

Logic & Dialectic

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1 Hegel's Criticism of Kant

- Hegel rejects Kant's derivation of the categories in two ways:
 1. The specification of *which* concepts designate or express categories is historical/empirical/unscientific – a science of logic must be *presuppositionless*

Logic, on the contrary, cannot presuppose any of these forms of reflection, these rules and laws of thinking, for they are part of its content and they first have to be established within it (SL 23; 21:27)

2. The origin/derivation/basis of the categories results in a kind of subjectivism or skepticism

The *critique of the forms of the understanding* [i.e. the categories] has arrived precisely at this result, namely that such forms do *not apply to things in themselves*. This can only mean that they are in themselves something untrue. (SL 26; 21:30)

1.1 Which Categories?

- Hegel's position suggests that he thinks Kant faces a dilemma:
 1. The reflected nature of the categories is merely historical in its reception of commonly accepted logical forms
 2. The reflected nature of the categories is experiential in that it requires a kind of intellectual experience of acts of the mind to which one attends and then from which one abstracts to form the relevant concepts

1.2 On What Basis?

- Hegel's second criticism concerns the *origin* of the categories in the subject's judgmental activity

When Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (p. 83)[A58/B82], in connection with logic comes to discuss the old and famous question: *What is truth?*, he starts by *passing off* as a triviality the nominal definition that it is the agreement of cognition with its subject matter – a definition which is of great, indeed of supreme value. If we recall this definition together with the fundamental thesis of transcendental idealism, namely that *rational cognition* is incapable of comprehending *things in themselves*, that *reality* lies *absolutely* outside *the concept*, it is then at once evident that such a *reason*, one which is incapable of *setting itself in agreement* with its subject matter, and the *things in themselves*, such as are not in agreement with the rational concept – a concept that does not agree with reality and a reality that does not agree with the concept – that these are *untrue conceptions*. If Kant had measured the idea of an *intuitive understanding* against that first definition of truth, he would have treated that idea which expresses the required agreement, not as a figment of thought but rather as truth. (SL 523; 12:26)

- This is an objection to Kant’s position that is *internal* or “immanent” to Kant’s position itself
- Relies on Kant’s twin commitments regarding truth as agreement & God’s intuitive intellect
 - * The problem: the conception of the intuitive intellect entails that our categories may not apply to being as it fundamentally is (i.e. that the categories aren’t really categories of *being* but rather merely being for *us*)

1.3 Reconstructing Hegel’s Argument

1. God’s intuitive intellect represents non-discursively, and thus non-categorially (definition)
2. God’s intellectual intuition is in total/absolute/perfect agreement with its object (definition)
3. ∴ God’s non-categorial intellectual intuition constitutes an ultimate standard for truth (as agreement of a representation with its object) (1-2)
4. God’s intellect perfectly comprehends all things from their grounds (definition)

5. ∴ God truly or perfectly accurately *non*-categorially represents what is metaphysically fundamental about all things (3-4)
6. If (5) then it is possible that the intuited ways of being are not identical to those ways of being picked out by the discursive categories (assumption)
7. ∴ It is possible that the categories, even when applied correctly, do not pick out the necessarily fundamental ways of being (5, 6)
8. It cannot be possible that the categories, when correctly applied, do not pick out the necessarily fundamental ways of being (assumption)
9. Contradiction (7, 8)
10. Therefore ...

2 Hegel & Method

2.1 Does the Logic Have a Method?

- Hegel rejects any presupposition with respect to the *Logic* (SL48/21:56), but he also argues that it must have a method that is fit for its content.

I know that it is the one and only true method. This is made obvious by the very fact that this method is not something distinct from its subject matter and content – for it is the content in itself, the dialectic which it possesses within itself, which moves the subject matter forward. (SL 33/21:38)

- Forster’s characterization of the “dialectical method”:

Beginning from a category A, Hegel seeks to show that upon conceptual analysis, category A proves to contain a *contrary* category, B, and conversely that category B proves to contain category A, thus showing both categories to be self-contradictory. He then seeks to show that this negative result has a positive outcome, a new category, C (sometimes referred to as the “negative of the negative” or the “determinate negation”). This new category unites - as Hegel puts it - the preceding categories A and B. That is to say, when analyzed the new category is found to contain them both. But it unites them in such a way that they are not only preserved but also abolished (to use Hegel’s term of art for this paradoxical-sounding process,

they are *aufgehoben*). That is to say, they are preserved or contained in the new category only with their original senses modified. This modification of their senses renders them no longer self-contradictory (and not a source of self-contradiction in the new category that contains them both). That is because it renders them no longer contraries, and therefore no longer self-contradictory in virtue of their reciprocal containment. At this point, one level of the dialectic has been completed, and we pass to a new level where category C plays the role that was formerly played by category A.^{1*} And so on. Hegel understand each step of this whole process to be necessary.

2.2 Two Features of Thought

- Thought “moves”
- Thought is “dialectical” or self-contradictory