

## 5 Hegel's dialectical method

The dialectical method is pervasive in Hegel's mature philosophy. It governs all three parts of his system proper: the Logic, the Philosophy of Nature, and the Philosophy of Spirit. And it also governs the discipline that he developed as an introduction to this system, the Phenomenology of Spirit (expounded in the book of that name).

Few aspects of Hegel's thought have exerted as much influence or occasioned as much controversy as this method. Yet, paradoxically, it remains one of his least well understood philosophical contributions. The aim of this essay is to cast a little light where there remains much darkness.

It seems to me that three main shortcomings in the secondary literature have hindered a clear understanding of the method. First, most interpreters, if not actually denying that there is such a thing as the dialectical method, have at least characterized it in terms that remain too vague. Second, interpreters have generally made too little effort to explain the method's philosophical motivation. Third, many critics have been too hasty in dismissing the method as guilty of one or more of a variety of original sins that would render it useless *in principle*, such as violating the law of contradiction.

The main task of this essay will therefore be to overcome in turn each of these obstacles to understanding. Part I will attempt to give a reasonably precise characterization of the method. Part II will offer an account of its philosophical motivation. Part III will give it a qualified defense against the allegations of original sin.

Finally, in Part IV, I shall append a few notes concerning the origins of the method for those readers who may be interested in this question.

## I. THE GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE METHOD

Sometimes commentators go as far as to deny that Hegel has or aspires to a dialectical method at all. For example, Solomon writes: "Hegel *has no method* as such . . . Hegel himself argues vehemently against the very idea of a philosophical 'method.'"<sup>1</sup> To see how deeply mistaken this view must be, one need go no further than the first edition preface of the *Science of Logic*, where Hegel gives a description of what he calls his "absolute method of knowing" and says that it is only by way of this method that philosophy is able to be "an objective, demonstrated science."<sup>2</sup>

Many more interpreters characterize Hegel's method in terms that simply remain too vague. For example, according to Acton, it is "a method in which oppositions, conflicts, tensions, and refutations [are] courted rather than avoided or evaded."<sup>3</sup> And according to Popper, it is the theory that something, such as human thought, develops in accordance with the pattern "thesis, anti-thesis, synthesis."<sup>4</sup> The problem with these characterizations is not that they are false. In particular, the 'thesis, anti-thesis, synthesis' model does capture the intended general structure of the method reasonably well; Hegel does not, as Kaufmann claims, "deliberately spurn" and "deride" this model in the preface of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (or anywhere else).<sup>5</sup> The problem is just that such characterizations remain too vague to be of much help.

A first step toward eliminating this vagueness is to recognize that the dialectic of the *Logic* enjoys a certain primacy over the dialectics of the *Philosophies of Nature and Spirit* and the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Hegel understands the dialectics of the latter three disciplines to be just *the dialectic of the Logic as it appears through the media of natural phenomena, spiritual phenomena and consciousness* (respectively). For the pure thought, which is the subject matter of the *Logic*, "encompasses [everything natural and everything spiritual] and is the foundation of everything"; and the development of consciousness, "like the development of all natural and spiritual life, rests solely on the nature of the pure essentialities which constitute the content of *Logic*."<sup>6</sup> If we wish to determine the character of Hegel's dialectic, then, we will do well to focus on the form it takes in his *Logic*.

In the Logic, the dialectic is essentially a method of expounding our fundamental categories (understood in a broad sense to include not only our fundamental concepts but also our forms of judgment and forms of syllogism). It is a method of exposition in which each category in turn is shown to be implicitly self-contradictory and to develop necessarily into the next (thus forming a continuously connected hierarchical series culminating in an all-embracing category that Hegel calls the Absolute Idea).<sup>7</sup>

In order to form a more precise picture of the intended structure of the method, we must look to Hegel's general accounts of it in the *Science of Logic* and Logic of the *Encyclopaedia*. Consider, for example, the following general account from the Logic of the *Encyclopaedia*: "The logical has in point of form three sides . . . These three sides do not constitute three *parts* of the Logic, but are moments of each logical reality, that is, of each concept . . . a) Thought, as the Understanding, sticks to finite determinacies and their distinctness from one another . . . b) The dialectical moment is the self-sublation of such finite determinations and their transition into their opposites . . . c) The speculative moment, or that of positive Reason, apprehends the unity of the determinations in their opposition – the affirmative that is contained in their dissolution and transition."<sup>8</sup> (Note that Hegel affirms this pattern for *each* logical reality or concept.)

If one takes these general accounts of the method together, the following emerges as its intended general structure. 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.<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup> That is to say, when analyzed the new category is found to contain them both.<sup>11</sup> 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*).<sup>12</sup> 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).<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup> And so on. Hegel understands each step of this whole process to be necessary.<sup>15</sup>

We may illustrate this general model of the Logic's dialectic by means of the textbook example from the beginning of the Logic. Hegel starts from the category Being, and first tries to show that this contains its contrary, Nothing: "*Being, pure being, without any further determination . . . It is pure indeterminateness and emptiness. There is nothing to be intuited in it . . . Just as little is anything to be thought in it . . . Being, the indeterminate immediate, is in fact nothing, and neither more nor less than nothing.*"<sup>16</sup> Hegel then undertakes to demonstrate the converse containment of the concept of Being in that of Nothing in a similar way. Having thus reached the negative result that these two categories are self-contradictory, Hegel finally tries to show that there is a positive outcome that unites them but in a manner that avoids their self-contradictoriness, because it not only preserves them but also modifies their senses: the category Becoming. (To see what he is getting at here, one should reflect on the fact that what is simply in a state of becoming *in a sense* is or *has being* and also *in a sense* is not or *is nothing*.) Becoming then forms the starting point for a new round of the dialectic – going on to develop a self-contradiction that leads to subsumption under the category of Determinate Being (Dasein).<sup>17</sup>

Having in this manner expounded our categories as a dialectical hierarchy in the Logic, Hegel then in the *Philosophies of Nature and Spirit* attempts to interpret natural and spiritual phenomena as embodiments of this same dialectical hierarchy (essentially interpreting natural phenomena as embodiments of its lower stages and spiritual phenomena as embodiments of its higher stages).

Now, certain aspects of Hegel's method call for further explanation (some of these will be addressed later). But it should at least be clear that he intends this method to have a considerably more definite character than Acton's courting of "oppositions, conflicts, tensions and refutations" or Popper's "thesis, anti-thesis, synthesis."

## II. THE PHILOSOPHICAL FUNCTIONS OF THE METHOD

Interpreters have not made sufficiently clear the philosophical *motivation* behind the method, its philosophical *point*. It is no doubt evident that the method is supposed to capture the single underlying structure common to both our thought and the world of natural and spiritual phenomena that we think about (thereby verifying Hegel's monistic vision of reality). In addition to this descriptive function, it is designed to serve a number of more easily overlooked but equally important philosophical functions.

These further functions may be divided into three main classes: *pedagogical* functions – functions concerning the teaching of Hegel's system to a modern audience; *epistemological* functions – functions concerning the justification of his system; and *scientific* functions – functions concerning standards that his system must meet in order to have a truly scientific character. The pedagogical and epistemological functions of the method are most prominent in Hegel's introductory discipline, the Phenomenology of Spirit, where the method is applied to very general viewpoints referred to as "shapes of consciousness."<sup>18</sup> The method's scientific functions, on the other hand, are performed within the system proper: Logic, Philosophy of Nature, and Philosophy of Spirit. (Since I have discussed elsewhere the pedagogical and epistemological functions served by the method in detail, I shall explain these only briefly and dogmatically in what follows.)<sup>19</sup>

Consider first the pedagogical functions of the method. The Phenomenology of Spirit is supposed to perform "the task of leading the individual from his uneducated standpoint to knowledge."<sup>20</sup> This process has both a negative and a positive side. Negatively, it involves (1) discrediting, by demonstrating the self-contradictoriness of, viewpoints other than that of Hegel's system – hence Hegel refers to the course of his discipline as "a pathway of *doubt*, or more precisely, . . . of *despair*" for the individual educated.<sup>21</sup> Positively it involves simultaneously (2) leading the individual from his initial viewpoint by way of a series of compelling steps up to the viewpoint of the system and (3) in the meantime giving him a compelling provisional exposition of the contents of the system.

The dialectical method of the Phenomenology of Spirit is the means by which both the negative and the positive sides of this peda-

gological project are to be accomplished. The method runs through a series of non-Hegelian viewpoints or "shapes of consciousness." As it does so, it shows that each of these in turn is self-contradictory – thus realizing the negative side of the project, (1).<sup>22</sup> Moreover, it shows that each necessarily develops into the next until the series culminates in Hegel's system. And in running through them, it also generates a sort of provisional exposition of the contents of Hegel's system.<sup>23</sup> So that in these two ways it realizes parts (2) and (3) of the positive side of the pedagogical project as well.

Consider next the epistemological or justificatory functions of the method. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel strives to meet three justificatory standards on behalf of his system: (1) the standard of showing his system to be immune to the skeptical objection that equally strong contrary positions might be adopted; (2) the standard of showing that his system does not fall victim to skeptical doubts about the instantiation of its concepts, doubts about whether or not these have instances in reality; (3) the standard of showing his system to be *provable for every other viewpoint*, in the sense that it be provable to each other viewpoint, purely on the basis of that viewpoint's own views and criteria, that the system is invulnerable to the skeptical problems just mentioned and is true.

Hegel's strategies for meeting these three justificatory standards in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* again make essential use of the dialectical method. His strategy for meeting standard (1) – immunity to the skeptical problem of equally strong contrary positions – is to show that his system in fact faces no such competition from contrary positions because *these all turn out to be implicitly self-contradictory*. In order to show this, he tries to prove that all viewpoints within which other positions could be articulated, all "shapes of consciousness," are self-contradictory. The dialectical method serves two essential functions in this proof. First, it shows the *self-contradictoriness* of each shape of consciousness considered. Second and less obvious, it shows the *completeness* of the collection of shapes of consciousness thus discredited.<sup>24</sup> How does it accomplish this demonstration of completeness? In two ways. On the one hand, it shows that all the shapes of consciousness that we know about develop into one another in a continuous series that eventually forms a kind of circle, hence demonstrating that they constitute a single entire system.<sup>25</sup> That they constitute a single entire system is already a strong indica-

tion that they include not only all the shapes of consciousness we happen to know about but all there are. On the other hand, the dialectical method's demonstration that these self-contradictory shapes of consciousness develop into one another in a necessary fashion and eventually culminate in Hegel's self-consistent system provides Hegel with a key for the interpretation of the whole course of human history. For the dialectical sequence turns out to be the same as the historical sequence – spanning the whole course of human history up to the present – in which the various shapes of consciousness and, eventually, Hegel's system have appeared. Hence Hegel is able to interpret human history as a teleological process aimed at unfolding, in order, this very dialectical sequence of shapes of consciousness with the purpose of escaping earlier self-contradictions and eventually reaching the self-consistent position of his own system. And that human history admits of this interpretation provides further proof that the collection of shapes of consciousness considered by the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is complete. For it is thereby seen that this collection of shapes constitutes not only an entire system but also an entire system the genesis of which has been the very purpose of human history. And this lends strong support to the view that this is the *one and only* system of these items – that there are unlikely to be further systems of them or additional ones lacking systematic connections.

In order to meet standard (2) – the standard of defending his system against skeptical doubts concerning the instantiation of its concepts – Hegel seeks to demonstrate the impropriety of an assumption that underpins any such skepticism, namely the assumption that the relevant concepts could exist without there being anything in reality to instantiate them. His way of doing this is to prove that all viewpoints that regard a concept as distinct from its object or instance are self-contradictory. These viewpoints are once again the “shapes of consciousness” treated in the work. Hence, this proof coincides with that used in order to meet epistemological standard (1), and the dialectical method plays the same essential roles here as there.

In order to meet standard (3) – proving the invulnerability to skepticism and the truth of his system for each other viewpoint in the light of that viewpoint's own views and criteria – Hegel does two things. First, he constructs the dialectical response to skepticism

(sketched above) in such a way that this response is compelling for each non-Hegelian viewpoint in the light of its own resources. This dialectical response to skepticism thus takes the form of a "ladder," as Hegel calls it, on which each viewpoint finds a rung corresponding to itself, starting from which it can be compelled, simply by having its existing commitments pointed out to it, to develop the dialectical response to skepticism sketched above in its entirety. Second, he constructs this dialectical "ladder" in such a way that, having run through and discredited all non-Hegelian viewpoints, it eventually reaches the stable, self-consistent viewpoint of the Hegelian system. Hence each viewpoint can, by climbing onto the ladder and seeing where its own commitments lead, come to recognize its own (and indeed every viewpoint's) implicit commitment to the truth of Hegel's system. Clearly, the dialectical method is fundamental to this whole strategy for meeting epistemological standard (3).

Finally, we should consider the scientific functions of the dialectical method, the functions through which it is supposed to give Hegel's system a truly scientific character (as we saw earlier, Hegel says that through this method alone philosophy is able to be "an objective, demonstrated science"). In Hegel's view, a philosophy, if it is to be truly scientific, must meet, in addition to the sorts of standards of justification described above, several further demanding standards. (1) It must have a genuine method: In a letter from 1810, Hegel rejects unmethodical philosophizing, says that philosophy must become an "ordered structure (regelmaessiges Gebaeude)" like geometry, and proclaims that his task is "to invent the scientific form or to work on its development."<sup>26</sup> (2) It must constitute an entire system: "Without a system, philosophizing cannot be something scientific."<sup>27</sup> (3) Its account must demonstrably cover everything, for, "The true is the whole"; "The true . . . exists only . . . as *totality*."<sup>28</sup> (4) It must in a certain sense demonstrate the necessity of everything: "Reason demands its . . . satisfaction with respect to form; this form is necessity in general" and is undermined if certain facts are left "external and accidental to each other."<sup>29</sup> (5) It must give to the subject matter of the existing empirical sciences – understood in a broad sense, including both the sciences of nature and those of man – "an *a priori* character".<sup>30</sup>

The dialectical method is essential to Hegel's satisfaction of all five of these scientific standards in his philosophical system. Obvi-

ously, since it is the method of his philosophy, it is essential to his satisfaction of standard (1), the standard requiring that philosophy be methodical.

The dialectical method is also essential to Hegel's satisfaction of scientific standard (2) – entire systematicity. For that his philosophy is a genuine *system* is established by the fact that the dialectical method shows its parts to form a connected series – “The method itself expands itself . . . into a *system*.”<sup>31</sup> And that it is an *entire* system is shown by the fact that this dialectical series has a circular structure.<sup>32</sup>

The dialectical method is also essential in several ways to Hegel's satisfaction of scientific standard (3) – giving an account that demonstrably covers everything. This standard proves to be less outrageously demanding than it might sound at first hearing. It turns out that Hegel will be satisfied if certain aspects of reality are accounted for only in the modest sense that it is shown necessary that there be aspects of reality, such as these, that *cannot really be further accounted for* – what he describes as a sphere of mere *existence* (*Existenz*) as opposed to *actuality* (*Wirklichkeit*).<sup>33</sup> Hence the challenge is to have his philosophy demonstrably cover the merely existent in this modest way and also, in a more full-blooded way, everything actual. The demonstrable modest coverage of the merely existent is a relatively straightforward matter: the general category of Existence is dialectically deduced in the Logic. The demonstrable full-blooded coverage of everything actual is a bit more complicated. First, Hegel seeks to derive all known actuality – whether actual categories or actual natural or spiritual phenomena – by means of his philosophy's dialectic. Second, he again uses a strategy that we encountered earlier in a different context in order to show that he has thereby in fact covered not only all *known* actuality but *all* actuality: he attempts to show that his philosophy's dialectical course, in addition to covering all known actuality, forms an *entire system*. The essential roles that the dialectical method played in satisfying scientific standard (2) – entire systematicity – are hence also roles that it must play in order for Hegel to meet scientific standard (3), demonstrable coverage of everything.

The dialectical method is also essential to Hegel's satisfaction of scientific standard (4) – showing that everything is necessary. As Bergmann points out, the necessity Hegel has in mind here is *teleo-*

*logical* necessity, necessity for a purpose.<sup>34</sup> More precisely, he has in mind the model of teleological explanation developed by Kant for organic life in the *Critique of Judgment*: an organism is understood as the sum of its parts, and the parts are explained in terms of the contribution they make to the whole organism as their end, so that each part is viewed as reciprocally both end and means.<sup>35</sup> One sees this, for example, from the fact that immediately after pointing out that "Reason demands . . . necessity in general," Hegel goes on to give as grounds for empirical science's inadequacy to this demand the circumstances that "the universal contained in it is . . . not in itself connected with the particular, but both are external and accidental to one another, and likewise the collected particularities are in themselves external and accidental to each other."<sup>36</sup> In order to give a demonstration that everything has the relevant sort of necessity, then, Hegel will seek to show that each thing is interconnected and interdependent with each other thing, so that each thing can be seen as contributing to a whole that they collectively constitute as its end; he will seek to demonstrate an "essential or necessary connection [of facts]."<sup>37</sup> The dialectical method is supposed to achieve this: "The dialectical principle . . . is the principle which alone gives immanent connection and necessity to the body of science."<sup>38</sup> If we bear in mind the distinction between *actuality* and mere *existence*, Hegel's strategy is, more precisely, as follows. He will seek to demonstrate necessity in a full-blooded sense for each aspect of actuality, showing it to be interconnected and interdependent with every other aspect of actuality, by deriving it from the others, and vice versa, in the course of a circular dialectic. At the same time, he will seek to demonstrate the necessity of the merely existent in an appropriately more-modest sense by showing that the general category of Existence participates in the same system of dialectical interconnection and interdependence.

Finally, the dialectical method is essential to Hegel's accomplishment of scientific standard {5}: giving the subject-matter of the existing empirical sciences an *a priori* character. It turns out, once again, that this standard is less implausibly ambitious than one might suppose at first hearing. First, it demands *a priori* explanation only of what is *actual* in the empirical sciences, not of what is merely *existent*; it does not require *a priori* explanation of such states of affairs as, for example, that there are so and so many varieties of

orchids.<sup>39</sup> Second, the *a priori* explanation required even for actual features of nature, human society, history, etc., is not envisaged as a knowledge of them wholly independent of experience. Rather, it is envisaged as an explanation of these features *once they are empirically known* in terms of something that can be known independent of experience, namely the structure of the Absolute Idea expounded in Hegel's Logic. The Logic provides us with knowledge of a dialectically ascending series of categories culminating in the Absolute Idea, which embraces the whole series, and it provides us with this knowledge independent of experience. We, then, in the *Philosophies of Nature and Spirit*, use this *a priori* principle to interpret and explain the empirically known contents of the empirical sciences (interpreting natural phenomena as embodiments of the lower steps of the logical hierarchy and spiritual phenomena as embodiments of its higher steps).<sup>40</sup> As Hegel puts it:

If . . . we consider Logic to be the system of the pure types of thought, we find that the other philosophical sciences, the Philosophy of Nature and the Philosophy of Spirit, take the place, as it were, of an Applied Logic, and that Logic is the soul which animates them both. Their problem in that case is only to recognize the logical forms under the shapes they assume in Nature and Spirit – shapes which are only a particular mode of expression for the forms of pure thought.<sup>41</sup>

Clearly, the dialectical method is fundamental to Hegel's attempt to confer an *a priori* character on the empirical sciences in this way.

These, then, are the main functions that the dialectical method is supposed to serve in Hegel's philosophy, in addition to the descriptive function of capturing what he believes to be the single underlying structure common to both our thought and the world of natural and spiritual phenomena (which we think about, and thereby verify his monistic vision of reality). It should now be clear that, far from being short of philosophical motivation, as most of the secondary literature would lead one to suspect, the method has a very complex and rather sophisticated philosophical point.

If one is looking for a general way of thinking about the method, I suggest that one should understand it as the core of a grand hypothesis – concerning the structure of our shapes of consciousness, our categories, and natural and spiritual phenomena – whose fascination for Hegel lies in the fact that, if true, it promises a sweep-

ing solution to a host of pressing philosophical challenges. These include not only the challenge of giving a monistic description of the world but also the challenge of meeting the sorts of pedagogical, epistemological, and scientific demands described above.

### III. THE METHOD'S ALLEGED ORIGINAL SINS

Many interpreters of the dialectical method have suggested that it suffers from one or more of a variety of original sins that render it useless *in principle*. In this part of the paper I will offer a qualified defense of the method against the most important of these criticisms.

One common charge, leveled by Popper, is that the method involves Hegel in the affirmation of contradictions.<sup>42</sup> This is by no means a foolish objection. We have seen that Hegel regards the dialectical, self-contradictory categories of the *Logic* as constituting the underlying essence of all natural and spiritual phenomena. In consequence of this view, he not infrequently makes alarming statements such as "Everything is inherently contradictory."<sup>43</sup>

The most obvious and familiar strategies for defending Hegel against this objection do not work. Many commentators suggest that when Hegel talks about contradictions and self-contradictions, he really means something more innocuous. For example, he means the kind of vacillation in judgment that flows from a *vagueness* in our concepts.<sup>44</sup> Or he means the application of logically incompatible predicates *at different times*. Or he means "opposed tendencies."<sup>45</sup> Or he means a failure of something to realize its *telos*.<sup>46</sup> Each of these suggestions corresponds to *something* in the texts.<sup>47</sup> Yet it is clear that they do not get to the bottom of Hegel's conception of his contradictions. Certain of these suggestions quickly succumb to specific problems. For example, Hegel's complaint with the categories dealt with in the *Logic* is not, in general, that they are vague; on the contrary, the Understanding, from which they come, is conceived by him as a faculty of sharp distinctions.<sup>48</sup> And Hegel pointedly rejects the suggestion that the incompatible predicates involved in his contradictions concern different times.<sup>49</sup> More important, general problems of the following sort rule out *any* such extenuating interpretation. If Hegel does not mean *contradictions* when he uses the word, but something more innocuous, then why are so many of his specific examples of contradictions – especially in the fundamental *Logic* –

clearly meant to be just that? Why does he repeatedly present himself as taking issue with the logical law of contradiction?<sup>50</sup> Why does he place his dialectic in the tradition of Socrates, Plato's *Parmenides*, and Kant's Antinomies, that is, a tradition concerned with contradiction in the usual sense?<sup>51</sup> How could he expect his method to do justice to the negative side of the pedagogical and epistemological projects that were explained in Part II (and which – see Part IV – were predominant among his earliest motives for developing the method)? And so forth.

Another superficially attractive strategy of defense runs as follows: There are two quite different ways in which one might be said to “affirm contradictions,” one objectionable, the other perfectly respectable. It is objectionable to affirm (self-)contradictory propositions about reality, but quite respectable to affirm that certain propositions or concepts are self-contradictory. Since Hegel is talking about *categories* or concepts in his *Logic*, he is only affirming contradictions in the latter, respectable way. And when he tells us that “everything is inherently contradictory,” it is his colorful way of saying that our usual conception of reality is self-contradictory through and through.

This strategy of defense does not work for the following reasons. First, Hegel makes it quite clear that he would reject such an interpretation of his dialectic when he criticizes Kant for showing in his treatment of the Antinomies “an excess of tenderness for the things of the world” by locating the contradictions of the Antinomies in thought rather than in the world.<sup>52</sup> And second, it is fundamental to Hegel's conception of what he is doing in the *Logic* that its categories are *not distinct* from the reality they represent; they are thus quite unlike the sort of concept that Hegel's would-be defender has in mind.

A further, and complementary, strategy of defense, suggested by Oakeshott, for example, claims that for Hegel, self-contradiction is merely an “element . . . inherent in all abstraction,” not something that afflicts his own all-embracing viewpoint.<sup>53</sup> There is a grain of truth in this interpretation, but not a sufficiently large grain to solve the problem. The grain of truth is that the all-embracing viewpoint in which the *Logic* culminates – the Absolute Idea – does not, like the partial categories that lead up to it, succumb to any *new* contradiction. (Hence Hegel denies that in moving beyond

it to Being or Nature, we make a genuine transition of the kind that occurred earlier in the Logic.)<sup>54</sup> The snag, however, is that the Absolute Idea just *is* all these partial categories and their development through self-contradiction (together with the stable recognition of them *as* itself).<sup>55</sup> Hence Hegel speaks of "the absolute dialectic which is its nature."<sup>56</sup> And since it thus essentially includes within itself (as well as supersedes) the self-contradictions of the partial categories, it seems that if those self-contradictions were objectionable in themselves, then the Absolute Idea must be objectionable as well.

If we are to defend Hegel against the charge of endorsing contradictions, then, we must look elsewhere. A first and reassuring point to note is that it would be very surprising if Hegel were himself deliberately endorsing contradictions, given that his epistemological strategies, as explained in Part II, rested so squarely on an assumption of the *unacceptability* of doing so. Because all non-Hegelian viewpoints proved to be self-contradictory, they did not constitute genuine alternatives to Hegel's system; because all viewpoints that distinguished a concept from its object proved to be self-contradictory, a skepticism that assumed such a distinction in the case of Hegel's concepts was unacceptable.

Hegel's true situation is, I think, as follows. On the one hand, he recognizes with the rest of us that it is unacceptable to make contradictory claims about reality (hence his epistemological strategies). On the other hand, his own philosophical viewpoint is inextricably involved in affirming contradictions, *but it does not affirm them of reality and so does not fall foul of his and our proscription of this*. His viewpoint avoids affirming contradictions of reality because it does not use or recognize the validity of the concept of reality. It renounces the distinction between reality and thought (being and thought, object and thought, object and subject, object and concept, etc.). And consequently, in Hegel's view, it renounces these concepts themselves, since the distinction is, in his view, an essential part of their very definition. Thus he writes that "Pure science presupposes liberation from the opposition of consciousness. It contains *thought insofar as this is just as much the object in its own self, or the object in its own self insofar as it is equally pure thought*."<sup>57</sup> However, strictly, "to talk of the *unity* of subject and object, . . . of being and thought, etc. is inept, since object and subject, etc. signify what they

are *outside* of their unity."<sup>58</sup> Hegel's philosophical viewpoint thus officially makes no claims whatsoever about reality, and *a fortiori* no contradictory claims about it.

Of what, then, if not of reality, *does* Hegel wish to affirm contradictions? As we noted earlier, he does not merely wish to affirm them of thoughts or concepts (the preceding paragraph indicates one reason why not). Rather, he wishes to affirm them of whatever is left once the essentially oppositional concepts of reality or object, on the one hand, and thought or concept, on the other, have been overcome and synthesized. Hegel variously calls this Reason, the Logos, the Absolute Idea, the Concept, Absolute Spirit. It may not be entirely clear what this position amounts to positively. But it is clear, first, that Hegel intends it to be neither the (evidently objectionable) activity of affirming contradictions of reality nor the (evidently unobjectionable) activity of affirming them of thoughts or concepts. And it is also clear, second, that he understands it to be *more* like the latter (evidently unobjectionable) activity than the former (evidently objectionable) one. For, as one would already anticipate from the names he gives it – Reason, Absolute Idea, Concept, etc. – Hegel understands the outcome of his synthesis of the concepts of reality or object, on the one hand, and thought or concept, on the other, to be more like the latter than the former.<sup>59</sup>

Of course, it is possible that Hegel is simply *deluded* in thinking that he possesses a genuine concept of something that is neither reality nor thought but somehow a synthesis of the two, of which to make his dialectical affirmations. Perhaps he has no genuine concept at all here, or perhaps he is lapsing unwittingly into the use of one or both of the supposedly superseded concepts (in a manner involving him in various kinds of incoherence). Doubts of this kind concerning the intelligibility of the position that Hegel wishes to occupy arise repeatedly in connection with his philosophy.<sup>60</sup> They are both pertinent and pressing. Nonetheless, I would point out, first, that this is a different sort of worry from the charge that Hegel endorses contradictions in his dialectical method. And second, it is unclear whether this new worry will prove to be well founded, not primarily because of any unclarity about the nature of Hegel's texts, but because of deep unclarity in our own criteria for distinguishing sense from nonsense and sameness of sense from difference of sense in hard cases. (Perhaps not the least of the benefits to be drawn from

reading Hegel is that he forces us to address this sort of unclarity in our own semantical concepts.)

Another alleged original sin of the dialectical method concerns its purportedly necessary derivation of a new category, the "negative of the negative," from the demonstrated self-contradictoriness of two preceding contrary categories: in our earlier example, the purportedly necessary derivation of Becoming from the demonstrated self-contradictoriness of Being and Nothing. As Inwood points out, it is particularly difficult to make sense of this aspect of the method; and many of Hegel's critics have denied that one can.<sup>61</sup>

The problem here lies not so much in Hegel's idea that, having discovered two contrary categories to be mutually implying and therefore self-contradictory, one might find some new category that eliminated the self-contradiction by unifying them in a manner that in a sense preserved while in a sense abolishing them (we were able to interpret this idea in a reasonably unmysterious way in Part I). The problem lies rather in the suggestion that the transition to this new category might be a *necessary* one.

Some commentators, for example, Findlay and Fulda, take this claim of necessity rather lightly, suggesting that the transitions in question could in fact have followed a variety of routes, but that this does no great harm to Hegel's overall project.<sup>62</sup> This position seems to me untenable, in view of the functions described in Part II that the dialectical method was designed to serve. Dispensing with the claim of necessity would, for example, wholly undermine the method's ability to demonstrate entire systematicity and thence completeness (whether within the *Phenomenology of Spirit* or within Hegel's system proper) and also its ability to demonstrate the kind of interconnection and interdependence in the subject matter of the system proper needed to ground a claim that this subject matter is teleologically necessary. We can only jettison Hegel's claim of the necessity of the transition to the "negative of the negative" at the cost of abandoning a very large part of his philosophical project.

I want to suggest that, in fact, reasonably good sense can be made, at least at a general level, of the idea that these transitions are necessary, as long as we take care to determine the kind of "necessity" that Hegel is interested in.

A first point to be made is the following. If one considers the nature of the necessity governing the transitions between the initial

contrary categories (in our example, Being and Nothing), it seems that this is supposed to be basically the necessity of analytic implication – the kind of necessity that allows one to infer “Unmarried” from “Bachelor” (or “X is unmarried” from “X is a bachelor”).<sup>63</sup> To be more exact, Hegel’s idea is that the first category that the dialectic treats (in our example, Being) analytically implies one, and only one, contrary category (in our example, Nothing), and that this contrary category in turn analytically implies it and only it. Hegel hardly ever suggests that the necessity governing the subsequent transition to the “negative of the negative” (in our example, Becoming) is precisely the same kind of necessity.<sup>64</sup> Rather, he sometimes seems at pains to distinguish it by suggesting that whereas the transitions between the initial contrary categories are “analytic,” the subsequent transition to the “negative of the negative” is “synthetic.”<sup>65</sup> This fact, together with the intrinsic implausibility of understanding the necessity of the transition to the “negative of the negative” to be the necessity of analytic implication (or still worse, logical implication), rules this out as Hegel’s considered position.

What sort of “necessity” *does* Hegel have in mind here? The first clue lies in the fact that many of the passages in which he discusses the transitions in question tend to suggest that his conception of them and their necessity simply *reduces to* the idea that the “negative of the negative” stands in that relation to the initial contrary categories which we have already explained: the relation of eliminating their self-contradictoriness by unifying them in a way which in a sense preserves while in a sense abolishes them. Thus he sometimes seems to imply that these transitions *consist in* the unification of the two preceding contrary categories: “The speculative moment, or that of positive Reason, apprehends the unity of the determinations in their opposition.”<sup>66</sup> And he sometimes states that the necessity of these transitions *consists in* the drive to escape the self-contradictoriness of the two preceding categories: “The *drive* to find a stable meaning in Being or in both [Being and Nothing] is this *necessity* itself, which leads Being and Nothing to develop and gives them a true . . . meaning.”<sup>67</sup>

A provisional account of the necessity of these transitions might, then, be the following: Hegel thinks that for each pair of mutually implying contrary categories, there will be one and only one new category that can be said to unify them in a way that in a sense

preserves while in a sense abolishes them, thereby avoiding their self-contradictoriness. In application to the transition from Being and Nothing to Becoming, for example, the thought would be as follows: Unlike other categories that we might consider, such as Substance, the category of Becoming can be said to preserve in a way the categories of Being and Nothing while simultaneously modifying their senses and to this extent abolishing them – what is simply becoming *in a sense* has *being*, while *in a sense* it is nevertheless *nothing* – and it can be said thereby to render these two categories no longer contraries and hence no longer afflicted with their original self-contradictoriness. Now the necessity of the transition from Being and Nothing to Becoming just *consists in* the fact that Becoming is the only known category that can be characterized in this way.

This provisional explanation of the idea of the necessity of the transition to the “negative of the negative” requires modification, however. One reason is that Hegel in fact believes that there will generally be *more* than one known new category that stands in this relation to a given pair of mutually implying contrary categories. For example, he points out that in the case of the pair Being and Nothing, not only the category of Becoming but also that of Beginning stands in this relation to them: “Another . . . example is Beginning. In its beginning, the thing is not yet, but it is more than merely nothing, for its being is already in the beginning.”<sup>68</sup> Again, one sees from his characterization of Determinate Being as “Being with negation” that he understands it too to stand in this relation to Being and Nothing.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, Hegel’s official view seems to be that *every* higher category in the Logic stands in this relation to *every* lower pair of contraries, for he envisages the categories of the Logic becoming richer in a cumulative fashion as they develop out of each other.<sup>70</sup>

A clue to how we should modify the definition of the necessity of the transition to the “negative of the negative” in order to avoid this difficulty may be found in the ground Hegel gives for preferring Becoming over Beginning as the “negative of the negative” of Being and Nothing: “Beginning is itself a case of Becoming, but it already expresses the idea of further advance.”<sup>71</sup> This strongly suggests that Hegel has in mind *greater proximity in conceptual content* to the two contrary categories being unified as his criterion for identifying one potential unifying category as the “negative of the negative” in prefer-

ence to another. A more satisfactory definition of the necessity of the transition to the “negative of the negative” would, then, be that it consists in this category’s unifying a given pair of mutually implying contrary categories by, in a sense, preserving while, in a sense, abolishing them, thereby eliminating their self-contradictoriness, *and being the one known category that does so while remaining closest to them in conceptual content*.<sup>72</sup>

There may still seem to be a problem with this account as it stands. If the maximal proximity in conceptual content in question is only maximal proximity relative to all *known* categories, then this appears to leave the necessity of the transition disturbingly weak and provisional: at any time, a previously unknown category might be found or invented whose conceptual content was closer, and then *this* would become the necessary “negative or the negative.” And this threatens to undermine the method’s ability to perform several of the functions it was designed to serve, which were indicated in Part II. If, on the other hand, we try to avoid this weakness by reinterpreting the maximal proximity in conceptual content in question not as maximal proximity relative to all *known* categories, but as maximal proximity *simpliciter*, then it becomes unclear if this condition is genuinely meaningful and, even if it were, how one could ever tell that it obtained.<sup>73</sup>

It seems to me that Hegel in fact has a way of sailing between this particular Scylla and Charybdis, although he nowhere explicitly makes the point. The necessity of the transition to the “negative of the negative” that we have defined must indeed be weak and provisional as long as particular transitions are considered *in isolation*. Hegel believes, however, that these transition will eventually produce a *system* comprising all known categories, and it is not at all clear that, when viewed in the light of such a system, the necessity in question must *remain* weak and provisional. Once a system has been exhibited through a necessity as yet weak and provisional, the hypothesis that some new category might come along and dislodge a given “negative of the negative” could come to look very implausible indeed. The realization of such an hypothesis would require the present “negative of the negative” either to be evicted from the system altogether or to be reintegrated into the system at some later stage, in which case it would have to perform the function of unifying some *new* pair of preceding contrary categories with minimal

addition of conceptual content. And it would also require either that the new "negative of the negative" break up the existing system or that it be such that it mutually implies a contrary and finds a free category within the system that unifies itself and its contrary with minimal addition of conceptual content (or, if a sequence of new categories were added, that each stand in this relation to another and that the last of them finds a free category within the system to which it stands in this relation). If one had a system comprising all known categories exhibited before one, these possibilities might all look very remote indeed.<sup>74</sup>

I may now adduce one last, important ground for thinking that our definition faithfully reflects Hegel's considered conception of the necessity of the transition to the "negative of the negative." The necessity of our definition seems to be all the necessity Hegel requires in this transition in order for his dialectical method to accomplish the philosophical functions it was designed to serve – the functions outlined in Part II. (I shall leave it to the reader to verify this by reviewing those functions.)

It does seem possible, then, to make reasonably good sense, at least at a general level, of Hegel's idea of a necessary transition to the "negative of the negative," as long as one takes care to determine the kind of "necessity" he is interested in.

A third alleged original sin of the method concerns its negative side, its demonstration of the self-contradictoriness of our fundamental categories. Readers frequently find the whole idea that our thought is entangled in fundamental self-contradictions quite implausible, and consequently this aspect of the method tends to be regarded as another original sin. Findlay, for example, suggests the criticism of Hegel that "It seems hard . . . to believe that contradictions infect our most ordinary notions and categories."<sup>75</sup>

Hegel sees the negative side of his method as placing him within a long tradition of philosophers who have sought to show that thought was in fundamental ways self-contradictory. In this connection he mentions the Eleatics, Socrates, Plato (particularly his *Parmenides*), and Kant (the Antinomies).<sup>76</sup> Hegel is right to emphasize the continuity between the negative side of his own dialectic and this long tradition in philosophy. And the negative side of this method is, I think, best appreciated by keeping in mind that it is representative of this tradition.

A first point to be made in response to those who see the negative side of Hegel's method as a source of weakness in principle is that philosophers in this tradition arguably *have* succeeded in uncovering fundamental self-contradictions in thought. Consider Parmenides, for example, whose argument for the incoherence of the notion of not-being is of special interest to us because it provided the inspiration for Hegel's own argument in the *Logic* for the incoherence of the category Nothing.

Parmenides expressed the paradox of not-being in the pithy argument: "What is there to be said and thought must needs be: for it is there for being, but nothing is not."<sup>77</sup> Interpretation of this is of course a difficult and much-disputed matter, but the idea seems to be somewhat as follows: "Saying" and "thinking" are, like "seeing" and "beating" but unlike "sleeping" and "walking," essentially relational activities; they are essentially performed *on something*. There can no more be an act of saying or thinking that is not an act of saying or thinking *something* than there can be an act of seeing or beating that is not an act of seeing or beating *something*. Now when we speak or think of existent objects, or existent conditions of objects, and say or think that they exist, this seems unproblematic: we speak or think of *the object* or *the condition of the object*; this is the *relatum*. But what if we say or think (i) that an object or condition of an object exists when in fact it does not or (ii) that an object or condition of an object does not exist? In case (i), it looks as though there is no *relatum*, and hence after all no speaking or thinking either. In case (ii), it seems that if (per impossibile, as it turns out) the speaking or thinking were true, then again it would lack a *relatum* and so again not really be a speaking or thinking after all; at best it could be a speaking or thinking only if it were false. To claim that somebody says or thinks that some object or condition of an object exists when it does not, or that somebody truly says or thinks that some object or condition of an object does not exist is hence implicitly self-contradictory. To say or think that some object or condition of an object does not exist is to commit a sort of pragmatic self-contradiction.

There is perhaps an inclination to respond that the solution to this paradox is obvious: *thoughts* constitute the missing *relata* in each case. The problem with this suggestion is that, arguably, it does not provide the kind of genuine *relata* to whose existence Parmenides'

contemporaries actually committed themselves when they ascribed meaningful speech or thought to people. Indeed, if one had offered this solution to them, they would probably have regarded it as no more than a bit of linguistic sophistry. To be sure, one can speak of "thinking a thought," but – even more commonly in our Greek than in your English – one can also speak of, for example, "fighting a fight"; it looks as though the thought, like the fight, is merely a cognate accusative, not a genuine *relatum*.<sup>78</sup> If a skeptical Ariadne had questioned whether there had really been anything in the labyrinth for Theseus to fight and whether, therefore, he had really fought, his response that, notwithstanding the absence of animate opponents, he had been able to fight a fight would not have impressed her. Why should we be any more impressed with the suggestion that thinkers, lacking *relata* of other kinds, may yet think thoughts?

Of course, there is a way of *avoiding* this paradox, namely by adding to one's ontology a domain of concepts and propositions to serve as *relata* in the problematic (and also the unproblematic) cases, and using terms like "say" and "think" in a way that implies no more than that there be *relata* of these kinds. But this is a solution which the best philosophical minds of Greece needed three generations to achieve (the Stoics were perhaps the first to approach such a position with the inclusion in their ontology of fictional "some-things" and incorporeal *lekta*).<sup>79</sup> Until then, men arguably were guilty of just the fundamental self-contradictions and pragmatic self-contradictions to which Parmenides drew their attention.

A second point to be made is that how one evaluates the idea common to Hegel and the dialectical tradition that our thought is in fundamental ways self-contradictory will depend very much on one's *semantical* intuitions and assumptions, one's intuitions and assumptions concerning *meaning*. Hegel and this tradition tend to semantical intuitions and assumptions that diverge from those typical of modern philosophers in two respects: (a) they tend to treat the boundary between what we now know as analytic and synthetic statements as though it included a good deal more on the analytic side than the modern philosopher would locate there, and (b) they tend to have stricter standards than the modern philosopher for saying of someone that he used a word or expression in more than one sense.<sup>80</sup>

These semantical intuitions and assumptions translate directly into a readiness to perceive widespread self-contradiction in thought, as follows. To determine that a proposition or concept is self-contradictory, one must show that its analytic implications contain a logical inconsistency; the larger the sphere of analytic implications one recognizes, the easier this will be to accomplish; and so if one adopts attitude (a) one will be more inclined to detect self-contradiction in people's thoughts. Moreover, the most common and effective technique for exculpating someone from a charge of self-contradiction is to impute to him a distinction between different senses of a key word or expression on two or more occasions of its use (or between the senses of two or more key words or expressions which at first sight appear to be synonyms); but the stricter one's standards for imputing distinct senses to someone, the less likely one will be to accept such an exculpation; and so if one adopts attitude (b) one will be more inclined to believe that people really are guilty of self-contradiction in their thoughts.

Let me illustrate Hegel's adoption of attitudes (a) and (b) in his dialectic. Consider first attitude (a), the expansion of the class of the analytic at the expense of the synthetic. Hegel adopts this attitude in one of his earliest dialectical arguments, where he tries to demonstrate the self-contradictoriness of the concepts of attraction and repulsion. His demonstration rests on the assumption that Newton's third law of motion, the law that to every action there is an equal and opposite reaction, is internal to the meaning of these concepts. He writes:

If the increased density or specific weight of a body is explained as an increase in the force of attraction, the same phenomenon can be explained with equal ease as an increase in the force of repulsion, for *there can only be as much attraction as there is repulsion . . . the one has meaning only with reference to the other. To the extent to which one were greater than the other, to that same extent it would not exist at all.*<sup>81</sup>

Consider next attitude (b), the adoption of strict standards for saying that someone used a word or expression in more than one sense. Hegel adopts this attitude in defending the genuineness of a self-contradiction when he criticizes Kant's solution to the (Dynamical) Antinomies. In his solution to the Third Antinomy, Kant, assuming the truth of incompatibilism, purports to show that the contradic-

tion between our commitment to universal causation and our commitment to human freedom is illusory because, while universal causation may be and indeed is true of *appearances*, this yet leaves room for spontaneity in the sphere of *things in themselves*. Hegel rejects this solution to the Antinomy, in part on the ground that allowing us the truth of our belief in universal causation only in the sphere of *appearances* is like "attributing to someone a correct perception, with the rider that nevertheless he is incapable of perceiving what is true but only what is false."<sup>82</sup> One might put the point this way: Our belief in universal causation was simply a belief in *universal causation*, not a belief in universal causation *within the restricted sphere of appearances* or *within some subsphere of reality*. Allowing the truth of the latter claims, or showing their compatibility with our belief in human freedom, is therefore not at all the same as allowing the truth or our original belief in universal causation or showing this original belief compatible with our belief in human freedom. Kant has found a way of enabling us to *avoid* holding our original contradictory beliefs while continuing to talk much as before – namely, by distinguishing two different senses that we can assign to a claim that causation is universal, one of which is consistent with a belief in spontaneity. But he has not shown that the contradictoriness of our original beliefs was *illusory*, as he seems to think. For we originally did *not* assign both of these senses to the claim, and did not embrace the sense consistent with a belief in spontaneity.

These observations are intended to suggest that we should take more seriously than we may initially be inclined to the view shared by Hegel and the rest of the dialectical tradition that thought is in fundamental ways self-contradictory. For once we recognize the bearing of semantical intuitions and assumptions on the plausibility of this tradition, we should be prompted to ask questions like the following. Might it not be that semantical intuitions and assumptions of the type expressed in attitudes (a) and (b), which make the imputation of self-contradictions plausible, are – in some version, at least – philosophically defensible against the contrary semantical intuitions and assumptions typical of the modern philosopher? Might it not turn out that our ready hostility toward the dialectical tradition rests on the shaky foundation of semantical intuitions and assumptions which, even if today widespread and deeply engrained, are ultimately idiosyncratic and questionable? These difficult issues

cannot be pursued here. But the very fact that they arise and *are* difficult should, I suggest, make us hesitate before dismissing the position shared by Hegel and the rest of the dialectical tradition.

It seems, then, that Hegel's method can be defended against at least the most-common forms of the objection that it is guilty of original sins that render it useless *in principle*. This defense must now be qualified with some more-critical observations concerning Hegel's application of the method *in practice*.

Even if it is wrong to dismiss the negative side of the method as flawed in principle, it may yet be right to say that it is flawed in practice; Hegel may fail to identify particular self-contradictions in our thought. Addressing this question properly would, of course, require a detailed treatment of the Logic. But my strong inclination is to think that Hegel is indeed less successful here than some of the earlier representatives of the dialectical tradition. And I would like to give one instructive example of this.

It was suggested earlier that a case could be made for seeing Parmenides's argument for the incoherence of the notion of not-being as a successful exposure of deep self-contradictions in the thought of his contemporaries. As I mentioned, Hegel, in his argument for the incoherence of the category Nothing in the Logic, attempts to revive a form of the Parmenidean paradox. This is perhaps clearest from the formulation of the argument in the 1808/1809 Logic: "[Being] is . . . the same thing as Nothing, which in thought is likewise and thus has the same being as Being itself."<sup>83</sup> Now, the problem with this is that by the time Hegel's era has arrived, an ontology of concepts and propositions (or judgments) has been established and a corresponding adjustment in the kind of *relata* implied when terms like "say" and "think" are used has taken place (especially, thought not exclusively, among philosophers), so that Hegel's contemporaries are no longer generally vulnerable to the paradox. Far from falling victim to Hegel's paradox, they are in a position readily to diagnose the error of raising it against them: In order for someone to think of Nothing there must *be* a *concept* of Nothing, to be sure, this is the *relatum* which thought requires in order to take place; but that does not commit us to the paradoxical admission that Nothing *itself exists*. Hegel often points out the futility of attempting to revive superseded forms of social life; it is equally futile to attempt to revive superseded paradoxes.

There is a great irony in the fact that Hegel should have rendered himself vulnerable to this particular criticism, an irony that enables us to make another point in his favor. The irony is that the history of the Parmenidean paradox that I have been suggesting as a ground for criticizing Hegel's treatment of the category Nothing is, after all, only Hegel's own general account of the historical development of thought writ small. For of course Hegel himself – particularly in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* – is the great exponent of the idea that the history of thought is a process in which genuine self-contradictions arise and act as motors driving us to escape them by enriching our conceptual resources in ways that then enable us to avoid them. If my comments have done anything to call into question Hegel's paradox of Nothing, then, this is only by simultaneously providing some evidence to support his general picture of the historical development of thought.

One can generalize the above criticism of Hegel's treatment of the category Nothing and the negative side of his dialectical method: however defensible the method as a whole may be in principle, Hegel's applications of it in practice tend to be unconvincing, for two distinguishable sorts of reasons. First, Hegel, over large stretches of his texts, deviates from the intended general structure of the method in more or less extreme ways. In the *Logic*, for example, we find some slippage in the second round of the dialectic, the transition from Becoming to Determinate Being, where, instead of showing Becoming and a contrary category to be mutually implying and then showing them to be unified in Determinate Being, Hegel tries to find a contradiction between two component concepts contained in the category Becoming and then argues that these two component concepts are unified in Determinate Being.<sup>85</sup> This deviation may be relatively modest and harmless, but by the time we reach the *Logic's* treatment of the forms of judgment and syllogism, there is hardly even a trace of the official method, and it is difficult to see how this method, which was formulated primarily with concepts in mind, *could* be applied to forms of judgment and syllogism. Second, even at points where Hegel is seriously striving to realize the intended general structure of the method, this realization falls victim to specific problems. We have just seen reason to criticize his supposed demonstration of the self-contradictoriness of the category Nothing. We can criticize the transition from Quality and Negation to Boundary

(*Grenze*), on the ground that Boundary, instead of unifying Quality and Negation in the method's official sense of containing them both in its conceptual analysis, seems to do so only in the sense that a boundary can serve as a kind of metaphor for the relation between a quality and its negation.<sup>86</sup> We can criticize the transition from Being and Nothing to Becoming on the ground that it is not at all clear that the temporal, dynamic idea that the concept Becoming adds to the concepts Being and Nothing is really a smaller conceptual addition than the idea of qualitative determinacy added by the concept Determinate Being, as the method would require. And so forth.

No doubt a few hard-boiled Hegelians will try to defuse this general criticism by responding that what the features of the texts to which it points really show is that my account of the dialectic's structure has been too one-dimensional, that the dialectic is instead, to use Fulda's expression, "an extremely multi-structured formation."<sup>87</sup> My answer is that if they could succeed in describing and delimiting the alleged multiple forms of the method clearly enough to distinguish this from a non-method and could show them to be consistent with Hegel's general accounts of the structure of the method as explained in Part I, and could show them to have at least a reasonable prospect of realizing the functions for which Hegel designed the method (and which were discussed in Part II), then their suggestion would be worth pursuing. Otherwise it must have the appearance of obfuscation. It may in fact be possible to come at least close to meeting these conditions for a very few of the deviations from the intended general structure of the method alluded to in the preceding paragraph, the structure of the transition from Becoming to Determinate Being. But it seems clear that this will not be possible in the great majority of cases where deviations and problems arise.

I would, though, enter a more modest qualification of the indicated general criticism: when we read Hegel's texts, we should always keep in mind the possibility of *reconstructing* their application of the dialectical method, or even of modifying the method itself in ways consistent with its performance of the philosophical functions for which it was designed. Neither his particular applications of the method nor even the method itself are ends in themselves for Hegel. Rather, they are means to meeting the sorts of philosophical challenges that were described in Part II. Hegel sometimes deters readers

from approaching his texts in this spirit, by speaking in the tones of a sort of infallible discoverer of ultimate truths. But we should set against such passages the voice of a more modest and sympathetic Hegel – a Hegel working on the task of inventing or helping to develop a scientific philosophy and aware of his own fallibility as he does so. This is the Hegel who, in a letter quoted earlier, emphasizes the need for philosophy to become methodical and scientific and says, “My task is to invent that scientific form or to work on its development.” And it is the Hegel who opens the preface to the second edition of the *Science of Logic* with the plea, “Earnestly as I have tried after many years of further occupation with this science to remedy its imperfection, I feel I still have enough reason to claim the indulgence of the reader.”<sup>88</sup> There is, of course, no *a priori* guarantee that a reconstruction of Hegel's project could be appreciably more satisfactory than his own execution of it. But this part of our paper has suggested that there is also no *a priori* guarantee that it could not.

In conclusion, we recall the suggestion in Part II that we might usefully think of the dialectical method as the core of a sort of grand hypothesis that promises a sweeping solution to a host of pressing philosophical challenges. The results of Part III now suggest that if Hegel's dialectical hypothesis fails at all, it will probably be more in the manner of an hypothesis that is eventually proven false when tested against the facts (at the point where it becomes clear that no amount of reconstruction of its details is going to make it convincing) than in the manner of an hypothesis that is incoherent or otherwise patently false from the start.

#### IV. THE ORIGINS OF THE METHOD

This paper has considered the dialectical method as it appears in Hegel's mature philosophy – the philosophy he propounds in the 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit* and later. The method has an even earlier history, and it is appropriate that a few notes be appended concerning this (these will of necessity be somewhat brief and dogmatic).<sup>89</sup>

1. Hegel's mature philosophy comprises an introductory *Phenomenology of Spirit* followed by the system proper in the form of *Logic*, *Philosophy of Nature*, and *Philosophy of Spirit*. By contrast, his ear-

lier Jena system (approximately 1801–1806) comprised an introductory Logic followed by Metaphysics, Philosophy of Nature, and Philosophy of Spirit. Duesing's judgment on the origin and development of the dialectic is broadly correct (a qualification will be entered later): "The dialectic as a method . . . arose in Hegel's early Logic, which as yet had the limited function of a systematic introduction to the system, and . . . only later spread as a general method to other parts of the system."<sup>90</sup>

2. The method's career in the early Logic takes a somewhat peculiar course. It seems fairly clear that Hegel was already in possession of something very like his mature method at the time when he wrote the essay *The Difference between the Fichtean and Schellingian Systems of Philosophy* in 1801. That is: a method which demonstrated both the self-contradictoriness of determinations and their constitution of a self-developing series, by repeated steps of showing a determination to involve a contrary determination and then showing these two determinations to be synthesized in a higher determination (in Hegel's later terminology, the "negative of the negative"). Consider the following two passages from the essay, in which Hegel describes in general terms the course of his envisaged introductory Logic:

Each being is, because posited, an op-posed, a conditioned and conditioning; the Understanding completes these its limitations by positing the opposite limitations as their conditions; these require the same completion, and the Understanding's task develops into an infinite one . . . Reason . . . completes [a relative identity] through its opposite and produces through the synthesis of the two a new identity, which is again itself an inadequate identity in the eyes of Reason, which again likewise completes itself.<sup>91</sup>

After this 1801 essay, we hear of nothing equally like Hegel's mature dialectic until the 1804–5 *Logic, Metaphysics and Nature Philosophy*. In the meantime, the evidence we have of the Logic's dialectic suggests a disappearance of continuous development through determinations by means of the transition to the "negative of the negative" and instead an exclusive focus on the demonstration of self-contradictions.<sup>92</sup> The dialectic then reappears in something much like its mature form in the Logic of the 1804–5 *Logic, Metaphysics and Nature Philosophy*. In particular, the transition to the "negative of the negative" is again at work.<sup>93</sup>

3. It seems clear that Hegel's dialectical method was a fairly direct descendant of the method used by Fichte in his *Science of Knowledge* and later adopted by Schelling in his *System of Transcendental Idealism* from 1800.<sup>94</sup> The striking similarity of the two methods in itself makes this highly probable. Hegel's method advances by demonstrating the self-contradictoriness of a determination through showing it to involve a contrary determination, and vice versa, and then overcoming these self-contradictions by unifying the two determinations in a third determination that preserves them in a modified form, finally repeating this whole process at the new level thereby reached. Fichte's method does essentially the same.<sup>95</sup> For example, the *Science of Knowledge* begins with the principle of the absolute self. Fichte first shows that this both requires and is required by a not-self and that the not-self *nullifies* the self, thus apparently showing both the principle of the self and that of the not-self to be self-contradictory.<sup>96</sup> These apparent self-contradictions are then resolved by a unifying principle that both preserves and modifies the self and the not-self: the principle that a *divisible* self faces a *divisible* not-self.<sup>97</sup> The same process is then repeated at this new level. (Note in particular how Hegel's idea of a transition from self-contradiction to the "negative of the negative" is anticipated here.) One may also compare to Hegel's method the version of Fichte's method that Schelling uses in his *System of Transcendental Idealism*, which he characterizes schematically as follows: "Two opposites a and b . . . are united by the act x, but x contains a new opposition, c and d . . . , and so the act x itself again becomes an object; it is itself explicable only through a new act = z, which . . . again contains an opposition, and so on."<sup>98</sup> The similarity of Hegel's method to that developed by Fichte and adopted by Schelling would, then, by itself make the hypothesis of its descent from the latter highly probable. But when one recognizes the occurrence of something already very like Hegel's mature dialectical method in his 1801 essay *The Difference between the Fichtean and Schellingian Systems of Philosophy* (see point 2 above), this debt to Fichte and Schelling becomes a virtual certainty. For Hegel in this essay praises Fichte for realizing the Kantian principle of a deduction of the categories "in a pure and strict form," referring to the procedure for "deducing" determinations that Fichte employs in the *Science of Knowledge*.<sup>99</sup> And he envisages his own method being used in an introductory Logic which is directly modeled on or even identical

with Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism* (together perhaps with his *Philosophy of Nature*).<sup>100</sup> (In this connection, one should also note the following remark from one of Hegel's introductions to *Logic* and *Metaphysics* in the Jena period: "Fichte's *Science of Knowledge* and Schelling's *Transcendental Idealism* are both nothing other than attempts to present *Logic* . . . in its pure independence."<sup>101</sup>

4. In the passage quoted earlier, Duesing described Hegel's dialectic as originally restricted to his early *Logic* alone, and he described the early *Logic*, and by implication the dialectic that arose within it, as serving the limited function of providing a "systematic introduction to the system." This is a little too vague and in certain respects inaccurate. What then, more precisely, was the function of the dialectic of the early *Logic*? Disregarding differences between the several versions of this discipline, we can identify the following main functions. First, it served pedagogical functions similar to those later served by the dialectic of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* – functions of teaching Hegel's system by discrediting other viewpoints, providing an approach to the system, and giving a sort of provisional articulation of the contents of the system.<sup>102</sup> Second, it served the same range of epistemological or justificatory functions vis-à-vis Hegel's system as the dialectic of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* later served, responding in ways similar to those indicated in Part II to the skeptical difficulties that the system appears to face competition from equally plausible contrary viewpoints and that its concepts might lack instantiation, and to the ideal of showing that the system can be proved to all other viewpoints purely on the basis of their own views and criteria.<sup>103</sup> Third – and here we encounter a function that, unlike those already mentioned, *cannot* properly be termed a "systematic introduction to the system," and which shows that the early dialectic already had a limited role beyond the confines of the early *Logic* – the dialectic of at least some versions of the early *Logic* already, though in a restricted way, served as an *a priori* key to the interpretation of natural and spiritual phenomena; it already in a restricted way served this function so characteristic of the dialectic of the *Logic* of Hegel's mature philosophy. One sees this, for example, in the 1801–2 fragment "The Idea of the Absolute Being," which sketches symmetrical *Philosophies of Nature* and *Spirit*, each of which divides into two parts: a lower part corresponding to and based on the *Logic* and a higher, subsuming part corresponding to

and based on the *Metaphysics*.<sup>104</sup> One sees it also in the 1802–3 *System of Ethical Life*.<sup>105</sup> The first half of this version of the Philosophy of Spirit corresponds to the Logic. This half begins by covering lower spiritual phenomena under the heading “Absolute Ethical Life according to Relation” – the roughly contemporary essay *Natural Law* assigns dialectic, and hence the Logic, the task of showing the nothingness of *relation*.<sup>106</sup> It then enters a negative phase, “The Negative or Freedom or Crime” that, as Trede argues, corresponds to the culminating dialectical stage of the version of the early Logic sketched in the fragment “Logica et Metaphysica.”<sup>107</sup> In its second half, the work moves to a higher, subsuming spiritual sphere, that of “Ethical Life” simpliciter, which corresponds to *Metaphysics*.

5. With the inception of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the mature system associated with it that is, by 1807, the confinement of dialectic to the early Logic (and lower parts of the Philosophies of Nature and Spirit) came to an end. Dialectic became the method of Hegel's whole philosophy and added to its primarily pedagogical and epistemological functions the full complement of further functions described in Part II.

## NOTES

- 1 R.C. Solomon, *In the Spirit of Hegel* (Oxford, 1983), 21–22.
- 2 G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic* (London/New York, 1976), 28, cf. pp. 53 ff. / *Wissenschaft der Logik I* (Frankfurt am Main, 1969) – henceforth abbreviated as *WdL* – pp. 17, 48 ff.. (Translations are sometimes my own and sometimes borrowed from the cited English language editions, with modifications where necessary.)
- 3 *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, ed. P. Edwards (London/New York, 1972), vol. 3, 444.
- 4 K.R. Popper, “What Is Dialectic?” in *Mind* 49 (1940): 404.
- 5 W. Kaufmann, *Hegel – A Reinterpretation* (Notre Dame, 1978), 154. G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford, 1979), pars. 50–52 / *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Frankfurt am Main, 1970) – henceforth abbreviated as *PdG* – pp. 48–51. Hegel certainly criticizes the manner in which this model has been utilized by previous philosophers, especially Schelling's reduction of it to a “lifeless schema” externally applied to a subject-matter (instead of being allowed to emerge therefrom). But he does not criticize the model itself; on the contrary, he quite clearly assumes its *correctness*, saying, for example, that since Kant it has

"been raised to its absolute significance and with it the true form in its true content has been presented, so that the Concept of Science has emerged." (Similarly, in *Science of Logic*, pp. 836–37 / WdL II, pp. 564–65, Hegel resists undue emphasis on the *numerical* aspect of the model, its triplicity, suggesting that the method may, if desired, be divided up into more than three steps. But this does not imply any rejection of the "thesis, anti-thesis, synthesis" model itself; on the contrary, Hegel's comments occur in the context of an explanation of the method that accords it this structure.)

- 6 G.W.F. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia* (*Logic*, Oxford, 1975); *Philosophy of Nature*, Oxford, 1970; *Philosophy of Mind*, Oxford, 1971) / *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* I, II, III, Frankfurt am Main, 1970), par. 24, Zusatz 1; *Science of Logic*, p. 28 / WdL I, p. 17.
- 7 As Hegel puts it, dialectic is a principle that "alike engenders and dissolves" categories. See G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right* (Oxford, 1976) / *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (Frankfurt am Main, 1971), par. 31.
- 8 *Encyclopaedia*, pars. 79–82. Hegel's most-extended general accounts of the method occur in *Science of Logic*, pp. 53–59, 431–43, 830–38 / WdL I, pp. 48–56; WdL II, pp. 64–80, 556–67.
- 9 *Science of Logic*, p. 431 / WdL II, p. 56: "The self-subsistent determination . . . that contains the opposite determination . . . at the same time also excludes it . . . It is thus *contradiction*." Ibid., p. 433 / WdL II, p. 67: "Positive and negative, each in its self-subsistence, sublates itself; each is simply the transition or rather the self-transposition of itself into its opposite"; cf. the discussion of the behavior of pairs of contraries cited in illustration at *ibid.*, p. 437 / WdL II, pp. 71–72; and *Encyclopaedia*, par. 214: while the Understanding claims that subjective and objective, finite and infinite etc. are quite opposed and different from one another, "the Logic shows instead the opposite, namely that the subjective which is supposed to be only subjective, the finite which is supposed to be only finite, the infinite which is supposed to be only infinite and so forth has no truth, contradicts itself and passes over into its opposite." On the role of conceptual analysis here, see, for example, *ibid.*, par. 88: "The deduction of the unity [of Being and Nothing] is completely analytical."
- 10 It is "the unity [of the first concept] and its opposite" (*Science of Logic*, p. 54 / WdL I, p. 49).
- 11 Thus Hegel writes of the category Becoming, which unifies Being and Nothing, that it is "one idea" and that "when it is analyzed, the determination of Being, but also that of its straightforwardly other, Nothing, are contained therein" [*Encyclopaedia*, par. 88, {3}].
- 12 On these two aspects of the unification, and Hegel's use of the verb

*aufheben* to convey them both, see *Science of Logic*, pp. 106–8 / WdL I, pp. 113–15.

- 13 "The *drive* to find a stable meaning in Being or in both [Being and Nothing] is [the] *necessity* . . . which leads Being and Nothing to develop and gives them a true . . . meaning" (*Encyclopaedia*, par. 87).
- 14 "On the new foundation constituted by the result as the fresh subject matter, the method remains the same as with the previous subject matter" (*Science of Logic*, p. 838 / WdL II, pp. 566–67). Compare Fulda, "Hegel's Dialektik als Begriffsbewegung und Darstellungsweise," in *Seminar: Dialektik in der Philosophie Hegels*, ed. R.P. Horstmann (Frankfurt am Main, 1978), 159–60, who places too much weight on the superficial ordering in Hegel's table of contents.
- 15 Logic has the task of exhibiting thought "in its own immanent activity or what is the same, in its necessary development"; it shows "the *immanent coming-to-be* of the distinctions and the *necessity* of their connection with each other" (*Science of Logic*, pp. 31, 55 / WdL I, pp. 19, 51).
- 16 *Science of Logic*, p. 82 / WdL I, pp. 82–83. Strictly speaking, since Being as the first category of the Logic is supposed to be unanalyzable and simple (*Science of Logic*, p. 75 / WdL I, p. 75), we should not, in this particular case, talk about "containment." What Hegel aims to show is rather the literal identity of the concept of Being with the concept of Nothing. Hence the formulation "Being . . . is in fact *nothing*, and neither more nor less than *nothing*." (Hegel fails to address the obvious difficulty that if Being and Nothing are in fact the very same concept, then they can hardly also be contraries, as the method requires if it is to demonstrate a self-contradiction.)
- 17 *Science of Logic*, p. 106 / WdL, p. 113; *Encyclopaedia*, par. 89.
- 18 For the purposes of this essay, I shall not go into the distinctive form taken by the dialectical method in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which Hegel describes at pars. 84–87 / PdG, pp. 76–80. Nor shall I discuss the exact relation of this work's dialectic to that of the underlying Logic. These matters are dealt with in my *Hegel's Idea of a "Phenomenology of Spirit"* (Cambridge, Mass., forthcoming).
- 19 On both sets of functions, see my *Hegel's Idea of a "Phenomenology of Spirit"*; on the epistemological functions, see my *Hegel and Skepticism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), chs. 6, 8, 9, 10.
- 20 *Phenomenology*, par. 28 / PdG, 31.
- 21 *Phenomenology*, par. 78 / PdG, p. 72.
- 22 As Hegel puts it at *Science of Logic*, p. 54 / WdL I, p. 49, each shape of consciousness "has for its result its own negation." Cf. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pars. 84–85 / PdG, pp. 76–78.
- 23 For example, Hegel understands the series of shapes of consciousness

- generated to be the Logic's series of categories seen through a glass darkly (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, pars. 89, 805 / PdG, pp. 80, 589).
- 24 As Hegel puts it, "The completeness of the forms of the unreal consciousness will result from the necessity of the progression and interconnection itself" (*Phenomenology*, par. 79 / PdG, p. 73).
- 25 On the circularity of the discipline's course, see *Phenomenology*, pars. 806–7 / PdG, pp. 589–90).
- 26 Draft of a letter to Sinclair, mid-October 1810, in *Briefe von und an Hegel*, ed. J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg, 1969), vol. 1, 332.
- 27 *Encyclopaedia*, par. 14.
- 28 *Phenomenology of Spirit*, par. 20 / PdG, p. 24; *Encyclopaedia*, par. 14.
- 29 *Phenomenology*, par. 9.
- 30 *Ibid.*, par. 12.
- 31 *Science of Logic*, p. 838 / WdL II, p. 567.
- 32 *Science of Logic*, pp. 838–42 / WdL II, pp. 567–72; *Encyclopaedia*, pars. 14–15.
- 33 *Encyclopaedia*, pars. 6; 123, Zusatz. On this see further D. Henrich, "Hegels Theorie ueber den Zufall," in his *Hegel im Kontext* (Frankfurt, 1967), 157–86.
- 34 F.H. Bergmann, "The Purpose of Hegel's System," in *Journal of the History of Philosophy* (1964), p. 191: "The sense of 'necessity' that is crucial for Hegel is . . . that of Fichte's 'necessity for a purpose.' " (Bergmann's claim requires qualification: the word "necessity" and its cognates also bear other important senses in Hegel. For example, at *Encyclopaedia*, pars. 1, 9, 25, Hegel is concerned with the "necessity" of his philosophy in the epistemological sense of its possession of a justification or proof; and elsewhere he speaks of the "necessity" that governs his dialectical transitions, and which – see Part III – is different in nature again.)
- 35 Hegel is much less ambivalent than Kant himself about embracing this model of explanation. For example, when he discusses organic life he writes, "Life must be grasped as self-end, as an end which possesses its means within itself, as a totality in which each distinct moment is alike end and means" (*Encyclopaedia*, par. 423).
- 36 *Ibid.*, par. 9; cf. par. 14: "A moment has its justification only as moment of the whole."
- 37 *Ibid.*, par. 12.
- 38 *Ibid.*, par. 81.
- 39 Thus Hegel remarks on the "positive" element that makes up the whole of some sciences, such as heraldry, and part even of those sciences that have a rational basis, and which element philosophy shuns (*ibid.*, par. 16).
- 40 This fundamental difference between the Logic, on the one hand, and

the Philosophies of Nature and Spirit, on the other, is the key to understanding the "free self-release" of the Absolute Idea into Nature, which Hegel talks about when he makes the transition from the Logic to the Philosophy of Nature (and thence the Philosophy of Spirit). See *Science of Logic*, p. 843 / WdL II, p. 573.

- 41 *Encyclopaedia*, par. 24, Zusatz 2. Cf. pars. 6, 9, 12; *Science of Logic*, pp. 58–59 / WdL, pp. 54–56. Hegel repeatedly emphasizes the indispensability and the authority of the empirical element in this whole process: philosophy necessarily agrees with actuality and experience, and this agreement "can be seen as at least an external criterion of the truth of a philosophy" (*Encyclopaedia*, par. 6); "Not only must philosophy be in agreement with our empirical knowledge of Nature, but the *origin and formation* of the Philosophy of Nature presupposes and is conditioned by empirical physics" (*ibid.*, par. 246). Earlier critics, for example, Trendellenburg and McTaggart, who *criticized* Hegel for allowing empirical information into his Philosophies of Nature and Spirit, failed to realize that this was an essential part of his official method.
- 42 Popper, "What Is Dialectic?" pp. 416–19.
- 43 *Science of Logic*, p. 439 / WdL II, p. 74.
- 44 H. F. Fulda, "Unzulängliche Bemerkungen zur Dialektik," in *Seminar: Dialektik in der Philosophie Hegels*, p. 64, cf. p. 48.
- 45 J.N. Findlay, *Hegel – A Re-examination* (New York, 1976), 77–78.
- 46 *Ibid.*, p. 66; M. Theunissen, "Begriff und Realität. Hegels Aufhebung des metaphysischen Wahrheitsbegriffs," in *Seminar: Dialektik in der Philosophie Hegels*, p. 348.
- 47 For example, "vagueness": see *Science of Logic*, p. 82 / WdL I, p. 82 on the indeterminacy of the category of Being; "different times": *Encyclopaedia*, par. 81, Zusatz 1 says, "We know that everything finite, instead of being something firm and final, is instead changeable and transient, and this is nothing other than the dialectic of the finite"; "opposed tendencies": *ibid.*, par. 81, Zusatz 1 gives as examples of dialectic the facts that "the extremes of anarchy and despotism naturally bring each other about" and that "the extremes of pain and happiness pass into one another"; "failure to realize a *telos*": *ibid.*, par. 24, Zusatz 2 notes that we may call something untrue in this sense and that "In this sense a bad state is an untrue state, and badness and untruth in general consists in the contradiction which occurs between the *telos* [*Bestimmung*] or concept of an object and its existence," cf. *ibid.*, par. 213, Zusatz.
- 48 The Understanding contributes "fixity and determinacy" to thought; it is what ensures that in philosophy "one does not rest content with what is vague and indeterminate" (*ibid.*, par. 80, Zusatz).
- 49 "Something moves, not because at one moment it is here and at another

there, but because at one and the same moment it is here and not here" (*Science of Logic*, p. 440, cf. p. 835 / WdL II, pp. 76, 562–63).

50 Such as *ibid.*, pp. 439–43 / WdL II, pp. 74–80.

51 *Encyclopaedia*, par. 81, Zusatz.

52 *Ibid.*, par. 48.

53 M. Oakeshott, *Experience and Its Modes* (Cambridge, 1933), 328.

54 *Science of Logic*, p. 843 / WdL II, p. 573.

55 *Science of Logic*, p. 843 / WdL II, p. 572; cf. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pars. 39, 47 / PdG, pp. 40–41, 46.

56 *Science of Logic*, p. 841 / WdL II, p. 570; cf. *Encyclopaedia*, par. 214.

57 *Science of Logic*, p. 49 / WdL I, p. 43.

58 *Phenomenology of Spirit*, par. 39 / PdG, p. 41.

59 Hence Hegel writes that one reason why it is wrong to characterize the Absolute as the "unity of thought and being" is that in the Idea, "thought [encompasses] being, subjectivity [encompasses] objectivity," although this "*encompassing* subjectivity, thought . . . is to be distinguished from *onesided* subjectivity, *onesided* thought" (*Encyclopaedia*, par. 215).

60 For example, E. Tugendhat raises a doubt about whether Hegel's categories of Being and Nothing are genuinely meaningful. See "Das Sein und das Nichts," in *Durchblicke: Martin Heidegger zum 80. Geburtstag*, ed. V. Klostermann (Frankfurt, 1976), 151–53.

61 M. Inwood, *Hegel* (London/Boston, 1983), p. 130; compare Findlay, *Hegel*, p. 81.

62 Findlay, *Hegel*, pp. 74, 81–82; Fulda, "Unzulängliche Bemerkungen zur Dialektik", pp. 42–43.

63 *Encyclopaedia*, par. 88: "The deduction of the unity [of Being and Nothing] is completely analytical."

64 One of the rare exceptions: *ibid.*, where Hegel continues the above remark with the comment, "Similarly, the whole development of philosophy, as a *necessary* development, is nothing other than the *positing* of that which is already contained in a concept."

65 *Science of Logic*, pp. 835–36 / WdL II, p. 563.

66 *Encyclopaedia*, par. 82; cf. *Science of Logic*, p. 56 / WdL I, p. 52.

67 *Encyclopaedia*, par. 87.

68 *Ibid.*, par. 88.

69 *Ibid.*, par. 89.

70 *Science of Logic*, p. 840 / WdL II, p. 569.

71 *Encyclopaedia*, par. 88.

72 A problem might seem to arise for the underlined criterion in the fact that there are cases where it is unclear which of two concepts sharing a common core adds more conceptual content to it than the other. This fact may indeed cause difficulties for some of Hegel's particular exam-

ples of the transition to the "negative of the negative." For example, it is not really clear that the temporal, dynamic idea added to Being and Nothing by Becoming is a smaller conceptual addition than the idea of qualitative determinacy added by Determinate Being – or, for that matter, vice versa. But it does not show that there is anything intrinsically wrong with the criterion. There would be if we could *never* identify a concept as the one among a set of concepts having a common core which added least conceptual content to it. But such a strong claim appears implausible.

- 73 Both problems, the meaninglessness of the condition and impossibility of ascertaining whether it obtains, would be avoided if among the possible unifiers were ones that added *no* new conceptual content. But neither Hegel's general remarks nor his particular examples suggest that he believes this, and it has little intrinsic plausibility.
- 74 This account may qualify, but it does not, I think, compromise Hegel's insistence that his dialectical transitions be *immanent* in character. See *Science of Logic*, pp. 40, 582, 829, 830 / WdL I, p. 30–31; WdL II, pp. 252, 555–56, 556–57.
- 75 *Ibid.*, p. 76.
- 76 Hegel praises the historical Parmenides's argument for the incoherence of the notion of not-being (G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* [London/New York, 1968], vol. 1, p. 252 / *Vorlesungen ueber die Geschichte der Philosophie* I [Frankfurt am Main, 1971], p. 288) and bases his own argument in the *Logic* for the self-contradictoriness of the category Nothing upon it. He asserts that dialectic proper begins with the Eleatic Zeno (*ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 261 / *Vorlesungen ueber die Geschichte der Philosophie* I, p. 295). In the *Encyclopaedia*, he points out that "dialectic . . . is no novelty in philosophy" and refers to Socrates, Plato (his *Parmenides*), and Kant (the Antinomies) as earlier examples. See *Encyclopaedia*, par. 81, Zusatz; cf. *Science of Logic*, pp. 55–56, 831–32 / WdL I, pp. 51–52; WdL II, pp. 557–59. Hegel sees it as a particular merit of Kant's (mathematical) Antinomies to have drawn attention, as his own dialectic does, to the circumstance that our fundamental categories or concepts are themselves a locus of self-contradiction (*ibid.*, pp. 56, 832–33 / WdL I, p. 52; WdL II, pp. 559–60).
- 77 G.S. Kirk, J.E. Raven, and M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge, 1983), 247.
- 78 On cognate accusatives in Greek, see, for example, H. W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge, Mass., 1984), 355–57.
- 79 For the Stoic position, see A.A. Long and D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (Cambridge, 1987), 162–65.
- 80 I focus on Hegel in what follows, but these matters are discussed in

detail for another representative of the dialectical tradition, Socrates, in my essay "Socratic Refutation" (unpublished).

- 81 G.W.F. Hegel, *Natural Law* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975), p. 119 / *Ueber die wissenschaftlichen Behandlungsarten des Naturrechts*, in G.W.F. Hegel, *Jenaer Schriften 1801–1807* (Frankfurt am Main, 1970), 512—my emphasis.
- 82 *Science of Logic*, p. 46 / WdL I, p. 39.
- 83 G.W.F. Hegel, *Nürnberger und Heidelberger Schriften 1808–1817* (Frankfurt am Main, 1970), 91.
- 84 In fairness to Hegel, it may be that he is here relying on a principle that he supposes himself to have established in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, namely that one cannot coherently distinguish between concept and object, so that one cannot appeal to such a distinction in order to avoid the paradox of Nothing. If so, then my skepticism about the cogency of this paradox must include skepticism about the proof of the incoherence of that distinction in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.
- 85 *Science of Logic*, p. 106 / WdL I, p. 113; *Encyclopaedia*, par. 89.
- 86 *Ibid.*, pars. 91–92.
- 87 Fulda, "Hegels Dialektik als Begriffsbewegung und Darstellungsweise," p. 162.
- 88 *Science of Logic*, p. 31; cf. pp. 27, 42, 54 / WdL I, pp. 19, 16, 33–34, 50.
- 89 For a fuller treatment – from which the following diverges in certain respects – see M. Baum, *Die Entstehung der Hegelschen Dialektik* (Bonn, 1986).
- 90 K. Duesing, "Spekulation und Reflexion," *Hegel-Studien* 5 (1969), 128. Hegel's earliest known use of the term "dialectical" occurs in his 1801–2 lectures on Logic, where it refers to the Logic's technique of demonstrating self-contradictions in finite concepts; see *Schellings und Hegels erste absolute Metaphysik (1801–1802)*, ed. K. Duesing (Cologne, 1988), 63–77. The method itself is visible in Hegel's various descriptions and drafts of the early Logic, especially the draft in the 1804–5 *Logik, Metaphysik und Naturphilosophie*, in G.W.F. Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe II* (Hamburg, 1982). On the other hand, the dialectic officially comes to an end when the transition is made from the early Logic to Metaphysics: "Cognition [that is, the transitional category] in that it makes the transition to Metaphysics is the sublation of the Logic itself, of dialectic" (*Logik, Metaphysik und Naturphilosophie*, p. 134).
- 91 *Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems der Philosophie*, in *Jenaer Schriften 1801–1807*, pp. 26, 46. A number of commentators have, for various reasons, denied that there is a real anticipation of Hegel's mature method here; see, for instance, Baum, *op. cit.*, pp. 116–17; J.H. Trede, "Hegels frühe Logik," *Hegel-Studien* 7 (1972), 133; J.B.

Baillie, *Hegel's Logic* (London, 1901), 94. None of their reasons seems to me persuasive. In particular, Baillie is clearly wrong to claim that the method here "has not as such a positive side, it does not conserve the negated factors"; as we see, Hegel says that "Reason . . . produces through the synthesis of the two [opposites] a new identity."

- 92 See, in particular, the description of the Logic in the fragment from 1801–2 "Logica et Metaphysica," in G.W.F. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke* (Hamburg, 1968 ff.), vol. 5, the notes from Hegel's 1801–2 lectures on Logic in *Schellings und Hegels erste absolute Metaphysik* (1801–1802), and the examples of dialectic in the 1802–3 essay *Natural Law*.
- 93 Consider, for example, Hegel's description of the dialectic of Quality: "Quality . . . is the reality out of which it has become the opposite of itself, the negative, and out of this the opposite of the opposite of itself." (*Logik, Metaphysik und Naturphilosophie*, p. 6).
- 94 Here I agree with W. Hartkopf, *Der Durchbruch zur Dialektik in Hegels Denken* (Meisenheim, 1976), *Kontinuität und Diskontinuität in Hegels Jenaer Anfaengen* (Königstein, 1979). Baum takes a contrary view (op. cit., p. 5).
- 95 The most significant difference is that, unlike Hegel, Fichte understands the self-contradictions to be apparent rather than real. This is less a difference in their methods than a difference in their choice of criteria of identity for determinations. Fichte tends to think of these as including all the modifications or qualifications required to make a determination self-consistent; Hegel does not.
- 96 J.G. Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge* (Cambridge, 1982), 106.
- 97 Ibid., p. 109.
- 98 F.W.J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800) (Charlottesville, 1981), 61.
- 99 *Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems der Philosophie*, p. 9.
- 100 Ibid., pp. 26, 28, 115.
- 101 K. Rosenkranz, *Hegels Leben* (Darmstadt, 1977), 188.
- 102 For example, in the 1801–2 fragment "Logica et Metaphysica," Hegel advertises to his students that in the Logic he will "begin from what is finite . . . in order to proceed from there, namely in so far as it is first destroyed, to the infinite." For details on the pedagogical functions of the early Logic, see my *Hegel's Idea of a "Phenomenology of Spirit."*
- 103 For example, in the 1802 essay "Einleitung. Ueber das Wesen der philosophischen Kritik," in *Jenaer Schriften*, pp. 173–74, Hegel points out that his philosophy may find itself in the epistemological difficulty that it appears to be just "one of two subjectivities opposed to one another," and that "positions which have nothing in common come

forth for just that reason with equal right." As his solution to this epistemological problem he proposes – with the early Logic, on which he was currently working, in mind – to "recount how this negative side [that is, the views opposed to his philosophy] expresses its view and confesses its nothingness." For details on the various epistemological functions of the early Logic, see my *Hegel and Skepticism*, chs. 6, 8, 9.

104 In *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 5.

105 G.W.F. Hegel, *System der Sittlichkeit* (Hamburg, 1967).

106 *Natural Law*, p. 88.

107 Trede, "Hegels frühe Logik," pp. 146–56.