter and cognizing the concept of science. (WL2, 565/SL, 752)

Here, we find an intimation of our role in the method used by Absolute Spirit to achieve its self-awareness within the Absolute Idea. When life reaches a stage of determination from which consciousness emerges, and awareness leads to self-awareness to the

understanding and reason, the sum total of reality becomes a subject matter for consciousness. It begins with sheer determination – taking inventory of what it is by what it can make of itself. The Absolute Idea “builds itself up to the entirety of its reality,” finding means by which it can better understand itself through every aspect of existence, and improves upon those means as new developments in existence allow the refinement of its method (ibid.). Its means of self-awareness are perfected, for Hegel, in “the system of science” (ibid.). The mere system, however, lacks the agency necessary for Absolute Knowledge. The absolute (or all of the absolutes) are incomplete in the absence of “cognizing the concept of science” (ibid.) – the very science Hegel places within our power to construct, where the Absolute Idea apprehends itself. The science of logic is itself the work of Absolute Spirit to understand its approach to grasping reality. Our discovery of this science is Absolute Spirit’s realization of the role we play in granting it those portions of Absolute Knowledge that we are capable of providing. This provides us the possibility of understanding what is and how it is by means of our participation in ability to discern true rationality.

Hegel highlights our participation in rationality in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, where he sees the history of philosophy as culminating in his insight into the absolutes. Regarding the practical relevance of his science regarding human development and our cognitive capacities, from our encounter with the absolutes, Hegel comments:

The strife of the finite self-consciousness with the absolute self-consciousness, which last seemed to the other to lie outside of itself, now comes to an end. Finite self-consciousness has ceased to be finite; and in this way absolute self-consciousness has, on the other hand, attained to the reality which it lacked before. This is the whole history of the world in general up to the present time, and the history of Philosophy in particular, the sole work of which is to depict this strife. (VGP3, 620/LHP3, 545)

For Hegel, all of history exhibits a struggle and apparent incompleteness on the part of the absolute. Absolute self-consciousness has sought to attain “the reality which it lacked before” (ibid.) This reality it lacked is the finite self-consciousness we possess. When finite self-consciousness undertakes the project of tracing its origins, it sees the dynamic ideality of the infinite as its condition to be and knows it is a part of that infinite. When we have this concrete moment of recognition, absolute self-consciousness is realized in a way it was not before, and we give it a reality it was lacking. We make the absolute present within the finite, and the task of philosophy, to Hegel, is to facilitate our awareness of how the absolute informs our world structurally, while we manifest its self-consciousness concretely. There is the role we play in completing the absolute, and as we manifest this absolute, we see its role in our cognition between our thought and the absolute. Hegel describes the beginning of the process by which we come to know when certitude is the truth:

What happens is only a translation, the formal transition into manifestation that reason exists for me, such that I know about it, that I know that it is, and the human being has the faith that reason is actual. When he recognizes reason's presence he obtains truth. He has nothing else to do but to appropriate this recognition as his own, and thus he comes into possession of a truth that is existent. (VGP3, 110/LHP3, 202)

There is a translation of rationality, from the absolute into our concrete existence, in the form of a manifestation – our agency directs reason to manifest itself in the world of determinate being through our rational action. This process requires a certain willingness to initially have faith in the potential outcome. The science of logic is to help us see how we can recognize reason's presence. When we do so, we can advance to study truthmaking conditions within our world, but not until that faith in reason exists. Through

that faith, its warrant is brought into question by reason itself. The science of logic is the method by which the formal warrant is shown, but in a practical way each act of appropriating reason, irrespective of whether one knows how it is accomplished, brings the individual “into possession of a truth that is existent” (ibid.) In this way, we spread the rationality of the absolute everywhere within our reach, and come to understand how it assists our agency.

### Two Concluding Concerns

I will conclude with a brief section on what I take to be the most likely or common concerns with the interpretation of Hegel I have presented in this dissertation. There are principally two concerns I take to be most relevant, and they are (1) that Hegel’s doctrine of the identity of thought and being is grounded upon a coherentist or antifoundational theory of cognition, and (2) the open-ended searching of the absolute can never conclude and, therefore, we can never make definitive claims about the search because they are subject to infinite revision.

First, a long-standing concern with Hegel’s science is in the way he claims that the conclusion proves its premises, and the premises determine the conclusion. This suggests a circularity that can quickly seem arbitrary or guilty of special pleading, whereby this philosophy is the only one that would be true despite missing the ground required for any philosophy. Tom Rockmore claims that, although there is a sizeable portion of Hegel scholars who agree as well, Hegel’s science is a “philosophical science,

which has no ground external to it” and “is itself its own ground.”<sup>184</sup> This claim takes the internal cogency of Hegel’s development from the category of Being to the Absolute Idea as Hegel’s main aim and achievement. Obviously, Hegel’s insistence on the self-development of philosophic investigation rightly influences such interpretations. By Hegel’s own admission, as we saw in Chapter Three, in *With what must the beginning of science be made?*, we are led to believe that all starting points are unjustifiable without already presupposing their truth, and therefore the beginning of the *Science*’s development is only proved by its end. This idea that the end is both determined by the beginning and proof of the soundness of that beginning is the end of the science being an explanation of the beginning – hence, its alleged circularity. Of course, if the mechanics of the truth for any philosophic system is the mere coherent non-contradiction between its premises and conclusions, there are many alternatives to Hegel’s science that also have “no ground external to it” and serve as their “own ground.”<sup>185</sup> This circularity is uninteresting in that it lacks any uniqueness to Hegelian thought, and further makes its system appear arbitrary. Rockmore goes on to heighten his claim in that not only is Hegel’s science self-grounding (“is itself its own ground”), but also insists that Hegel has some necessary drive within the science such that “the system of scientific philosophy is necessarily ungrounded.”<sup>186</sup>

First, Rockmore’s use of “circularity” does not describe the objectifying conditions of Hegel’s science, as “circularity” can (and has) conflated the vicious circularity of subjective judgment, whereby arbitrariness becomes the first principle from

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<sup>184</sup> Rockmore, Tom. “Foundationalism and Hegelian Logic.” *The Owl of Minerva*. Vol. 21, No. 1 (1989). p. 42

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

which any system can develop as accurate so long as it stipulates its conditions for truthmaking, and justifies those truthmaking conditions from its arbitrary foundation. While this is not the circularity Rockmore presents, it is the circularity expressed in many of the Anglophonic attempts to come to terms with his theory of cognition. In fact, Hegel uses the term “dialectical” to express his understanding of the science as infinitely progressive. Circles (as metaphorical) suggest a repetitive and constricted range of motion that cannot be broken. Dialectics, however, have no trajectory except forward – the present becomes the old, the old passes away, the new rushes up to become the next present. “Circular” may represent the formal structure because the dialectic will always work on thought and being in a repeated procedural manner, but the results are always different, and therefore the Absolute Idea, or Spirit, of Knowledge, is different at each logical moment. I do not consider the beginning of Hegel’s *Science* helpful to those arguing about an absence of philosophic foundations. It is one thing to argue that our starting point is arbitrary (which Hegel admits), but it is unwarranted to then insist that there was never (nor ever could be) a true starting point (which Hegel does not). Hegel argues that we, as discursive thinkers, literally do not know where to begin and initially have no assurances. What is not immediately disclosed to us, what must be learned, is not good evidence to argue for its absence simply because it is not comprehended from its beginning.

Even as we saw in Chapter Three, immanent critique cannot be construed to mean hopelessly reduced to understand only our subjective experience just because we must begin to understand reality through experience. Rather, Hegel attempts to describe a self-correcting process of learning, from which our convictions about the relationship between

thought and being (and our relationship to that relationship) are purged of false foundations from which the necessarily true foundation is discovered, thereby allowing those sciences that are contingent upon the science of logic to proceed and develop with the assurance that being is intelligible, and objective claims (as opposed to merely consistent claims) about spirit and nature are possible. Rockmore is right to note that for Hegel the science has no ground external to it. Because Hegel takes it to be the beginning of grounds, it is not possible to have a ground, but this is not an endorsement of circularity. As the *Science* comes to an end, *we discover* there would have been no other adequate way to provide a ground, and that the appropriate ground was discovered, which is how we can know philosophy finally found the right key for the lock. This is not at all the claim that there are no keys or any key would do.

Second, following the notion of self-correcting learning, critics have argued that Hegelian circularity, irrespective of its relation to foundations, cannot have necessary conclusions because it is susceptible to infinite revision. That is, it is not only that our knowledge of the content the system reveals may change, but that the system of logic may suffer a paradigm shift, from which the system itself discovers it is wrong or now obsolete. The alleged possibility for this to happen suggests a persistent threat that cannot allow the system to have the objectivity it claims for itself by the very nature of what the system is. After all, as John Burbidge proposes, the self-correcting process of Hegel's science will show that "any particular action and judgment will turn out to be relative," and only "the dynamic itself turns out to be absolute and without condition."<sup>187</sup>

Progressive correction occurs precisely because the relativity of any particular action and

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<sup>187</sup> Burbidge, "Hegel's Absolutes," 33.

judgment fails to exhaust its subject and possible contexts. It is fair to ask, then, that even if “relative” does not mean false, if we concede that all discernment of fact is proportionate to what we observe and reason, would it not also follow that the science of logic, as a matter of our observation of thought thinking thought, is subject to this same mutable relativity? Is not the logic like any language, and as Klaus Brinkmann notes, one which leaves itself only a partial objectivity, “just as an individual language may represent the world from a particular perspective that only partially overlaps with the world-view of another language?”<sup>188</sup> What unites these two concerns in Burbidge and Brinkmann is the notion of incompleteness and the potential impact of such incompleteness. Burbidge is content to leave us with a “paradoxical conclusion” that “the only thing that is absolute in Hegel is the relativity of all things,” which, to the degree that Hegel’s science is a thing, as a thing, it remains unsecured from its own potential mutability of its immutability.<sup>189</sup> Brinkmann tries to secure the immutability of the logic by arguing that:

Once all partial frameworks have been integrated into one comprehensive framework, the question whether there might still be a mismatch between thought and reality becomes moot, because there is no way to answer it one way or the other.

For Brinkmann, there will come a point in time, concerning conceptual frameworks, that one framework will emerge that is all-encompassing. When this framework is discovered, we will know that we need not concern ourselves over a mismatch between thought and reality because there is no way to frame that problem, with either an affirmative or negative conclusion, that will not have come from that comprehensive framework.

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<sup>188</sup> Brinkmann, *Idealism Without Limits*, 5.

<sup>189</sup> Burbidge, “Hegel’s Absolutes,” 33.

However, this argument relies on subjective indispensability, and the certainty of subjective consciousness is not the litmus test Hegel intends because it only speaks to what applies to subjectivity and would keep Hegel's thought within the metaphysics of subjectivity.

There is an understandable concern over the potential revisability of Hegel's logic wrapped in the metaphysics of subjectivity Hegel struggles so hard to dismantle. Involvement in performative contradictions, or avoiding them, was never a part of Hegel's argumentative strategy regarding the identity of thought and being and serves a misdirection. Hegel's goal, as we first saw in Chapter Three, has been to chisel away at the idea that a first-person perspective is the appropriate model for what thinking is. As we saw in Chapter Four, thought as such, or thought thinking thought, precedes all finite consciousness and is that medium by which finite thought is possible at all. The logic, as the method of the identity of thought and being, is, as Burbidge writes, "the structure of self-conscious life wherever and whenever it occurs."<sup>190</sup> All determinate being, all finite consciousness, cannot be explained nor explain itself except as the procession of immediacy's determination, dissolution, and re-emergence. The logic is the invariant base, as the origin from which any metaphysics, frameworks, and modifications to such views are possible. As the tool of any revision, logic is that one thing that cannot be revised. No potential paradigm shift exists *regarding the identity of thought and being*, because its content and method are always the same. There exists no other content if one grants the immanent deduction of Hegel's logic. However, the aim of this dissertation has always been to explain Hegel's break from transcendental philosophy and the motivation

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

of that break. What has not been accomplished, nor was intended to be, is an explanation of what must compel the reader to accept the method and implications of Hegel's deduction apart from its internal development. There is the difference between understanding Hegel's science of logic and accepting this science as true; the former (this dissertation) is meant to serve as a propaedeutic to assess the warrant of the latter (a separate task of a separate study) .

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