

3 Hegel's Conception of Thinking in His *Logics*

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Introduction: The Fundamental Determinations of Thinking

What does Hegel think the science of logic is about? It is commonplace to suppose that Hegel's view of logic does not seem to be very close to more recent conceptions of the discipline.¹ For one thing, there is the considerable breadth of topics that Hegel seems to accord to the domain of logic. Even a quick glance at the tables of contents of his 1812–16 *Wissenschaft der Logik* ('WL'; 3rd edition 1832) and his shorter 1817 *Encyklopädie Wissenschaft der Logik* ('EL'; 3rd edition 1830) reveals that Hegel takes logic to include topics like substantiality (EL §150), causality (EL §153), atomism (WL 5:184), repulsion and attraction (WL 5:190), mechanism (EL §195; WL 6:409), chemism (EL §200; WL 6:428), teleology (EL §204; WL 6:436), life (EL §216; WL 6:469), willing (EL §233), and the idea of the good (WL 6:541).² None of these topics are typically included in contemporary textbooks on logic. For another, at various points Hegel seems to identify the subject matter of logic with that of *theology*, claiming perhaps most memorably that logic 'is *the presentation of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation [Erschaffung] of nature and a finite spirit*' (WL 5:44). This commitment will surely seem to push Hegel even further away from most contemporary conceptions of logic. In fact, this alignment has been recognized as striking even by many of his most sympathetic followers, with his first biographer, Karl Rosenkranz, for example, imagining readers exclaiming, 'God and logic – what a baroque synthesis!' (Rosenkranz 1858: 37). Among more recent sympathetic treatments of Hegel's views of logic, a common response has been instead simply to downplay this alignment or to even omit reference to it altogether.³

- 1 Compare Taylor 1975: 206; Redding 2014: 281–2. The distance from the traditional pre-Hegelian conception of logic was noted already by Bolzano (cf. Bolzano 1851).
- 2 I will cite Hegel's published works according to the edition, volume number, and pagination of the Suhrkamp Edition of Hegel's *Werke in 20 Bänden*, eds. Moldenhauer and Michel. All translations are my own, in consultation with the recent Cambridge Edition translations of the WL and EL.
- 3 Compare Burbidge 2004; Pippin 2017, and Stern 2017.

My goal in what follows is to bring new light to what motivates Hegel toward both of these commitments (the ‘over-enrichment’ of logic, the ‘divinization’ of its subject matter) in order to help render more comprehensible Hegel’s views on logic more generally. The main pathway I will take will be to articulate how Hegel himself takes his own conception to flow quite naturally out of deeper reflection on a fairly traditional conception of logic that was broadly advocated among Hegel’s predecessors, including Kant, and also among Hegel’s contemporaries. On this conception, logic should be understood as the science of ‘*thinking* [Denken]’. As I will show below, Hegel’s own understanding of the history of the development of this philosophy of logic is what leads him, first, to his ostensibly over-enriched conception of logic, since he thinks this tradition itself shows that all of the aforementioned ‘determinations’ are required to present the essence of thinking itself, and so they must all be counted as ‘logical’. More specifically, it is only once we have in view concepts pertaining to teleology, life, the good, the will, and so on that we can ever hope to have fully comprehended thinking in its highest possibility – namely, in the form of the ‘absolute knowing [Wissen]’, or absolute ‘*science* [Wissenschaft]’ that Hegel (along with many others still today) takes to be the goal of thinking. Yet because thinking in its absolute form would consist in the complete and total ‘agreement’ or ‘harmony’ of the whole of what is thought with the whole of what there is – i.e. it would be the whole ‘*truth* [Wahrheit]’ – Hegel concludes that we ought to recognize that thinking, and with it, the subject matter of logic itself, has shown itself to have the shape of something divine.⁴

My path here will largely follow Hegel’s own introduction to his views on thinking (and with it, logic), as they are presented in the early sections of the later editions of the EL.⁵ In a part of the text entitled ‘Preliminary

4 In taking Hegel’s theologically inflected claims about the logic quite seriously, my interpretation here departs in crucial ways from the currently most prominent recent strategy in the interpretation of Hegel’s logic, inspired by Robert Pippin, Terry Pinkard, Sally Sedgwick, and others, which has been to look primarily to Kant’s views on logic, and in particular his conception of its relation to human self-consciousness (‘apperception’), as a template for our understanding of Hegel’s (cf. especially Pippin 1989; Pinkard 2000 and 2002; Sedgwick 2012; and more recently Pippin 2014). Against this, I will argue below that, if anything, it is instead Kant’s own views on the *divine* understanding which should be thought of as the template for what Hegel has in mind in depicting logic as the science of ‘the divine concept’ (compare Plevrakis 2017 and Tolley 2018). This emphasis on the divine form of thinking, and the emergent contrast with all forms of human consciousness, will also set my reading apart from otherwise more metaphysically minded readers such as Taylor 1975 and Houlgate 2006.

5 The need for a more introductory exposition of the conception of thinking Hegel is working with, so as to better prepare the reader for the subsequent discussions within the *Logic* proper, was something that Hegel seems to have more fully appreciated only after the first (1817) edition of the *Encyclopedia* was published (= ‘1817a’), which contained only a very brief introduction that had little beyond the presentation of the

Conception [Vorbegriff]', Hegel provides something of a historical origin story for his own conception of logic, in order to help the reader catch on to what should be had in mind when we claim (rightly, Hegel thinks) that logic is 'the science of thinking' (EL §19 Anm 8:67). Hegel's account proceeds by discussing a series of 'positions [Stellungen]' that have been taken up on the relation of 'thought [Gedanke]' to 'objectivity [Objektivität]', leading up to his own (EL §§26–78). In the next several sections, I will retrace Hegel's own telling of this history, focusing in particular on the way in which Hegel sees this tradition as wrestling (unsatisfactorily) with the right way to cast the relationship between thinking and two concepts taken to be essential to logic – namely, 'truth [Wahrheit]' and 'science [Wissenschaft]'. I will highlight Hegel's reasons for holding that a more careful reflection on these two concepts should lead in the direction of the enriched and ultimately theologized conception of the subject matter of logic itself. From here I will turn briefly to the main text of Hegel's *Logics* themselves in order to outline how the lessons Hegel takes from this history can be seen to shape his own overarching threefold division of logic itself into 'the doctrine of being', 'the doctrine of essence', and 'the doctrine of the concept', with each providing a further set of determinations needed to articulate thinking in its highest (or 'truest') form. I will conclude by providing a preliminary comparative analysis of key ways in which Hegel's philosophy of logic can now be seen to differ from, but also overlap with, several of the views of logic that have also emerged in the wake of Kant, but have become more commonly embraced today than Hegel's own.

Logic as Immediately 'Objective', and then as Merely 'Subjective': 'Metaphysics' and 'Empiricism'

In his developmental account of the 'given positions' on thinking that Hegel thinks one will confront, when looking to the then recent history of philosophy for guidance about the nature of logic, the variety of positions Hegel considers are grouped into three stages, with the middle stage itself being further divided in two. The complete list of Hegel's headings for these four positions is as follows: (1) 'metaphysics', (2a) 'empiricism', (2b)

official division of logic itself. In the first edition of the EL, Hegel begins the '*Vorbegriff*' with only a one-section preliminary treatment of logic and thinking (cf. Hegel 1817a §12), before jumping immediately to what he later calls the 'closer look and division' of logic (cf. Hegel 1817a §§13–17), and then giving a relatively brief overview of the history of philosophy of thinking prior to his logic, covering both the standpoint of 'metaphysics' and that of 'the critical philosophy' (Hegel 1817a §§18–36). It is only in the second (1827) edition that Hegel adds an initial treatment of what might be called 'the phenomenology of thinking about thinking' (EL §§20–25) along with a much fuller elaboration of the history of philosophy of thinking (EL §§26–78). For further discussion of the '*Vorbegriff*', see Nuzzo 2010 and Stern 2017.

‘critical philosophy’ and (3) ‘immediate knowing’. Because the first two positions (1 and 2a) neatly mirror one another, I will take them up together in this section. In the following section (“Logic as About What Is Objective for Subjectivity: ‘The Critical Philosophy’”), I will turn to Hegel’s treatment of Kant’s conception of thinking (2b), before moving (in “Logic as About the Thoroughgoing Harmony of Subject and Substance: ‘Immediate Knowing’ and the Transition to Hegel’s Own Conception”) to the position entitled ‘immediate knowing’ (3) that Hegel associates most with Jacobi. This will all help chart the path to a still further position, over and above any of these four positions – namely, Hegel’s own position, which will be our topic in the second half of the section “Logic as About the Thoroughgoing Harmony of Subject and Substance: ‘Immediate Knowing’ and the Transition to Hegel’s Own Conception” and in the conclusion.

One final preliminary note: while these sections from the ‘Vorbegriff’ contain much that is of interest concerning Hegel’s interpretations of previous philosophers – especially Hegel’s views on Kant, who occupies the lion’s share of Hegel’s spotlight⁶ – our main focus throughout will be limited to the task of using these sections to make clearer what Hegel himself means by ‘thinking’.⁷ I will also focus primarily on the exposition of Hegel’s own presentation and how this clarifies his own views, rather than on assessing either the adequacy of his historical reconstruction or his own critical remarks.

The First Position: ‘Metaphysics’

Even though Hegel associates this first position with a view more dominant in ‘the *previous* metaphysics, prior to the Kantian philosophy’ (EL §27 8:93), it is clear that he thinks that this position is still present and active among his contemporaries. In fact, Hegel claims that this position consists in a ‘belief’ that ‘the daily doings and strivings of consciousness lives in’, and so also is embraced by ‘all philosophy in its beginnings’ and is even upheld in ‘all the sciences’ (EL §26 8:93). This is the simple belief that, ‘the truth’ is ‘cognized [erkannt]’ in ‘*thinking over* [Nachdenken]’, that ‘what objects truly are’ is directly ‘brought before consciousness [vor das Bewußtsein]’ in and through thinking them over (ibid.). In effect, this position presumes that ‘thinking goes directly to objects’, and simply and without any alteration ‘reproduces [reproduziert] out of itself

6 The section on ‘critical philosophy’ takes up by far the largest part of the ‘Vorbegriff’. For an analysis of Hegel’s interpretation of Kant in these sections, compare Sedgwick (2012) and Ameriks (1985).

7 Indeed, this is Hegel’s own official motivation behind his analysis of ‘the given positions [Stellungen] of thinking toward objectivity’: ‘to elucidate and lead us closer to the significance and the standpoint which is here given to logic’ (EL §25 8:91) – i.e. Hegel’s own standpoint.

the content of sensations and intuitions as a content of thought', and thereby 'finds satisfaction in the like as the truth' (ibid.). This makes the first position '*naïve* [unbefangen]', because it is 'without consciousness of the opposition of thinking in and against itself' (ibid.) – i.e. it doesn't include any accounting for (and perhaps does not even notice) the familiar distinction between acts of thinking and their objects or what they are about; it does not characterize one as being subjective and the other being objective. A fortiori, then, it does not provide any account as to how these two *relata* (moments, aspects) could ever come together in one thing (e.g. consciousness), and so also does not address in any satisfactory way the possibility that they could come apart, e.g. in cases of thinking that is incomplete, confused, false, and so on.

Beyond failing to draw any distinction in kind between the activity of thinking and the object thought about, Hegel notes that this position also makes the 'presupposition' that what might be called the 'content' of thinking – i.e. what is being thought – is of the same kind as being itself, as what is. That is, this position 'regards thought-determinations as the *fundamental determinations of things*' – i.e. that simply 'because it is *thought* [gedacht], that which *is* will be cognized *in itself*' (EL §27 8:94). Insofar as it had been (and, especially since Kant, remains) common to view the most basic contents of thinking to be *concepts* ('universals'), and to take predicative *judging* to be the most elementary way in which concepts are used in thinking, this fundamental presupposition thereby amounts to assuming that the subject-predicate structure that is manifest in the content of judging is itself valid of things. In other words, the features that serve to mark the nature of thinking and the content thought are also taken to be features of the things thought about, taken to be true of what is, and not just of our way of thinking about what is.

Now, even if this assumption itself were to turn out to be true, Hegel points out that the assumption has been made 'without investigating whether the form of judgment *could* be the form of truth' (EL §28 Anm 8:94; my ital.). Hegel himself thinks that the skeptical tradition over the years has provided a good number of reasons to doubt the validity of this assumption, though Hegel's own presentation of these reasons here is admittedly quite compressed.⁸ For one thing, this first position recognizes (either explicitly or at least implicitly) that there are multiple distinct, yet equally true, judgments; this, however, seems to entail that no *one* individual predicate 'shows itself to be adequate [angemessen] to the fullness of representation' of the whole truth about what is; each predicate 'is for itself only a limited content' (EL §29 8:96). What is more, the position also (implicitly or explicitly) assumes that there are

8 For some further discussion, see Inwood (1983: 155f).

multiple, distinct yet equally true, judgments about the very same individual object; yet the further truth that all of these judgments are about the same object, and that all of the predicates are thereby ‘bound up *with one another* [miteinander; my ital.] *in one* subject’, is not itself a content of any one of these (first-order) judgments – rather, in thinking about what is, the predicates can only be ‘taken up *over and against one another* [gegeneinander] from the *outside*’ (EL §29 8:97). Yet since thinking (judging) does not itself show up as something distinct from (over and against) the objects thought about, and so as something that itself can be judged about, this first position cannot express certain basic truths about thinking itself. The sum-total of the things it takes to have the form of the true will ultimately be ‘*one-sided* on account of its form and to that extent false’; in short: ‘the form of judgment is unsuitable [ungeschickt] to express...the true’ (EL §31 Anm 8:98). This itself stands in direct contradiction to the fundamental assumption of the position in question, since, as Hegel notes, it is a common presupposition of this position (and, again, remains so), not only that some individual judgments *can* be true, but that, for any two ‘opposing’ judgments (‘assertions’), ‘one *must* be true and the other false’ (EL §32 8:98; my ital.).

The Second Position: ‘Empiricism’

The transition to the next ‘position’ on thinking and objectivity – what Hegel initially calls ‘empiricism’ – comes, Hegel thinks, from an attempt to respond to a general skepticism about the validity of the form of judgment to adequately express what is true. Rather than take the form of truth from thinking as *judging*, ‘empiricism’ embraces instead the ‘great principle that what is true must be in actuality and *be there* [da sein] *for perception*’ (EL §38 Anm 8:108; my ital.). The form of truth now is taken to consist in ‘seeing [sehen]’ the object, along with a new emphasis on the ‘subjective side’ of ‘knowing [wissen] *oneself* to be *present* [präsent]’ in the seeing (ibid.), and a new focus on ‘*immediate presence* [Gegenwart]’ for ‘consciousness [Bewußtsein]’ of the object itself – the combination of which yields ‘*certainty* [Gewißheit]’ (EL §38 8:108).

However this might fare as a method for securing a kind of certainty for what is immediately present to consciousness, it is not clear what room it leaves for the science of *thinking*, understood as the bringing of things to consciousness by way of concepts and judgments, insofar as concepts and judgments are not themselves ‘seen’ in what is immediately present to perception. In any case, at least in its initial historical form, Hegel thinks that this sort of empiricism does not actually limit its account of what is true simply to ‘what is outwardly and inwardly present’ to consciousness in perception (EL §37 8:107). This is because empiricism (again, at least in its historical form) cannot resist ‘elevat[ing] the content belonging to perception, feeling, and intuition to the *form of universal representations, propositions, and laws*, etc’

(EL §38 8:108). This leads to the moment of 'Humean skepticism', which points out (rightly, Hegel thinks) that, 'insofar as perception is to remain the foundation [Grundlage] of what is to count as truth, universality and necessity appear to be something *unwarranted* [Unberechtigtes]', since these features (universality, necessity) are not themselves immediately present or given in any one perception (EL §39 8:111). Rather, these features – and any other form or 'determination' from thought, from outside of perception – come to be seen as, at best, something 'subjective', something added by additional acts of the subject to what is present in perception.

Now, strictly speaking, according to its own principle, empiricism should thereby count thinking and its determinations, one and all, as 'untrue' – including (however problematically) whatever thinking might be a condition for the possibility of articulating the philosophical position of empiricism itself. For Hegel, this would be a rejection, first, of the traditional assumption that logic, as the science of thinking, will also be a science of truth itself, since thinking and the truth are now being sharply separated from one another. What is more, it would also be, in effect, to reject the idea that logic itself should count as a science at all, since its subject matter (thinking) cannot itself come before consciousness in immediate perception, which implies that empiricism should recognize no truths about thinking (so understood).

Logic as About What Is Objective for Subjectivity: 'The Critical Philosophy'

Hegel sees the next position in thought – Kant's 'critical philosophy' – as growing out of an attempt to reconcile both of the previous two 'principles' – that thinking (concepts, judging) is needed for the truth to come before consciousness, but also that the only things which come immediately before consciousness are the objects of perception (sensory 'appearances'). On Hegel's retelling, however, Kant's philosophy itself ultimately moves through three distinct stages in its own 'critical' reconception of thinking itself: from an initial embrace of thinking as judging, as the activity of what Kant calls discursive '*understanding* [Verstand]', in contrast to what is simply given in perception; to a recognition that thinking also can take a more 'dialectical' form, in the movement of '*reason* [Vernunft]' beyond the relation between subject and predicate in a single judgment, toward the unification of objects and judgments in relation to their principles; and finally to a 'speculative' proposal of a kind of thinking that is itself an objective, creative activity, one performed by the absolute or *divine* understanding.

Thinking as Understanding

As Hegel sees it, Kant initially aims to achieve a synthesis of 'metaphysics' and 'empiricism' by retaining the traditional conception of thinking as

judging, but then restricting the scope of the objective validity claimed for the elementary determinations of thinking (Kant's 'pure concepts', 'categories') to the application of these determinations to what Kant thinks is in fact immediately present to consciousness – namely, 'appearances' – and to appearances alone. The doctrine of thinking per se, and the understanding as the capacity for thinking (judging), is what constitutes, for Kant, the traditional logic. The doctrine of thinking (understanding) in its application to appearances is given in Kant's new 'transcendental' logic. To be sure, in this application, thinking does go 'beyond' what is 'given' in any one perception, since it deploys universal representations (concepts) to thereby 'determine' what is given, whereas what is immediately given is something singular. Nevertheless, through this process, Kant claims that the mind thereby achieves, not merely the 'perception' of singular sensory contents (mere appearances), but the 'experience [Erfahrung]' of substances and causes and other objects falling under the categorial determinations of understanding. In Hegel's words: 'through the categories, mere perception is elevated to the level of objectivity, to the level of *experience*' (EL §43 8:119); 'thought-determinations constitute [ausmachen] the *objectivity* of the cognition of experience' (EL §40 Anm 8:113).⁹

Though Kant hopes to show that thinking can and does allow us to 'determine' a kind of objectivity in the constitution of experience – and hence, demonstrate that the principles of traditional logic itself have at least some kind of objective validity – Hegel argues that Kant still acknowledges that, from another point of view, these thought-determinations themselves might be seen to 'belong to *subjectivity*' alone. This is so in two senses: first, Kant himself insists that the categories are subjective with respect to their 'origin', and purports to provide a 'metaphysical deduction' of these thought determinations from the 'subjective activity' of thinking, due to the exercise of our understanding as our capacity to judge (rather than coming to consciousness by being given from outside of acts of our understanding). Second, the categories ultimately turn out to be merely subjective with respect to the domain of their demonstrable validity, since these determinations cannot be demonstrated to have correct application to any 'thing in itself', but only to appearances, which are themselves only representations in the mind (EL §41 8:113–14). What is more, Hegel takes Kant himself to clearly recognize – and even celebrate – both of these limitations; in fact, Hegel takes Kant to openly proclaim that any thinking which arises through the application of concepts in judgment by our understanding 'is incapable of cognizing things in themselves' (EL §44 8:120).¹⁰

9 For more on the significance of the distinction between perception and experience for the interpretation of Kant's own conception of cognition and objectivity, see Tolley 2017b.

10 There is also the further question of whether Hegel thinks Kant is actually successful in overcoming the deeper Humean worry about the 'application' of the categories

Thinking as Reason

Over and against this position, however, Hegel also thinks we find in Kant's own transcendental logic a basis for a second conception of thinking, one that overcomes the restriction to the understanding and its acts of concept-application in the formation of judgments about appearances in experience. This is because Kant himself ultimately accepts that thinking – not least Kant's own thinking, in the critical philosophy itself – *is* able to 'have insight into [einsehen] what is conditioned about these cognitions of experience', insofar as thinking is able to cognize the *conditions* for the possibility of experience itself (e.g. those presented in Kant's own 'Analytic of Principles'), conditions which are not themselves further conditioned by experience and (crucially) which are not themselves further appearances. The capacity for *this* sort of thinking is what Kant associates, not with our understanding and its acts of judging, but rather with our *reason* and its acts of inference and explanation, in which our judgments become ordered according to relations of consequence, on the basis of which one expresses a principle and which a theorem, which one follows from which, and so on.

Now, insofar as Kant also takes reason to be also the capacity which searches for ultimate or absolute principles, reason can also be characterized as 'the capacity for the *unconditioned* [Unbedingte]', at least with respect to its aim (EL §45 8:121). Yet once it is able to take up the point of view of reason, Hegel argues that thinking must ultimately 'explain [erklären] cognitions of experience as something *untrue*, as appearances', and must 'assume the unconditioned for the absolute and *the true*' (EL §45 8:121; my ital.). This is because thinking qua reason assumes that the true nature of objects lies not in their appearances (as 'empiricism' would have it), nor in anything else merely subjective or contained in consciousness, whether in what is immediately presented in perception or in what is judged or cognized in experience (as Kant's 'Analytic of the Understanding' would have it). Rather, as Kant's own 'Dialectic' indicates, reason takes the essence or truth of objects to lie in the complete conditions which 'explain' why these subjective items are the way that they are – and so not *just* in those conditions that lie in

(thought-determinations) *even to appearances* (to what is immediately present in perception), given their radical singularity, particularity, etc. – in Hegel's words, whether it even makes sense that we can '*think* perceptions' at all (EL §50 10:130). Kant famously tries to overcome just this worry in his 'transcendental deduction' of the validity of the categories at least with respect to appearances, drawing on the earlier findings of the Aesthetic, that appearances already have universal and necessary 'forms' (space, time) – though Hegel's own assessment of Kant's arguments for the universality and necessity of space and time as forms of appearance has received less treatment. For discussion of Hegel's criticisms of Kant's transcendental deduction more generally, see Ameriks 1985, Bristow 2007, McDowell 2009, Sedgwick 2012.

our own mental capacities, which (by Kant's own lights) provide only a partial reason or ground for experience being the way that it is, but also, ultimately, in those conditions that provide the grounds for why our mental capacities themselves are the way that they are.¹¹

Famously, however, Kant himself does not take thinking as reason to be able to demonstrate the objective validity of its own 'ideas' of such unconditioned principles, precisely because they are ideas of objects which lie beyond all possible experience. In Hegel's diagnosis, however, Kant reaches this conclusion only because he assumes that 'to *cognize* [erkennen] means nothing other than to know [wissen] an object according to its *determinate* content' (EL §46 8:123), where the only 'determinate contents' that thinking has available to itself are those categories given to it by the understanding. This implies that the only way that thinking *could* achieve cognition of its objects would be by way of an application of those very same 'determinations' that we saw above constitute the predicates in judgment – i.e. by means of an 'application of the categories to the unconditioned' (EL §46 Anm 8:124; cf. EL §48 Anm 8:127). This assumption, Hegel thinks, is what pushes reason directly into an 'antinomy': on the one hand, reason must make use of 'determinate' contents (categories) to judge about its objects; on the other hand, these objects are defined as being essentially 'undetermined' in the specific sense of being 'unconditioned' by anything in appearances themselves.

Because Kant takes himself to have shown that appearances themselves provide the only concrete content for the categories, the thoughts that reason purports to form, by means of these same categories, of objects that transcend appearances altogether, will inevitably seem 'empty' – referring us to what can be pointed to only as a 'something = X'. In Hegel's words, the thoughts that reason thinks in relation to *its* objects are no better than an 'empty identity': reason's thinking is ultimately 'merely empty indeterminate thinking'; 'it thinks *nothing* [nichts]' (EL §48 Anm 8:127). Thus, despite the fact that reason seemed at first, and is officially, for Kant, a 'higher' form of thinking than mere understanding, thinking by reason is ultimately such that '*determinateness* remains something *external*' to it, with the result being that, as reason, 'thinking is in itself merely an *indeterminate unity* and the *activity* of this *indeterminate unity*' (EL §52 8:137).

Because of this, the thinking of reason, too, cannot be in accord with the truth. Thinking as understanding fails to accord with the truth as thought by reason, because the basic contents (categories) of thinking are 'incapable of being determinations of the absolute', such that 'the

11 For a recent analysis of Hegel's positive assessment of Kant's own treatment of reason in the Dialectic, see especially Kreines 2015—though Kreines stops short of taking up Hegel's own positive assessment of the prospects of reason being able to provide a grounding of the metaphysics of the human mind itself (and its experience).

understanding or cognition by means of the categories is incapable of cognizing *things in themselves*' (EL §44 8:120). Yet thinking as reason also itself fails to accord with the truth, insofar as reason inevitably leads thinking either into contradictions and antinomies or into empty identities.¹² As long as 'the Kantian philosophy...leaves the categories and the method of ordinary cognizing completely uncontested' (EL §60 Anm 8:144), it will therefore remain in the dialectical moment of contradiction and nothingness.¹³

Thinking as Intuitive Understanding

Even so, Hegel sees Kant as implicitly recognizing a *still higher* power of thinking in the very idea of 'the thing-in-itself', thought however indeterminately by reason. On the one hand, this very idea is *itself* 'merely *the product* of thinking, more specifically, of thinking that has progressed to pure abstraction' (EL §44 Anm 8:120–1). More specifically, Hegel thinks that 'the thing-in-itself...expresses *the object* insofar as one abstracts from *everything that it is for consciousness*, from all determinations of feeling as well as from all determinate thoughts of it' (ibid.; my ital.). Yet with this abstraction, *thinking itself* has 'progressed' to 'the beyond, the negative of representation, of feeling, of determinate thinking, etc' (EL §44 Anm 8:121) – i.e. beyond not just understanding but also reason construed as limited in its thinking by the 'determinate' categories of understanding – and so, not just to an empty nothing but to what Kant himself would call a positive conception of a noumenon (object of *nous*).

As Hegel sees it, this still higher idea of thinking arises in the course of two further reflections. First, Hegel notes Kant's belief (articulated in the second *Critique*) that the activity of reason itself is also 'practical', in the sense of making actual (causing) things to be which are not yet so. What is more, though reason is faced with antinomy when it thinks about objects it takes to be real but would have to be 'given' to it from without (but cannot be given, due to the limitations of our sensibility), reason is nevertheless able to think consistently of objects that it *itself* will *make*

12 In fact, Hegel thinks Kant radically underestimates the pervasiveness of the dilemma that thinking qua reason will face; on Hegel's analysis, an antinomy will obtain for reason with respect to the application of categories 'in *all* objects of all genera, in *all* representations, concepts, and ideas', and therefore indicates a 'property' that arises in relation to the thinking of reason *as such*, a 'property' of thinking called 'the *dialectical* moment of what is logical' (EL §48 Anm 8:128). For helpful discussion of some of Hegel's motivations for claiming to uncover a more radicalized form of Kant's antinomies, see again Kreines 2016.

13 On the details of Hegel's discussions here (and elsewhere) of Kant's account in the Dialectic of the limits of cognition and the categories, see especially Ameriks 1985; compare Longuenesse 2007, Bristow 2007, and Sedgwick 2012.

real or actual, as their cause (i.e. as ‘will’), by way of its ideas of what ‘ought to happen’ (EL §53 8:138). But then, in its practical-causal form, reason’s thinking is an ‘activity that is *objectively determining*’ (ibid.), insofar as its thinking itself gives its ideas ‘worldly existence, external objectivity’ (EL §54 8:138).

Even practical reason, however, still remains ‘external’ to objectivity in the following sense: though it is a kind of thinking that achieves objectivity through its own causality, it does so in relation to products or effects which need not be identical to itself. That is, practical reason does not (or at least not always) ‘make actual’ more practical reason; rather, it causes *nature* to be configured in a certain way (consonant with its idea of how it should be). This implies that, even when it is effective, practical-rational thinking still stands at some remove from the objectivity it produces, and reason itself, and its causal power, remains something subjective in this sense.

It is with this second reflection that Hegel shifts our attention to what he sees as a third, ‘speculative’ stage in Kant’s thinking, one which articulates a concept of thinking that lies ‘beyond’ reason (so construed) altogether, whether theoretical or practical. Hegel sees Kant’s later speculation (in the third *Critique*) concerning what he calls an ‘intuitive understanding’ as eventually bringing into focus an idea of a thinking that would *not* be external to its effects in the same way, but would instead itself *be* the external effect *as well as* the cause, and so itself *be* what is objective. Kant is led to this higher conception of thinking by reflection on the kind of thinking that ‘is to be experienced in the products of art and in organic nature’ (EL §55 8:139; my ital.). In these cases, Kant thinks we encounter existences which are (or seem to be) effects of ideas about how nature ought to be, but existences whose causes are not something external to themselves; rather the actuality of these beings is in some sense the cause *of itself*, insofar as the actuality of the activity is itself the ‘end’ of the activity itself; the actual doing is itself the goal or purpose, it is done ‘for itself’, and it (the activity) is itself what ought to be. Here, as Hegel sees it, Kant has finally hit upon the idea of a thinking that itself *is* the objective reality experienced, *is* both cause and effect. This gives Kant the ‘distinction’ of attaining what Hegel calls the fully ‘*speculative*’ idea of thinking that transcends the ‘dialectical’ thinking of reason spelled out above (EL §55 Anm 8:139–40).

Yet if Kant himself spends more time in the third *Critique* articulating how this form of thinking is actualized in the course of specifically human and biological activity (in art, in ‘organized’ nature), Hegel also thinks that, by the conclusion of the book (cf. §§76–78 of the third *Critique*), Kant takes one last, final, crucial *further* step in the philosophy of thinking, by forming the ‘idea’ that the actualization of just this form of thinking is what is ultimately responsible, not just for this or that work of art or living body or any other finite part of the natural world, but for

existence as a whole. With this, Kant forms the unlimited, 'encompassing [umfassende] idea' of 'the postulated *harmony* [Harmonie] of *nature* or necessity with the *end* of freedom, in the final *end* of the world thought of as *realized*' (EL §55 Anm 8:140; my ital.). Crucially, however, this is not a conception of existence as a whole as simply caused by thinking, where the thinking as cause remains external to what exists itself (as in the thinking that characterizes practical reason). Rather, actuality itself just *is* the ongoing activity of a higher thinking, self-actualizing, whose purpose or end lies entirely in itself.

Now, the traditional name for a 'power' for thinking described in this 'encompassing idea', one that is capable of being this sort of cosmic-level activity – being itself the 'third' term that perfectly unifies in itself the good as idea and what there is (the world) as what is actual – can only be something *divine*:

the idea in its entire unlimitedness would be that the universality determined by reason, the absolute final end, *the good*, would be actualized [verwirklicht] in the world, and indeed through a third, the power [Macht] positing this final end itself and is realizing it – *God*...

(EL §59 8:142)

What is more, because it is therefore 'the essence, the substance, the universal power, and the determination of the end for the world', it is only this thinking that will be the 'absolute truth' of everything (EL §50 Anm 8:131). For 'while being belongs to the world, this being is merely a semblance [Schein], not the true being, not absolute truth; this is instead beyond that appearance [Erscheinung], in God alone, that God alone is true being [das wahrhafte Sein]' (EL §50 Anm 8:132).

As Hegel sees it, then, Kant's own progressive analysis of thinking, when taken to its full conclusion, leads us to reconceive of the highest form of thinking along explicitly divine, panentheistic lines. Nevertheless, Hegel takes Kant himself to fundamentally misunderstand the full significance of this higher conception of thinking as speculative. This is because Kant holds that we humans can only relate to this speculative form of thinking as itself a 'harmony...that merely *ought* to be, i.e., that at once does *not* have *reality* – as *something believed* [Geglaubtes], to which pertains only subjective certainty, not truth, i.e., *not* the objectivity corresponding to this idea' (EL §60 8:143).¹⁴ At the same time, however,

14 In fact, Hegel notes that this is so, even with respect to the 'limited' cases, insofar as, strictly speaking, Kant doesn't think we can demonstrate the objective validity of the concept of self-determining purposiveness with respect to *anything* in nature, including ourselves, but can only take this concept as a 'principle of assessment belonging to *our* understanding', and so ultimately 'something subjective' (cf. EL §58 8:141). Hegel

Hegel means to highlight the fact that, even according to Kant himself, at least the *idea* of speculative thinking is something whose reality *thinking itself* can ‘know [wissen]’, and not just ‘believe’ in. This, Hegel thinks, will provide sufficient opening for an argument that the *thinking represented in this idea* can also be ‘known’ – again, *by thinking itself*.

Logic as About the Thoroughgoing Harmony of Subject and Substance: ‘Immediate Knowing’ and the Transition to Hegel’s Own Conception

Trying to work out these last two thoughts – that thinking enjoys a real relation at least to its own speculative ‘idea’ of the highest thinking as divine (since it can form this idea), and that thinking thereby might enjoy a real relation to the object of this idea, i.e. this divine thinking itself – is what Hegel thinks drives the philosophy of thinking (and hence the philosophy of logic) toward its next and penultimate position, prior to arriving at Hegel’s own. This position takes its starting point from the fact that it is only this highest form of thinking (God’s), rather than thinking as understanding or even as reason, that should be counted as ‘absolutely true’. One key reason for this is that it is only in this thinking that there will be a perfect ‘harmony’ (*adaequatio*) between thought and being, since what there is just *is* the actualizing of this divine thinking itself. In ‘the absolute inseparability of the thought of God from his being’, Hegel thinks we have now moved to conceiving of thinking as having achieved an ‘immediate *knowing* [Wissen]’ (EL §51 Anm 8:137).

Intuitive Understanding and the Truth

In the WL, Hegel spells out in greater detail how this transition to thinking as immediate knowing is supposed to work, by drawing out a conflict within Kant’s own ‘definition’ of truth – indeed, a conflict that echoes the one that we saw arise in the first ‘position’ of ‘metaphysics’. On the one hand, Kant officially embraces the traditional ‘definition’ of truth as

also notes that this same estimate is given (and perhaps even more obviously so) with respect to our relation to the speculative idea of thinking when it is deployed at the cosmic scale: here Kant again emphasizes the absence of objective validity (though also the subjective usefulness) of the concept of an intellect whose activity would serve as the supersensible ground for all of nature (cf. 5:469f).

There is a question as to whether Hegel means to claim that Kant himself holds that speculative thinking transcends reason altogether; if so, this would seem to saddle Kant with a position on reason that would be incompatible with Kant’s claim (emphasized in the *Groundwork* and elsewhere) that God, too, is a member of the community of specifically rational beings. There is also a question of whether Kant himself would accept that an intuitive understanding would still count as ‘thinking’ at all, in his sense of the term (cf. B71).

a relation of 'correspondence or agreement [Übereinstimmung]' between thinking and its object (cf. B82–3). On the other hand, Kant's idealism seems to render all thinking qua understanding and reason – including the thoughts of reason and of things in themselves – as 'untrue', since incapable of agreeing with things in themselves:

If we recall this definition [of truth as agreement of cognition with its object] together with the fundamental thesis of transcendental idealism, namely that *cognition of reason* is incapable of grasping *things in themselves*, that *reality* lies *absolutely* outside the *concept*, it is then at once evident that such a *reason*, one which is *incapable of setting itself in agreement with* its subject matter, and the things *in themselves*, such as *are not in agreement with* the concept of reason – a concept that does not agree with reality and a reality that does not agree with the concept – that these are *untrue representations*.

(WL 6:266; my ital.)

In fact, as we have seen, Hegel thinks that Kant, too, implicitly recognizes that the only kind of thinking that could even possibly enjoy an absolute agreement or harmony with its object is not that of our understanding or even that of our reason, but the thinking performed by the intuiting understanding:

If Kant had measured the *idea of an intuitive understanding* against that first definition of truth, he would have treated that idea which expresses the required agreement, not as a figment of thought, but rather *as truth*.

(6.266; my ital.)

Note again that Hegel's point is not just that the intuitive understanding is capable of attaining the truth, or cognizing it as an object, but rather that its thinking itself simply *is* the truth.¹⁵

Hegel's criticism, then, is ultimately that, by treating thinking qua speculative as merely an 'idea', Kant treats *the truth itself* always only as something we humans must 'believe' ought to exist, and hence as

15 Hegel makes a similar point a few pages earlier: 'It will always be a source of wonder how the Kantian philosophy did cognize that the relation of thought to sensuous existence (the relation at which it stopped) is only a relation of mere appearance, and also well recognized and asserted in the *idea* in general a higher unity of those two terms, as for example in *the idea of an intuitive understanding*, and yet remained standing at that relative relation and at the claim that the concept is and remains utterly separate from reality – thus asserting as *truth* what it declared to be finite cognition, and explaining away as extravagant and illegitimate figments of thought what it recognized *as truth* and had specifically defined as such' (6.264; my ital.).

something we relate to only by our thinking of it ‘in idea’. Kant never adequately takes up the truth itself as an ‘objectivity’ that *already does* exist in reality, yet insofar as he claims that there are truths – and claims, moreover, to know some of them – then Hegel thinks Kant is ultimately committed to there being a real, actual object (i.e., the truth itself) corresponding to our idea of truth – and hence, to our idea of the thinking performed by the intuitive understanding. Kant’s own reflections lead him only to form the *idea* of a ‘harmony’ of subjective activity (causality) and objectivity (effect) which itself exists objectively; he takes the *object* of this idea – this panentheistic activity ‘in itself’ – to lie beyond our own finite consciousness or representations. In so doing, however, Hegel sees Kant as placing the truth itself beyond our consciousness (qua understanding, reason), as something which cannot be known in or through consciousness itself, since the truth itself can be *nothing other than* this divine activity.

Rethinking the ‘Immediacy’ of the Highest Thinking

Returning now to the final section of the EL’s history of philosophy of thinking, Hegel then highlights one particular attempt after Kant, to try to take up the challenge of more directly articulating the shape or form of the activity that would be ‘speculative’ in the sense articulated above (i.e. would itself be an objective harmony (agreement, unity, ‘identity’) of subjective and objective). This is the ‘speculative’ conception of ‘immediate knowing’ articulated by Jacobi in his 1785/9 *Letters on Spinoza*.

In one sense, the turn to Jacobi is surprising, because, as Hegel sees it, Jacobi counsels that we simply *reject thinking* itself – understood along official Kantian lines as the activity of consciousness that determines objects through categories – as the manner in which the truth is to be cognized (cf. EL §§61–2), in order to affirm a more ‘*immediate* knowing [unmittelbare Wissen]’ (EL §62 Anm 8:148). It is a *knowing* because, in it, the mind itself achieves the ‘harmony or agreement’ between something subjective and something objective that is constitutive of having the *truth* ‘in mind’. It is not a *thinking*, however – at least in the sense familiar from Kant – because the consciousness of this agreement is ‘immediate’, and occurs by way of a consciousness of a simple ‘*representation*’, rather than anything discursive, predicative, inferential, etc. Thinking, by contrast, is always ‘the activity of *the particular* [das Besondere]’ (EL §61 8:148), which implicitly involves differentiation of one thing from another by means of negation, and so involves ‘mediation [Vermittlung]’ in Hegel’s sense.

In its emphasis on immediacy, and in its efforts to effect a complete ‘*exclusion* [Ausschließung]’ of mediation, Hegel recognizes that attempts like Jacobi’s will (rightly) sound like ‘a falling back [Zurückfallen] into the metaphysical understanding’ we met with above in the discussion of the first ‘position’ concerning thinking (EL §65 8:155). Nevertheless,

Hegel recognizes that the position at least *intends* the immediacy in question *not* to be naive at all, as it intends something 'higher' than both thinking qua judging (understanding) and thinking qua reason – and in fact, intends nothing short of the 'intellectual intuiting of God' (EL §63 Anm 8:151). What is more, it intends this both in the sense of at least representing the intellectual intuition that God has of what God knows, and also in the sense of intuitively representing God himself, where this is done by the divine itself, 'in' and 'through' us.

Still, Hegel himself does not see anything in the way that the position (at least in Jacobi's version) spells out this allegedly higher immediacy of 'intuiting' that would determinately differentiate it from the initial naive immediacy of the mere having of an object in a 'representation', insofar as Jacobi doesn't seem to allow even consciousness of the representation, or subjective 'certainty' of its presence (à la empiricism), or any further determinations to obtain. Nor does Hegel think Jacobi *could* articulate how this immediacy could be 'higher' than the simple immediacy from the first position *without* incorporating any of the further intellectual aspects that were taken to characterize thinking by the later positions in the history of philosophy.

Even so, Hegel's complaints against Jacobi's specific way of formulating the nature of 'immediate knowing' should not be read as a wholesale rejection of the idea itself – nor should Hegel be taken himself to reject the possibility that 'immediate knowing' might nevertheless turn out to be a form of *thinking* after all. In fact, Hegel argues against Jacobi that the relevant 'higher' mental activity should not be thought of as enjoying *less* mediacy (and so a fortiori would not be *devoid* of mediacy) but should in fact be thought to incorporate a *more* thoroughgoing – in fact, 'absolute' – mediation – and so one that incorporates the previous forms of mediation constitutive of understanding (predication, judgment) and reason (inference, systematic ordering) but then supersedes them (rather than simply negating them).

This is so, even if the higher thinking in question might give the impression, for example, of being entirely 'spontaneous'. At this point Hegel turns to several examples – some from Kant's third *Critique*, some which draw upon aspects of human life that do not receive extended treatment in any of Kant's *Critiques* – to consider what we undergo in the partial or imperfect realizations of intuitive understanding that we ourselves might be thought to achieve. Hegel's aim is to highlight several dimensions of mediacy that remain present not just in the organic and aesthetic examples of thinking as intuiting understanding that Kant himself had begun to sketch, but also in the thinking that constitutes scientific (e.g. mathematical) practice:

[I]t is one of the most common experiences that truths, which one knows very well to be the result of the most complicated [verwickeltsten] and highly mediated considerations, present themselves

[sich präsentieren] *immediately* in the consciousness of someone conversant [geläufig] with such cognition. The mathematician, like everyone else trained [Unterrichtete] in a science, has solutions immediately present [gegenwärtig] to which a very complicated analysis has led; every educated [gebildete] person has immediately present in their knowing a set of universal viewpoints and principles that have come forth only from repeated reflection and long life-experience. The facility [Geläufigkeit] we have achieved in any kind of knowing, also in art, in technical skill, consist precisely in such acquaintances [Kenntnisse]...

(EL §66 8:156)

Here Hegel is describing moments in which a solution to a problem seems to come to consciousness in a flash, despite having only been made available to the relevant individual due to their acquisition of this ‘facility’ through ‘training’, ‘education’, ‘repetition’, and so on:

In all these cases the immediacy of knowing does not only not exclude its mediation, but rather they are so connected that immediate knowing is even the product and result of knowing that has been mediated.

(EL §66 8:156)

Hegel then goes on to emphasize that a similar ‘mediation’ – in the sense of a dependence on prior ‘training’, ‘reflection’, ‘life-experience’, etc. – obtains even in the kind of knowing we might enjoy in ‘religion’ and ‘ethical life’ – and even in philosophy itself (‘even for Platonic recollection’). In all such cases, ‘*education* [Erziehung], development [Entwicklung] is essentially required to bring to consciousness what is contained therein’; these cases of knowing ‘are absolutely conditioned by the *mediation* that is called variously “development”, “education”, “formation [Bildung]” (EL §67 8:157). ‘It is thoughtlessness’, Hegel insists, ‘not to know that, with the conceded necessity of an education, the essentiality of mediation is thereby asserted’ (EL §67 Anm 8:158).

One of Hegel’s main points here is that the ostensibly ‘immediate knowing’ enjoyed by an individual ‘mathematician’ or ‘artist’ – i.e. in the flash of their apprehension of the harmony between their concept and its object, which is enjoyed in the seemingly effortless appearing of the truth in their consciousness – is itself actually made possible by many earlier acts of thinking, acts which are in a fairly straightforward sense ‘external’ to the moment of seemingly immediate apprehension. What is more, this moment is mediated not just by the necessity of earlier acts of thinking by the *individual*, which are required to have achieved certain capacities or expertise, but also by the acts of thinking by *other* individuals, i.e. thinking performed by the community responsible for the

education and training of the individual. Especially the second activity of thinking is one that in no way could be seen as entirely 'my' own but rather necessarily includes the activity of the broader social world of other subjects (other 'I's) who put each individual (each 'me') through training, education, and so on.

Hence, what can seem initially as something that arises immediately to my mind, thanks wholly to 'my' own freedom and spontaneity in thinking in that moment, shows itself to be, in several senses, given *to me* from without – even if not necessarily given from outside of *thinking* as such. Even – and perhaps especially – in its most 'scientific' form, 'my' thinking bears within itself the marks of having been 'developed' by the thinking of others; 'my' own thinking includes a dimension of activity that is still subjective but beyond 'my' own doing, and so also stands over and against me as something 'objective'. Or, to more fully put this point in the terms of the third part of Hegel's *Encyclopedia*, the *Philosophy of Spirit*: the thinking performed by 'my' ('subjective') 'spirit' – and perhaps especially when it is most 'true' (most scientific, most ingenious, most expert) – is made possible only by the thinking performed by the 'objective' spirit of the family, community, and history into which I am born and from which I will depart upon my death.

Thinking as Absolutely Self-Mediating

Faced with the limits of Kant's doctrine of understanding and reason, Jacobi had assumed that the only path left to this adequacy would be to reject or exclude all mediacy from truth itself. Hegel's reflections on the sociality and historicity of even the most 'scientific' moments of human knowing are meant to demonstrate that increase in mediacy (education, training, etc.) does not, in fact, imply a decrease in adequacy. But while the appeal to the mediation present via the sociality and historicity that pertains to human knowing, even in its ostensibly more 'immediate' forms, can help to point up the mistaken presupposition in Jacobi's conception of the higher form of knowing, it is important that Hegel's own account of the progressive development of the history of philosophy of thinking does not conclude here.

One indication of this is Hegel's explicit rejection, at this point, of the idea that the '*consensus gentium*' could be a final 'criterion of truth' (EL §71 8:160). Even if it is necessary to recognize that the prior thinking of the other 'I's that constitute 'my' community is part of what makes possible 'my' thinking and therefore any 'agreement' between concept and object that obtains in 'my' consciousness, this will remain always only *part* of the story. For one thing, genuine knowing requires not just dependence upon – and in this sense, agreement with – the thinking of others (via education, training, etc) but also the agreement between all of

these thinkings and the *object* of the thought itself. For another, the very possibility of the social-historical development of thinking itself within objective spirit, along with the initial arising of what Hegel famously calls the ‘second nature’, through the historical-communal realization of reason, has its further own ‘presupposition’ – namely, the existence of the ‘first’ *nature* out of which human (subjective and objective) spirit in general arises (cf. EG §381 10:17). Only if social-historical thinking qua objective spirit was all that there is to think about (the only object), or if social-historical thinking were somehow itself what was responsible for all that there is, including itself and first nature both (and so was in this sense ‘presuppositionless’), could this social-historical form of thinking itself be adequate to being the absolute truth.

The final step to Hegel’s own position, then, will be to combine this lesson (that immediacy of knowing is not incompatible with very rich forms of mediacy) with the earlier thesis, anticipated in Kant, that the only thinking that will be absolutely adequate to what is being thought – and so will have the absolute form of ‘the true’ – will be divine thinking. This will lead Hegel to claim, first, that rather than divine knowing being akin to what Jacobi had described as an absolutely un-mediated intuition, this highest form of thinking will include all the mediation required to go beyond and perfect whatever partial forms of intuitive understanding that objective human spirit is able to achieve. And in order to achieve perfect harmony with what is being mediated, Hegel will claim, secondly, that divine knowing must be absolutely *self*-mediating. As he briefly puts this thought at the conclusion of the ‘Vorbegriff’, what we are ultimately aiming for is a conception of God as ‘known [gewußt] as *mediating himself* in himself *with himself* [als sich in sich selbst mit sich vermittelnd]’ (EL §74 8:163). Rather than excluding mediation, the absolute form of thinking will not only include all relevant mediation but will itself be what is mediating, what is being mediated, and that in which such mediation will take place.

To be sure, this only provides us with a ‘preliminary conception [Vorbegriff]’ of what thinking must ultimately be conceived as, or ‘determined’ to be, as the subject matter of logic. In order to adequately think of thinking in this form, Hegel thinks we will need to develop our concept of thinking from the simplest determinations that we will need to predicate of thinking, upward until thinking in its truth is truly comprehended. In the logic itself, then, we will begin by thinking of thinking as simply ‘being’, but then also having ‘quantity’ and ‘measure’ – and then to successively include more complicated ones – such as that of having an ‘essence’, being something which grounds ‘appearances’, having a kind of ‘substantiality’ and ‘causality’ – finally, onto ones that begin to become increasingly adequate to the truth about thinking in particular – such as that of having the shape of a ‘concept’, ‘judgment’, and ‘inference’, being itself an ‘object’ of a concept, being ‘alive’, involving ‘cognizing’ and

'willing' – and then, finally, to thinking of thinking as itself being Hegel will call 'the *absolute idea*' or 'divine concept'.¹⁶

This progressive development of 'logical determinations of thought [Denkbestimmungen]' is what comprises the body of the text of the *Logics* proper, which is itself organized into the 'doctrine of being', the 'doctrine of essence', and then 'the doctrine of the concept and of the idea' – all of which are moments in the overarching 'doctrine of thought [Gedanke]' (EL §83 8:179). The final determination of thinking is as 'an object into which all [these] determinations have gone together', which finally presents thinking as itself both 'the *absolute and total truth*' and 'as the self-thinking idea [sich selbst denkende Idee]' (EL §236 8:388). And with this, we will have reached something of a 'metaphysical definition of God' (EL §85 8:181) – at least as to God's own 'essence', 'prior to his creation of nature and of finite spirit' (WL 5:44).¹⁷

Conclusion: Hegel's Conception of Logic in Dialogue with Other Post-Kantian Positions

Logic as the Science of Truth and the Science of Science

This should suffice to give at least an outline of the context and motivations for Hegel's 'theologized' or 'divinized' conception of the subject matter of logic, as well as at least some initial indications as to why Hegel thinks that such a seemingly 'enriched' list of 'determinations' will be necessary to present what this thinking itself is, if logic is to adequately articulate its subject matter. Logic is the science of thinking, but thinking is essentially defined by its relation to the truth; logic itself can thus be understood as a science of 'the true'.¹⁸ Thinking that is itself 'the truth' must be in absolute harmony with its object; absolute harmony will obtain only in divine thinking – and indeed, only in this when construed in something of a panentheistic manner.¹⁹ To incorporate two well-known

16 For more on these transitions, see Bowman 2017, Quante 2017, Ng 2017, Zambrana 2017, and Kreines 2017. Compare as well Kreines (2015) for a different, non-theologized account of how best to understand the 'self-mediation' of the absolute idea; for some points of criticism, see Tolley 2017a.

17 The 'definitions' of the divine specifically as to how it manifests as nature and as spirit are not topics for the science of logic itself, as they are too 'concrete' (cf. 6:257, and see below).

18 Hegel claims in his lectures that, though it has traditionally been seen as 'the science of thinking', it would be as true to say that 'the task of logic would be grasped in the question "what is truth?"' (Hegel 1817b: 3). In the EL itself, Hegel even goes so far as to identify 'what is logical [das Logische]' with 'the absolute form of the truth', claiming 'even more than that, [it] is the pure truth itself' (EL §19 Anm 8:68; my ital.).

19 For more discussion of the relation between Hegel's views and panentheism, see Williams 2017.

phrases from Hegel's *Phenomenology*, this thinking, as 'what is true [das Wahre]', 'is the whole' (PG §20 3:24), so that 'what is true' is not just something in the thinking (knowing) 'subject' but is also the 'substance' that is thought (known) (PG §17 3:23). Hence, any science of thinking which purports for thinking to be able to true will by necessity have to characterize thinking itself in such a way so as to show how this is possible. And in order to sufficiently characterize (or 'determine') thinking in this way, as this sort of thing, Hegel thinks that logic will need to develop just that series of concepts Hegel presents in his *Logic*.

If we continue to broaden our perspective to include not just the *Logics* themselves, but also the *Phenomenology*, we can also better appreciate that Hegel takes this reconception of logic be of a piece with the reconception he proposes there for what is involved in truly 'scientific' thinking and knowing – indeed, his reconception of what is constitutive of 'science [Wissenschaft]' itself. In the *Phenomenology* Hegel purports to have demonstrated that, strictly speaking, 'knowing [Wissen] is actual [wirklich] *only* as science or as system' (PG §24 3:27; my ital.); the 'result' is the appearance of 'the *concept of science*' itself (WL 5:42). More specifically, the whole text itself 'presents the coming-to-be of *science in general or knowing*', beginning from the point of view of 'consciousness' (PG §27 3:31), and this exposition of the 'appearance' of science for consciousness itself provides what Hegel calls a 'deduction' of the validity of the 'concept of pure science' itself (WL 5:43). Even so, the *Phenomenology* does not yet itself present this concept 'in its *true shape*' (PG §38 3:40); this task is said to be left to *logic* (cf. PG §37). Because it is the science of thinking as absolute knowing and truth, logic can therefore equally be understood as the presentation of the 'determinations' of the 'true shape' of *science itself* – indeed, as the true science of science.

Against Subjectivism, Against Objectivisms

When taken out of context, sentences proclaiming Hegel's divinization of thinking, science, and truth can surely suggest that there might be little if any points of overlap with other post-Kantian conceptions of logic.²⁰

20 Though it is not always emphasized (and is in fact often explicitly de-emphasized) among his recent readers (compare, however, Plevrakis 2017), the divinized conception of logic is in fact something Hegel affirms quite frequently throughout his writings and lectures. Hegel begins the *Encyclopedia* as a whole, for example, by claiming that philosophy 'has its objects in common with religion' because 'both have the *truth* for their object, and indeed in the highest sense – in the sense that *God and God alone* is the truth' (EL §1 8:41). And this same point is then repeated, with respect to logic in particular, in the very first section of the EL itself: 'logical determinations in general can be regarded as the definitions of the absolute, as *metaphysical definitions of God*' (EL §85 8:181). In his 1817 lectures on logic, as well as in the first (1817) edition of the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel explicitly aligns logic with 'speculative theology' (cf. Hegel 1817a: §17 Anm; Hegel 1817b: 8). See as well the end of the WL, where Hegel

In conclusion, however, I would like to provide the beginnings of a comparative analysis that tries to highlight points of continuity between Hegel's position and several other positions on the nature of logic that were developed in the wake of Kant in the 19th and 20th centuries and have gained a more widespread acceptance than Hegel's own. I will focus on the following three conceptions: the *mathematical-objectivist* conception of logic, put forward by Russell and others; the *semantical-objectivist* conception, put forward by Bolzano, Frege, and Husserl, among others; and the *pragmatist-intersubjectivist* conception, put forward most influentially by Robert Brandom. I will say more about what I mean to be associating with these labels in the course of the comparisons.

A first thing that Hegel's conception of logic shares with these others is that logic is not restricted in its focus to reporting what has been true of already-existent human mental activity, nor does it focus primarily on something that is possessed by any one individual human mind. In both of these respects, Hegel agrees with these other perspectives in affirming that the subject matter of logic should be kept distinct from that of individual psychology.

Yet even if Hegel's conception of logic is not psychologistic in this sense, Hegel's conception does take the determination of what is logical to involve reference to an activity that is associated with *subjects* – namely, *thinking* – even if Hegel does not mean to claim that the primary subject of this thinking is any individual human being. In this essential reference to subjectivity as such, Hegel would seem to agree both with the semantical and pragmatist conceptions of logic, though this pushes Hegel (and the others, incidentally) away from the mathematical conception. For their part, the semantical-objectivist takes logic to be essentially about a sphere of items that, though they are not properties or states of any individual subject's psychology, are nevertheless essentially the kinds of things that relate subjects to objects – for Frege, 'thought [Gedanke]' or 'sense [Sinn]'; for Husserl, 'meaning [Bedeutung]'; for Bolzano, 'concepts and propositions *an sich*'. The pragmatist-intersubjectivist might seem to incorporate even more of subjectivity into logic: Brandom, for example, takes what is logical to be not primarily an ideal, static, eternal realm of meaning-relations between subjects and objects, but instead a set of rules for activity by subjects in an essentially intersubjective context, along with the interrelation among the statuses that come along with following or failing to follow these rules.

Only the mathematical-objectivist insists that logical properties and logical laws are not properties and laws that pertain in any special way to subjects or their mental activity at all. On this conception, logic is concerned solely with very specific sorts of very abstract or universal objects (truth-values, functions, sequences of these), their properties (identity,

describes what has been presented as 'the science of the divine [göttliche] concept' (6:672). Compare also Tolley 2018.

difference), and the relations between them (tautologicality, satisfaction, validity, etc.), typically pursued as the semantical correlates of a suitably formalized language and usefully modeled within set-theory. What makes these objects, properties, and relations ‘logical’ is that they exist or apply to the most universal domain; the laws and principles that govern these items (e.g. the law of identity, contradiction) are valid of everything; everything has at least logical properties or falls under logical categories; logical modality has the widest scope (what is logically possible is absolutely possible; what is logically impossible is absolutely impossible).²¹

In other words, according to the mathematical-objectivist, logic is no longer specifically ‘about’ thinking at all. Instead, logic is essentially about the most universal (and in this sense: ‘formal’) properties and relations that obtain between anything whatsoever (identity, difference, self-identity, etc). To be sure, logic does come into some relation with thinking: since logic is about the most general properties, relations, and laws that obtain with respect to anything which can *be*, they will also obtain with respect to anything which can *be thought about*. Its laws also hold of all acts and contents, considered as mathematical entities in their own right (e.g. as members of sets of thoughts, etc.). Nevertheless, at least officially, the sphere of logic is not in any way constrained by the sphere of what can be thought about; if there is any dependence, it will go in the opposite direction.

From the Hegelian point of view, traditional mathematical-objectivism will look most like the first position of thinking (‘metaphysics’), insofar as the mathematical-objectivist is largely unconcerned to specify any role for thinking itself in the basic articulation of what they call specifically ‘logical’ (formal) properties, relations, laws, etc. Beyond the assertion of the existence of such items, and the implicit claim that they can be thought of and known, there is little attempt to explain how or why such correlation between thinking and the objects of logic should obtain or even be possible, let alone knowable – nor is there an attempt to provide an analysis of other ‘epistemological’ concepts, such as that of ‘science’. None of these concepts are themselves taken to be among the basic concepts of logic proper.

Despite these differences, however, there is a further respect in which Hegel’s conception *does* overlap with these universalist-objectivist commitments – and in this way actually pushes Hegel away from the other two conceptions. Given the afore-listed table of contents of Hegel’s own *Logics*, it might come as a surprise to some readers to learn that Hegel himself *also* means for his own logic to be ‘universal’ – and indeed ‘formal’ – in a parallel respect. This is because Hegel, too, agrees that

21 For the laws and properties view, compare Russell 1918; for the properties view, compare Tarski 1986 and Sher 1991; for the modality view, compare Williamson 2013.

logic should not occupy itself with anything that is peculiar to one specific kind of concrete reality – including specifically human subjectivity and its activity. The two main kinds of concrete reality that Hegel identifies are ‘nature’ and ‘spirit [Geist]’, which are themselves divided up into several moments or aspects (or ‘shapes’): nature divides into mechanical, physical (dynamical, chemical), and organic shapes; spirit divides into subjective (roughly: the consciousness, self-consciousness, and reason of individuals), objective (roughly: the family, corporation, state, history), and then absolute shapes (art, religion, philosophy itself). At key points in his *Logics*, Hegel takes pains to emphasize that logic should not concern itself with how its subject matter is realized in any concrete shape of nature or spirit, but only with the ‘scaffolding [Gerüst]’ that is common to both:

Concerning the subject-matter [of logic] itself, we should note, first of all, that each of the shapes of intuition, representation, and the like belong to self-conscious spirit, and so are *not* as such to be considered in the logical science. The pure determinations of being, essence, and concept surely constitute the foundation [Grundlage] and the inner simple scaffold [Gerüst] of the forms of spirit. Spirit as intuiting just as much as sensory consciousness is in the determinacy of immediate being, just as spirit as representing and also perceiving consciousness has raised itself to the step of essence or reflection. These concrete shapes, however, *belong in the logical science just as little as* the concrete forms which the logical determinations in nature assume, and which would be space and time, then filled space and time, then inorganic nature, and organic nature.

(WL 6:257; my ital.)

In fact, in notes from his lectures, Hegel claims that ‘all the other philosophical sciences, the philosophy of nature and the philosophy of spirit’ should be thought of instead as ‘applied [angewandte] logic’ (cf. EL §24 Z2 8:84). By contrast, Hegel thinks that his own list of logical ‘forms’ are a part of ‘pure’ logic, and therefore satisfy something close to the unrestricted universality thesis of the mathematical-objectivist: since these are the forms of ‘what is absolute’, these forms characterize (at least in some sense) absolutely everything. This can be seen throughout the *Logics*, but perhaps reemerges especially clearly throughout the EL, with Hegel describing the successive ‘logical determinations’ as determinations of ‘the absolute’, such that *everything*, for example, is (has being), has an essence, has a concept.²² Hegel signals his kinship with

22 In the first sections of the EL proper, concerning the first ‘logical determination’ of ‘being [sein]’, and generally concerning ‘logical determinations in general’, Hegel claims that they ‘can be viewed as definitions of the absolute’ (EL §85), such that ‘the

universalist-objectivism in his acceptance of the Anaxagorean thought that ‘understanding and reason [Verstand, Vernunft] are *in the world*’ (EL §24 Anm 8:81).

Conversely, though their continued reference to subjectivity might seem to draw the semantic-objectivist and pragmatist-intersubjectivist closer to Hegel, it should be noted that the subjectivity *they* mean to refer to is not itself ‘absolute’ in Hegel’s sense. Because of this, their reference to subjectivity actually seems to push them further away from Hegel, precisely to the extent to which, unlike Hegel, neither means to embrace a kind of universalism with respect to *their* logical forms. Bolzano, Frege, and Husserl all mean to sharply separate the specifically logical ‘forms’ (of ‘propositions *an sich*’, of ‘thought’, of ‘meaning’) from the most general metaphysical or ontological forms of being.²³ Brandom, too, means for the normative principles and statuses to pertain first and foremost only to intersubjective inferential activity, and, in fact, in some sense might never refer to anything beyond this activity.²⁴ This, however, leaves it open that *not everything* there is will fall within the domain of ‘what is logical’, or essentially incorporates what is logical in its very being. On both accounts, the domain of logic is therefore not absolutely universal.

In any case, one of the most salient contrasts that will have already been felt to distance all three of these conceptions from Hegel’s own is Hegel’s thesis that it is necessary to ascribe a kind of active *causality* to thinking, one that would seem to go well beyond anything that any of these three positions would ascribe to what they take to be ‘what is logical’. For Hegel (again, echoing Anaxagoras), the thinking in question is a ‘principle [Prinzip]’ of the world (WL 5:44), as part of what produces and thereby ‘rules [regiert]’ the world (12:23). Of course, it is this last commitment that lies behind Hegel’s most infamous claim about what is logical – namely, that the subject matter of logic and *theology* coincide and that logic ‘is *the presentation of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation [Erschaffung] of nature and a finite spirit*’ (WL 5:44).

It can be wondered, however, just how different in principle this is from what we might say if contemporary science purported to achieve a ‘grand unified theory’ that could ‘explain’ the emergence of the universe itself, and we were to ask: what kind of thing (ontological category) are the basic elements that structure this explanation? For it to be a theory

absolute is being’ (EL §86 Anm), ‘the absolute is essence’ (EL §112 Anm), ‘the absolute is identical with itself’ (EL §115 Anm) – and then also glosses this commitment as entailing: ‘*everything* is differentiated’ (EL §117 Anm), ‘*everything* is a concept’, ‘*everything* is a judgment’ (EL §181 Anm), and so on.

23 This is so, even if Husserl and possibly Frege, too, seem to embrace a kind of correlationism between the logical forms and the forms of being (compare Husserl 1900).

24 This is meant to pick up on Brandom’s general proposal to ‘explain away’ both sense (conceptual content) and reference through inferential goodness (cf. Brandom 2000).

and an explanation (to be *science*), Hegel will insist that its elements must be thoughts. Yet if there were to be a genuine science of the coming to be of the universe – and with it, nature, finite spirit, and everything else; the coming to be of being itself – and if therefore there were truths about this coming-to-be, then, Hegel will insist, only a thinking that is *in perfect agreement with* this originary coming-to-be will itself be of the right shape to be true.

The main issue, of course, will be: what would this perfect agreement itself consist in? – which is itself a version of the general question that Hegel takes to animate logic itself: what would it mean for science to be true? Whether or not Hegel's own answer to this question is ultimately a convincing one, my hope is that the foregoing suffices to motivate Hegel's insistence that the question itself is one of deep interest for logic in particular, as it has traditionally been conceived. I hope also to have shown, more generally, how Hegel's reflections on this question, and his resulting reconception of the domain of *das Logische*, draws direct motivations from more familiar Kantian advances in the philosophy of thinking. I hope, finally, to have at least begun to sketch the extent to which Hegel's own view, suitably recontextualized, might nevertheless be seen to overlap with more recent post-Kantian developments in philosophy of logic on several fundamental points – despite first appearances to the contrary.²⁵

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