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Hegel's Critique of Metaphysics

Béatrice Longuenesse

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HEGEL'S CRITIQUE OF METAPHYSICS

Hegel's *Science of Logic* has received less attention than his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, but Hegel himself took it to be his highest philosophical achievement and the backbone of his system. The present book focuses on this most difficult of Hegel's published works. Béatrice Longuenesse offers a close analysis of core issues, including discussions of what Hegel means by "dialectical logic," the role and meaning of "contradiction" in Hegel's philosophy, and Hegel's justification for the provocative statement that "what is rational is actual, what is actual is rational." She examines both Hegel's debt and his polemical reaction to Kant, and shows in great detail how his project of a "dialectical" logic can be understood only in light of its relation to Kant's "transcendental" logic. This book will appeal to anyone interested in Hegel's philosophy and its influence on contemporary philosophical discussion.

BÉATRICE LONGUENESSE is Professor of Philosophy at New York University. She is author of *Kant on the Human Standpoint* (2005).

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ABBREVIATIONS

Christianity	*The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate*
Diff.	*The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*
E. L.	*Encyclopedia Logic*
Faith	*Faith and Knowledge*
H. P.	*Lectures on the History of Philosophy*
L.	*Science of Logic*
L. A.	*Lectures on Fine Arts [Aesthetics]*
Letters	*Hegel: the Letters*
Phen.	*Phenomenology of Spirit*
R.	*Principles of the Philosophy of Right*

NOTE ON CITATIONS

When I talk of "Hegel's Logic" I primarily mean the logic expounded in Hegel's *Science of Logic*, published in 1812 and 1816. Its first part, Objective Logic, is in two books: Book 1, Being (published in 1812, with a second, revised edition in 1831); and Book 2, the Doctrine of Essence (published in 1812). Its second part is the Subjective Logic (published in 1816). See G. W. F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Nordrhein-Westfälische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1967), vol. 11 (Erster Band, Die objective Logik: erstes Buch, Die Lehre vom Sein; zweites Buch, Die Lehre vom Wesen) and vol. 12 (Zweiter Band, Die subjektive Logik oder Die Lehre vom Begriff), trans. A. V. Miller, as *Hegel's Science of Logic* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1969). Hegel wrote a more condensed version of his Logic as the first part of his *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, published in 1817, with two new editions, one (heavily revised) in 1827 and the other (slightly revised) in 1830. See *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (1830), A: Die Wissenschaft der Logik, in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 13, trans. William Wallace, with Foreword by I. N. Findlay, 3rd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975 [1st edn 1873]). Works of Hegel will be cited in the Akademie edition cited above, with volume and page (e.g. *GW*4, 65); this reference to the German text will be followed by a reference to the Suhrkamp edition, *Werke in Zwanzig Bänden*, Theorie Werkausgabe (Frankfurt-am-Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1971) with volume and page (e.g. *S.* 5, 82), and finally a reference to the translation in English indicated in the endnote upon its first occurrence, and in the bibliography (e.g. *L.* 81). A list of abbreviations for references to Hegel's texts and to English translations is provided on the previous page. All other references will be in footnotes, except references to Kant.

As is common usage, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is cited by reference to the 1781 edition (A) and 1787 edition (B). All other works of Kant will be cited by reference to Kant's *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Königlichen Preußischen (later Deutschen) Akademie der Wissenschaften, 29 vols. (Berlin, 1902–83; 2nd edn De Gruyter, 1968, for vols. 1–9), abbreviated as AA. Standard English translations are indicated in the bibliography; references to the German edition are in the margins of all recent English translations.

PREFACE

The first part of the present book is the translation of my 1981 *Hegel et la Critique de la Métaphysique: étude sur la Doctrine de l'Essence* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin). The second part consists of two essays written in the early nineties, in which I offered a somewhat different perspective on Hegel's philosophical project.

Hegel et la Critique de la Métaphysique was originally written as my Thèse de Doctorat de Troisième Cycle (Ph.D.), which I defended in the fall of 1980 at the University of Paris-Sorbonne. Throughout the late sixties and seventies in France, the question of the relation between Marx's historical materialism and Hegel's dialectical method had been at the forefront of philosophical discussions. A view prominently defended by Louis Althusser was that the true ancestor of Marx's naturalistic treatment of society and history was not Hegel's dialectical method, plagued with metaphysical idealism and a teleological view of nature and society, but Spinoza's version of naturalistic monism. My interest in Hegel's *Science of Logic* was thus sparked initially by my interest in Marx, in contemporary political and social theory inspired by Marx, and in Althusser's provocative statements concerning Marx's and Lenin's relation to Hegel. One can find traces of this original interest in Part I of the present book, especially in Chapters 2 ("Twists and turns of Hegel's contradiction") and 3 ("*Ground* against *concept*?") where my discussion of Hegel's notions of "contradiction" and "ground" (*Grund*) is also a discussion of (then) prominent Marxist interpretations of Hegel such as those (in France) of Louis Althusser or (in Italy) of Galvano Della Volpe and Lucio Colletti.

Given this starting point, my study of the *Science of Logic* took an unexpected turn when I realized that no single step Hegel took in that work could be understood except against the background of Hegel's

debt to Kant's transcendental philosophy. My interest in Hegel's exposition of "Ground" in the Doctrine of Essence of the *Science of Logic* had initially been elicited by the fact that Hegel appeared to offer a concept of totality, and of the complex correlations between an empirical multiplicity of elements and the unifying structures organizing them, far more complex and interesting than the teleological model Althusser attributed to Hegel. But now in exploring Hegel's explanation of "ground" it became obvious to me that Hegel's version of the relation between empirical multiplicity and its unifying principle was inspired by Kant's analysis of the relation between the inexhaustible multiplicity of possible empirical entities and their law-like unity, and by Kant's account of the dependence of the law-like unity of nature on what he called the "transcendental unity of self-consciousness," namely the principle of mental activity that ensures that all our representations will belong to a single unified consciousness. Similarly, in studying Hegel's section on "contradiction" I became convinced that Hegel's treatment of "identity," "difference," "opposition," and "contradiction" could be understood only in light of Kant's treatment of the very same concepts in the chapter of the *Critique of Pure Reason* entitled "The Amphiboly of Concepts of Reflection." Indeed, Kant's description of those concepts as "concepts of reflection" is echoed in Hegel's description of them as "essentialities or determinations of reflection." Thus a project that started as an exploration of Marx's debt (or lack thereof) to Hegel, became an exploration of Hegel's response to Kant.

There is a striking similarity between the interpretation I proposed of the relation between Hegel's "speculative" logic and Kant's "transcendental" logic, and the view defended by Robert Pippin in his groundbreaking *Hegel's Idealism: the Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge University Press, 1989). Pippin's book is broader in scope, offering an interpretation of Hegel's system as the culmination of Kant's transcendental enterprise freed from the various guises of Kant's dualism: dualism of reason and sensibility, of thing in itself and appearance, of natural necessity and freedom. My own book focused on only a few chapters of the Doctrine of Essence (Book 2 of the first part of the *Science of Logic*: "The Objective Logic"). The reason for this choice, after I realized my interest was shifting from Hegel as an ancestor of Marx to Hegel as a descendant of Kant, was that Hegel himself described more specifically the second book of the *Science of Logic* (to which "ground" and "contradiction" belong) as the true successor to Kant's Transcendental Logic.

The particular chapters of the Doctrine of Essence I focused on seemed especially appropriate to bring out this Kantian legacy as well as Hegel's transformation of it.

The completed thesis had four chapters, plus a short introduction and conclusion which now introduce and conclude Part I of the present book. Chapter 1 is an analysis of the relation between Hegel's dialectical logic and Kant's transcendental logic. Chapters 2 and 3 analyze Hegel's treatment of "contradiction" and "ground." Chapter 4 offers an interpretation of Hegel's complex treatment of modal categories (actuality, possibility, necessity) and of the transition from these categories to the single most important concept of Part II of the *Science of Logic* (The Subjective Logic, or Doctrine of the Concept): freedom. Except for a few attempts at making my formulations clearer, I have left the original book unchanged, becoming Part I of the present book. Any attempt at amending it would have led to complete rewriting, and it was not my intention to undertake such a rewriting at this time. Thus the first part of the book bears the mark of the considerably younger philosophical apprentice I was at the time.

The two additional essays that now form Part II introduce a somewhat different perspective, which in some respects corrects my original understanding of Hegel's intentions in the *Science of Logic*. Let me briefly explain how.

It remained unclear to me, in light of my analyses of the Doctrine of Essence, how much of my interpretation of Hegel's Logic in relation to Kant's transcendental philosophy still held up when one proceeds from the Objective Logic to the Subjective Logic or Doctrine of the Concept, where Hegel takes himself to move decisively beyond Kant toward his own "speculative logic." More specifically, I was unsure how much of my defense of Hegel as the successor of Kant's critique of dogmatic metaphysics still stands once one moves to Hegel's Subjective Logic. And I was unsure how well Hegel's view of the relation between "ground" and "conditions," unity of thought and plurality of empirical elements, holds up in the face of Hegel's exposition of objectivity as the self-development of the concept.

I therefore embarked on a systematic study of the Subjective Logic. The first hurdle along the way was the extensive praise and criticism of Kant's Transcendental Deduction of the Categories with which Hegel opens this second part of his *Science of Logic*. In order to form for myself a clearer view of Hegel's position and its relation to Kant's, I returned to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and fell head first into the ocean of Kant's

philosophy. Instead of a book on Hegel's Subjective Logic, I produced a book on Kant's first Critique (*Kant et le Pouvoir de Juger*, whose original French version appeared in 1993; its expanded English version, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*, was published in 1998 by Princeton University Press). In the meantime, I did come up with at least some answers to the questions just mentioned, concerning the overall import of Hegel's Logic. These answers are presented in the two chapters that form Part II of the book.

Chapter 5 ("Point of view of man or knowledge of God. Kant and Hegel on concept, judgment, and reason") is a revised version of my contribution to the conference organized in August 1995 by Sally Sedgwick on "The Reception of Kant's Critical Philosophy: Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel." Its perspective is quite different from that of my earlier book. The focus now shifts from the Doctrine of Essence to Hegel's notions of "concept," "judgment," and "reason" in the Subjective Logic. I analyze the change in the meaning of these notions from Kant's transcendental to Hegel's speculative logic, finding help in an earlier text of Hegel, the 1801 *Faith and Knowledge*, where Hegel offers a systematic evaluation of Kant's standpoint in all three *Critiques* and defines his own philosophical project in contrast to Kant's. While Hegel's standpoint undergoes significant changes from *Faith and Knowledge* to the *Science of Logic* (I lay out some of these changes at the end of the chapter), nevertheless the earlier text is invaluable in helping us understand Hegel's radical revision of Kant's notion of "reason" and his related revisions, at least in the context of "speculative" logic, of Kant's notions of "concept" and "judgment."

The original version of Chapter 6 ("Hegel on Kant on judgment") was written and published in French in 1992. Its main focus is Hegel's notion of "Judgment" (as expounded in the Subjective Logic) in contrast to Kant's. Despite his harsh criticism of Kant's table of logical functions of judgment and what he deems its "empirical" character, Hegel seems faithfully to follow the pattern established by Kant in his table, consisting of four main titles of judgment (quantity, quality, relation, modality), and three divisions under each title (affirmative, negative, infinite; universal, particular, singular; categorical, hypothetical, disjunctive; problematic, assertoric, apodictic). I show how and why in Hegel's reading, the four titles and their three respective divisions distinguish judgments considered not just in their form but also in their content, and what this tells us about the shift from Kant's "general formal" to Hegel's "speculative" logic.

Chapters 5 and 6 both end on a fairly negative note. In Chapter 5, I express doubts about Hegel's charge against Kant, according to which Kant was wrong to give up on his own most important discovery when he treated as a merely negative notion the idea of an intuitive understanding, which Kant introduced both in the first and in the third *Critique* to illuminate *a contrario* the nature and limitations of our own finite, discursive understanding. In Chapter 6, I express doubts about Hegel's reinterpretation of Kant's four titles and twelve divisions of elementary logical functions of judgment in the context of his own "absolute judgment," and about Hegel's definition of "the rational" as a kind of realized syllogism: an individual entity (e.g. a house, or a human community) instantiating a universal concept (e.g. "family home," "State") by virtue of its particular constitution (e.g. the architectural structure of the house, the Constitution that organizes the community). How do my doubts about those points relate to the more positive assessment I gave of Hegel's enterprise in the Doctrine of Essence?

In the Introduction to the *Science of Logic*, Hegel proclaims his debt to Kant's idea that metaphysics should now be *logic*. What Hegel means by this, I proposed in my study of Hegel's Doctrine of Essence, is that rather than the empty endeavor to come up with a science of being *qua* being or a science of the universal determinations of things as they are in themselves, metaphysics after Kant is a science of being as *being thought*. In other words, metaphysics is an investigation of the universal determinations of thought at work in any attempt to think what is. Hegel goes even further than Kant, I maintained, in claiming that the kinds of entities under consideration depend on the kind of thought at work in individuating them, or on what Hegel calls the "attitude of thought toward objectivity." This being so, "truth" in metaphysical thinking does not consist in the agreement of thought to an object supposed to be independent of it, but rather in the grasp of the fundamental set of thought-determinations by which an object is individuated, as well as the grasp of the place of these thought-determinations in what Hegel calls the movement of thinking in general, i.e. the space of concepts under which any object at all is determined. Grasping the universal features of that movement of thinking is what is supposed to be achieved when we reach the "Absolute Idea," the final chapter in Hegel's *Science of Logic*. According to the interpretation of Hegel's view I offered in *Hegel et la Critique de la Métaphysique*, this was how Hegel claimed to refute both the empty claims of pre-Kantian dogmatic metaphysics and Kant's subjectivism and psychological idealism: grasping the movement

of thought (the set of conceptual determinations) by which a thing is individuated as the kind of thing it is was grasping *die Sache selbst*, the very matter at hand. It was grasping what it is that makes the thing as it appears the kind of appearance it is, by grasping its proper place in the thought process that provides the framework for any determination of thing.

However, this way of characterizing Hegel's project in the *Science of Logic* appeared radically insufficient once I started exploring Hegel's endorsement of Kant's "intuitive understanding" as "the true idea of reason" and Hegel's related metaphysical reconstructions of Kant's notions of "concept" and "judgment" in the Subjective Logic. In its early version (as I analyze it in Hegel's 1801 *Faith and Knowledge*) and even more in its mature version (in the Introduction to the Subjective Logic in the *Science of Logic*) Hegel's endorsement of Kant's "intuitive understanding" is the key to Hegel's claim that the *Science of Logic* expounds "the presentation of God, as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and of a finite spirit" or again his claim that the concept of God, rather than "I think," is the proper starting point of all philosophy. This radical shift of perspective is what I emphasize in taking up as the title of Part II of this book an expression present in the title of my 1995 essay (now Chapter 5): "Point of view of man or knowledge of God." The alternative under examination is that between Kant's avowed limitation of his critical philosophy to the human, "finite" standpoint (both theoretical and practical) and Hegel's claim to bring about, in expounding the "pure thought-determination" of the *Science of Logic,* precisely the kind of absolute standpoint Kant described as that of an "intuitive understanding" and presented, in §§76–77 of the *Critique of Judgment*, as a mere problematic concept meant to clarify by contrast the nature and limitations of human understanding.

Of course, it is by no means obvious that taking into account Hegel's emphasis on the standpoint of an intuitive understanding or "God's knowledge" as the backbone to the whole enterprise of the *Science of Logic*, is incompatible with the analysis of the Doctrine of Essence outlined above. On the contrary, one might read it along the very same lines of interpretation, and say that in emphasizing – against Kant – the importance of Kant's appeal to intuitive understanding in the third *Critique*, and in relating it to the Transcendental Ideal (the idea of an *ens realissimum* as a necessary idea of pure reason) in the first *Critique*, Hegel completes his appropriation of Kant's transcendental Logic by calling us to the ever-renewed task of assigning each and every one of the

thought determinations expounded in the Logic its proper place in the development of the whole. Correspondingly, the notions of "concept" and "judgment" expounded in the Subjective Logic would acquire a meaning peculiar to the context of the *Science of Logic*, in which "concept" refers to the unified process of conceptualizing Kant described as the transcendental unity of apperception and "judgment" refers to this process in its relation to what resists and ceaselessly reactivates it: the whole of reality *to be* conceptualized. Such a reading would have some kinship with the interpretation of Hegel's project Robert Brandom derives from his reading of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.[1] It would also be in continuity with the interpretation of Hegel's Logic as a radicalization of Kant's transcendental philosophy that I offered in the first part of this book, in the course of my analysis of Hegel's Doctrine of Essence.

This is an attractive reading, but one that does not fully do justice to Hegel's claim to have restored metaphysics against the Kantian strictures. Understanding this claim in its own terms is what I try to do when I explain it in light of Hegel's endorsement and transformation of Kant's "intuitive understanding" and Hegel's subsequent characterization of judgment as the self-division (*Urteilung*) of infinite being. For reasons I explain in Chapters 5 and 6, I do not think Hegel makes a convincing case for restoring metaphysics along these lines: this is the negative note on which both chapters end. Nevertheless, I offer the outline of a compromise that would preserve both Kant's prudent restriction of any metaphysical endeavor to the strictures of the "human standpoint" and Hegel's holistic and dynamic exposition of "pure thought-determinations." Such a compromise takes nothing away from the reading of Hegel's Doctrine of Essence I propose in Part I of this book, and it is somewhere along the lines of the deliberately one-sided reconstruction of the Subjective Logic I suggested above. This kind of reconstruction by no means excuses us from the task of understanding where and why it differs from Hegel's original view or what we might be missing in adopting it. On the contrary, becoming aware of such contrasts is part of what makes reading philosophers of the past an exciting and surprising endeavor.[2]

I do not want to close this Preface without signaling what I take to be the major limitation of my interpretation of Hegel's Doctrine of Essence in the 1981 book. There my reading of Hegel's relation to Kant was almost exclusively focused on Hegel's response to Kant's transcendental logic. I now think I should have given more attention to the fact

that one of the most important ways in which Hegel transforms Kant's transcendental logic consists in this: for Hegel, the relation between the unity of thought and the multiplicity of empirical elements has inseparably theoretical and practical aspects. So for instance, when I analyze the relation between the unity of *ground* and the multiplicity of *conditions* (in Chapter 3) I analyze it in light of the relation, in Kant, between transcendental unity of apperception and the empirical manifold it unifies for cognition. But just as important, in Hegel's elaboration of the relation between "ground" and "conditions," is the relation between what Kant called practical reason, with its self-prescribed imperative to order natural determinations for action according to its own norm (freedom), and these natural determinations themselves, which have their own law-like unity, cognized under the unity of apperception. The complex relation between these two kinds of unifying activity in the face of the contingent multiplicity of the empirical, finds its way into Hegel's notion of "ground" and then, in the Subjective Logic, into those of "concept," and "Idea." In the second part of the present book I do emphasize the fact that Hegel's *Science of Logic* is to be read in light of Hegel's appropriation of all three *Critiques*, not just the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Needless to say, a lot more remains to be done to take the full measure of Hegel's achievement in this regard.

A work that spans so many years is bound to have incurred more debts than can be recounted. Among the tireless interlocutors, critics and friends who have helped me along this particular journey, I must at least mention Alexandre Adler for our discussions of Hegel and Marx, many years ago; Olivier Schwartz for more conversations than either of us, I am sure, can remember; Wayne Waxman for innumerable questions about Hegel and Kant, and for forcing me to doubt every single one of my unexamined assumptions. I was fortunate to benefit, over the years, from the advice and kind support of Bernard Bourgeois. Thanks to Aaron Garrett for suggesting the translation of *Hegel et la Critique de la Métaphysique*, and for insisting on its happening when I strongly doubted it was a good idea. My very special thanks to Terry Pinkard and to Robert Pippin for supporting the project of this translation and for their own work in making Hegel studies such an exciting field of investigation. Thanks to Robert Brandom, Michael Forster, and Paul Franks for illuminating conversations about Hegel's philosophy.

I am grateful to Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin for allowing the translation into English of *Hegel et la Critique de la Métaphysique* and to Nicole Simek for providing an excellent translation, which I revised only for purposes of clarification of my own views. I hope she will not find I have defaced her fine work too badly. The original version of Chapter 6 appeared in French under the title: "Hegel, Lecteur de Kant sur le Jugement" (in *Philosophie*, 36 [October 1992]). I am grateful to the editors of *Philosophie* for allowing its translation into English and to Nicole Simek for producing an excellent translation of this essay as well. The original English version of Chapter 5 appeared in the volume edited by Sally Sedgwick, *The Reception of Kant's Critical Philosophy: Kant, Fichte, Hegel* (Cambridge University Press, 2000). My thanks to Sally for the fantastic conference she organized, for her hard work on that volume, and for allowing me to reproduce my contribution as Chapter 5 in this book.

I am, once again, deeply grateful to Hilary Gaskin for her invaluable help in seeing this book through the bumps of translation, revision, and production.

Michael Taylor was a wonderful assistant in producing this English version. He checked all the bibliographical references, going to great lengths in tracing English translations of texts I knew only in French, German, or Italian. He checked translations of Hegel, provided countless stylistic and substantive suggestions about my own text, and put together the Bibliography. All in all, he made working on this volume not only more manageable, but incomparably more pleasant than it would have been if I had done it on my own.

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I completed the final tasks of proof-reading and putting together the Index while on leave at the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin. I am grateful to New York University for allowing me to take this leave, and to the Wissenschaftskolleg for the wonderful work environment it provides.

This book is dedicated to Rolf-Peter Horstmann, as a small token of gratitude for his kindness and generosity, and for keeping alive the flame of German Idealism in Berlin and elsewhere with his inimitable combination of rigor, wit, and skepticism about it all.

PART I

HEGEL'S CRITIQUE OF METAPHYSICS: A STUDY OF THE DOCTRINE OF ESSENCE

INTRODUCTION

Numerous are the witnesses now coming forward in favor of a revision of the trial in dogmatism which Hegelian philosophy has had to endure. Hegel's Logic was the first accused in this trial. Benedetto Croce noted in his time that British Idealism had done Hegel a disservice by presenting Hegel's Logic as a systematic worldview and a universal method of knowledge.[1] The philosophies of history that flourished at the end of the nineteenth century, as well as one version of Marxism – that which finds expression in Friedrich Engels' *Dialectic of Nature* – played a similar role. A romantic description of universal laws common to nature, history, and thought was attributed to a thinker who adamantly opposed philosophical romanticism. As a result, the mere appeal to common sense all too often sufficed to dismiss Hegel's philosophy and, in particular, Hegel's Logic.

Today, however, the situation is different. In his Introduction to the issue of *Hegel-Studien* devoted to "The Science of Logic and the Logic of Reflection," Dieter Henrich writes:

> After the revival of Hegelian philosophy at the beginning of this century, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* has for a long time been the center of attention in Hegel studies. [...] The *Science of Logic* was considered to be evidence of a genius that outlived itself, in which the real motivations and force of Hegel become visible only indirectly; and at the same time, as a work which had inspired an anachronistic Victorian Hegelianism.
>
> This judgment has since undergone revision. [...] It is only after 1960 that one began to see attempts at a commentary [of the *Science of Logic*] that did not merely reproduce the style of Hegel's thought, but which described it from a somewhat distanced point of view, an indispensable condition for the success of any analysis.[2]

Thus commentators have begun to break away from the pathetic rewriting *ad infinitum* of Hegelian triads, and instead, to focus their attention on Hegel's challenge to the very nature of philosophical discourse. In France, Gérard Lebrun's recent book, *La Patience du concept*, is the most developed example of such an approach.[3]

In this context, reading Hegel's Logic as a critique of metaphysics has seemed to me particularly promising. I shall suggest in what follows that the meaning and systematic coherence of the concepts Hegel expounds in the Logic are thus brought into new light. The reader will be sole judge whether the analyses I propose, in Chapters 2, 3, and 4, of Hegel's concepts of "contradiction," "ground," and "actuality," confirm this view.

I first need to explain what I mean by the word "critique." Using this term is locating Hegel's Logic in the lineage of Kantian philosophy, and making of this lineage an important organizing principle of the Logic in its entirety. This point will be explained in Chapter 1 of this work. However, I should warn from the outset that here the meaning I am giving the term "critique" is different from the meaning we inherit from Kant. The critique I am attributing to Hegel is not the determination of the powers and limits of reason, supposed to be the indispensable preliminary to assessing any claim to metaphysical knowledge. Rather, it is the exposition of the very concepts of metaphysics, not in order to relegate them to the prop room of a dismissed dogmatism, but rather in order to call upon them to account for their own place and role in the activity of thinking.

It is a fairly well-known point that the "truth" of concepts, according to Hegel, is not their purported conformity to an object independent of them. Rather, it is their conformity to a project of thinking that is realized in them. In the *Science of Logic*, the initial project is to characterize *being*. But this project immediately collapses, and the *Science of Logic* is the painstaking exposition of the successive attempts to respond to this collapse and to reformulate the project in such a way that it can be realized. What are these new formulations, and in what way do they define a project that can be realized, indeed that is supposed to be realized by the whole process of thinking expounded in the *Science of Logic*? In other words, how can concepts be evaluated as to their "truth," if this means their adequacy to the project they are supposed to accomplish? However difficult it is to answer such a question, accepting that these are the terms of Hegel's problem in the *Science of Logic* is a necessary condition for even beginning to enter the text.

In all fairness, Hegel would have rejected the term "critique" to characterize what he is doing in the *Science of Logic*. For him, "critique" is this inconsistent attitude which consists in wanting to learn how to swim before jumping into the water, i.e. wanting to determine a priori the rights of reason instead of considering what reason *in fact* does, and produces. Now my defense here is that the use I am making of the term "critique" does not so much relate it, retrospectively, to Kant (although again, Hegel's relation to Kant will be a guiding concern of this book) as prospectively, to Marx. What I am proposing is that Hegel offers a critique of metaphysics in the way Marx will later offer a "critique of political economy." Or rather, Marx offers a critique of political economy like Hegel, *and not Kant*, offered a critique of metaphysics. Marx does not ask: under what conditions is a political economy possible? Rather, he asks: what is going on, that is, what is thought, *in fact*, in political economy? What are the referents and reciprocal relations of its concepts? This way of proceeding is precisely the same as the one Hegel adopts in his *Science of Logic*. It does not consist in asking under what conditions metaphysics is possible. Rather, it consists in investigating what metaphysics is about, and how the project of metaphysics needs to be redefined if one is to come to any satisfactory accomplishment of its self-set goal.

By thus forcing the term "critique" into Hegel's thought, I would like above all to suggest the following idea: at every stage in the *Science of Logic*, the transition from one concept to the next is inseparable from a particular stand taken with respect to the status of these concepts (the way they relate to other concepts, and the way they present a content). Moreover, every transition from one concept to the next is driven by the effort to elucidate further, not only the content of the concept (what is thereby thought), but the nature of its relation to "being" (in Part 1, Book 1 of the *Science of Logic*, Being), to something "actual" (in Part 1, Book 2, the Doctrine of Essence), or to an "object" (in Part 2, the Subjective Logic or Doctrine of the Concept).[4] Taking once again our inspiration from Kant, we could say that Hegel's Logic is inseparably a *metaphysical* and a *transcendental* deduction of the categories of metaphysics: a justification of claims concerning their content as concepts (what is thereby being thought: "metaphysical deduction"), and a justification of claims concerning their relation to objects (or reality, or being: "transcendental deduction").[5] The main goal of this twofold "deduction" is to put an end definitively and radically to all representational illusions, according to which thought could be gauged by any measure

other than itself. Thought, and particularly metaphysical thought, is not the mirror of nature. And yet it is neither arbitrary nor subjective (it is not relative to the particular standpoint of individual thinkers or empirically specified group of thinkers). This, again, is a Kantian theme. But as we shall see, Hegel gives this theme a very different meaning than the meaning it had for Kant.

From this perspective, we can see how the Doctrine of Essence plays a key role in the *Science of Logic*. The question of the "essence" of things is the metaphysical question *par excellence*. Discerning the "true" essence behind illusory appearances, thus grounding the possibility of truth in knowledge, is a traditional ambition of metaphysics. Yet Hegel, as is well known, refuses any rigid dichotomy between essence and appearance. What is less well known, however, is the significance of this refusal and the ways in which it threatens the very notion of "essence."

Revealing the essence of things, that is, of appearances, is nothing else, according to Hegel, than revealing the movement of thought that constitutes them as appearances. Nothing is revealed *beyond* appearances. Rather, one might say, what is revealed is *hither* with respect to appearances, *this side* of appearances. What is revealed is that an appearance is not *given*; rather, it is *constituted*. To understand the "essence" of appearance is to understand in what movement of thought it is constituted, from what totality of thought-determinations it derives its meaning. As we shall see, Hegel's whole exposition in the section on "contradiction" amounts to dissolving the illusory independence of "things" without, however, refuting their existence. It is a fact that we live in a world of things. Still, we must understand that these things are *our* fact, *our* doing – not in the sense that a philosophy of praxis would give to this statement, which would be too narrow an interpretation, but in the sense of a metaphysical account of the world as constituted by a process of *thinking*.

Such is therefore the main aspect of Hegel's reinterpretation of the notion of "essence": there is not an "essence" for each sensible thing; there is not even a "world of essences" behind the "world of appearances." This second formulation is a common interpretation of Hegel's position: the transition from "Being" to "Essence" in the Logic is supposed to be the transition from things to their relations.[6] Yet Hegel's position is more subtle: the transition from "Being" to "Essence" is the transition from determinations which seem to exist by themselves and to be immediately presented in "things," to the revelation that

the apparently most "immediate" determinations are always constituted and organized in the context of a unified process of thinking. It is true that this unity of the process of thinking is initially revealed not in the "things" themselves, but rather in the relations by way of which it becomes necessary to explain them. The whole Doctrine of Essence is the step-by-step exposition of *things* and their *relations*, of what *appears as given* and what is explicitly *constructed by thought* (the "essence" of things). But this exposition also reveals that if it is possible to think an essence for the appearance, to unify things by way of their relations, it is because the same unity of thought that determines relations and laws, namely essence, was already at work in the very presentation of the appearance. One and the same unity of thought organizes the immediate presentation of things and the understanding of their relations: both being and essence are products of the concept.

Thus Hegel treads on a tightrope between empiricism and dogmatic rationalism. Against empiricism, he refuses to assert that appearance is the ultimate content of thought or the irreducible given on which all thought is supposed to be grounded. But against dogmatic rationalism, he refuses to postulate the existence of anything other than appearance, any kind of rational pattern or ground one should retrieve from things as they initially appear. There is nothing other than appearance, nothing beyond appearance. And yet, appearance is not what is true. This is the demonstration that Hegel tries to make in the Doctrine of Essence. The "true" will be the developed exposition of the concept that organizes appearances even in their most "immediate" presentation, in other words, the exposition of the thought mediations that condition the very production of appearance.

Note that Kantian philosophy too defined itself by way of its twofold struggle, against empiricism and against dogmatic rationalism. Against empiricism, Kant affirms that understanding and reason have concepts of their own that are not derived from the senses. Against dogmatism, he affirms that these concepts yield knowledge only in relation to sensible representations. What, then, is the difference between Kant and Hegel? One way to characterize this difference might be to say that Kant preserves some aspect of each of the two positions he refutes. Like the empiricist who "woke him from his dogmatic slumber,"[7] Kant affirms that the ultimate soil for any of our cognitions is the appearance, the "phenomenon." Like the rationalists, he distinguishes from the cognition of phenomena a cognition of things in themselves which only an intellect freed of its dependence on sensible intuition might

yield. Kant's uncomfortable position is a major source of difficulties in his philosophy, which is in some respects more obscure even than that of Hegel. Kant leaves empiricism behind without leaving it behind, he leaves rationalism behind without leaving it behind. There is a reason for this: Kant preserves a pattern which is common to empiricism and to dogmatic rationalism, and which Hegel calls *representation*. It consists in relating cognition to something radically external to it, whether an empirical given that is not yet thought (appearance), or a rational content that is not yet revealed (essence).[8]

Hegel, for his part, escapes the dilemmas of representation and puts an end to the dualism of essence and appearance by leaving behind the theory of knowledge (e.g. Kant's question: how is knowledge possible at all?) and instead taking up residence in metaphysics, which he takes to be a knowledge that is the world itself, and a world that is, itself, knowledge of the world.[9] For him, essence and appearance are equally constitutive of the world. It would be just as wrong to believe that essence is true by itself as to believe in the truth of appearance. What needs to be understood is how *both* essence *and* appearance are produced, in a systematic unity which is that of the world as thought.

Let me briefly state a few important consequences of this point:

- Hegel's Logic is not a method, if by method one means a general pattern of progression to be followed by all knowledge (or for that matter, a particular pattern of progression to be followed by some particular knowledge, e.g. the method of physics, the method of chemistry, and so on). In this respect it is telling that Paul Feyerabend should have inserted a reference to Hegel's *Science of Logic* at the beginning of his essay *Against Method*.[10] In a way, Hegel's Logic is the anti-method. It makes no claim to providing the structure of any other knowledge than itself. It certainly does not provide any recipe for progress in those sciences which Hegel calls "finite."
- It remains nevertheless that, according to Hegel's repeated assertions (especially in the chapter on the absolute Idea, see *GW* 12, 236-237; *S.* 6, 550; *L.* 825), his Logic is a *method*. It is philosophy as method, or method as philosophy. It is a method in that its mode of exposition (or its "form") is inseparable from its content.
- This is because the Logic deploys, from being to existence, from existence to actuality, from actuality to objectivity, an ontological relativism that finds its resolution only in the unfolding of the totality of the Logic. None of its moments, even the "last," has any truth apart

from all the others. To attempt not only to give an overall account of this unity, but also to elucidate it step by step, always leaves one open to the danger of becoming trapped within the endless re-exposition of the Hegelian system. Taking this risk is nevertheless necessary to understand what motivates the transition from one category to the next.

I hope to convince the reader that the effort is worth pursuing. For, in terms that are deeply influenced by transcendental philosophy, and thus by what is perhaps the illusion of a fundamental unity of thought, Hegel arrives at a formulation of the problem of metaphysics whose force remains in part to be discovered.

1

TRANSCENDENTAL LOGIC AND DIALECTICAL LOGIC: FROM KANT TO HEGEL, A CRITIQUE OF ALL DOGMATIC METAPHYSICS

The *Science of Logic* is a formidably difficult text. The foolhardy reader who dares to approach it is soon left with no other resource than to abandon herself to the engulfing Hegelian waters, or to pass by, and go set up philosophical camp elsewhere. For Hegel's Logic is a discourse that seems to be speaking only about itself and its own logical delirium. In order to grasp something of Hegel's philosophy, it seems that a more feasible approach might be to consider some part of it where it is drawn away from its soliloquy by its object: art (with Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetic*), the State (with Hegel's *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*), history (with Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*).[1] Here at least, there remains some external authority that imposes on philosophical categories the test of their relation to the way things are. On this terrain, i.e. the domain of what Hegel calls the "Philosophy of Spirit," Hegel's teachings continue to haunt our own times by the questions they put at the forefront: the development of human consciousness and its relation to what is external to it; the production of symbolic systems; the State, law, civil society.

However, approaching Hegel through his exoteric teachings is a way of skirting Hegel's project as he defined it. Hegel's claim to "bring philosophy . . . to the goal where it can set aside the title '*love* of knowing' and be *actual* knowing,"[2] his claim to bring philosophy to its completion and end, find in his own eyes their meaning and justification only through the *Science of Logic*. Thus the *Science of Logic* is for Hegel's system what the three *Critiques* together are for Kant's.

How to enter the *Science of Logic*

And yet it looks very much as if Hegel had deliberately shut off all access to what constitutes the center of his system. His Logic appears to defy any attempt at analysis. Its object is pure thought, that is, a thought that is no longer dependent on any object external to it, or even, as in Kant, on sensible intuition. A thought that, in thinking its object, thinks only itself, that is, the categories in which it thinks any object. A thought whose movement cannot be broken down into its elements, nor stopped. For example: the starting point of the *Science of Logic* is Being. However, this starting point is not really one, for the thought of being is an empty thought; thinking simply "being" is thinking nothing, the void; but to think that "being" has no content, or being is nothing, is to be hurled into the flow of determinations in which *something* is thought: to becoming (see *GW* 11, 43; *S.* 5, 82–83; *L.* 82–83). In this game that thought plays with itself, where each determination derives its content only from the one into which it disappears – and then, with the Doctrine of Essence, from the one into which it casts its light, "scheint" (*GW* 11, 248–249; *S.* 6, 23; *L.* 398) – it turns out that "the True is thus the Bacchanalian revel in which no member is not drunk" (*Phenomenology of Spirit*: *GW* 9, 35; *S.* 3, 46; *Phen.* 27). How does one go about analyzing such an orgy?

Might one at least hope for an explanation of what the *genesis* of this process is? What history, what tentative experiments, led thought to settle into this mode? One would be out of luck: for Hegel, the exposition of such a genesis presupposes its end, i.e. it requires that one already be established in the logical element that one wishes to generate. Of course Hegel indicates that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* might be an introduction to the *Science of Logic*:

> In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, I have exhibited consciousness in its progression, from the first immediate opposition of itself and the object, to absolute knowing. This path goes through all the forms of the *relation of consciousness to the object*, and has the *concept of science* for its result. Thus this concept (apart from the fact that it emerges within logic itself) needs no justification here, because it has received it there. (*GW* 11, 20; *S.* 5, 42; *L.* 48)

Indeed, only at the conclusion of the voyage of consciousness described in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* can the separation between subject and object be overcome, thus opening the way to absolute knowing and

therefore to the *Science of Logic*. Could this, then, actually be the genetic story we need in order to settle into what Hegel calls the point of view of science? Not really. For according to Hegel, the progression of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* itself is comprehensible only for someone who already knows that the fantasy of separation from its object with which consciousness struggles is just this: a fantasy.[3] When consciousness finally reaches the term of its voyage, then this truth that drove it all along comes to light: thought only ever thinks *itself*. The consciousness that believes it confronts reality in single combat is only the foam of the wave of thinking that underlies it, in which what is thought is nothing but thought itself.

Consequently, if the *Phenomenology* is, in a sense, an introduction to the *Science of Logic* – insofar as it sets out the necessary progression of consciousness towards absolute knowing – it is also true to say that it *presupposes* the Logic, that is, it presupposes, in its very mode of exposition, the knowledge of the necessary process which unfolds as it were "behind the back" of consciousness.

Thus Hegel writes:

> Consciousness is spirit as concrete knowing, and indeed a knowing which is engrossed in externality; but the progression of this object, like the development of all natural and spiritual life, rests solely on the nature of the pure essentialities which constitute the content of logic. (*GW* 11, 8; *S.* 5, 17; *L.* 28)

We are thus back where we began: we must have already taken up the point of view of the *Science of Logic* in order not only to talk about it, but even to understand how and why we should strive to reach it.[4]

Some sympathetic readers have concluded that there is no point in trying to outsmart Hegel's Logic by questioning its theoretical presuppositions: it has none besides those it constructs in its own movement. It is equally pointless to attempt to submit it to criticism: one cannot speak *of* it without speaking *it*, failing which one is confronted, by those who do speak *it*, with the inadequacy of one's point of view, a point of view incapable of grasping the internal necessity of the movement of the concept. And one is granted the ironic honor of in fact belonging in this movement as one of its moments. Thus, the *Science of Logic* anticipates all possible objections. This is how Gérard Lebrun describes the fortress Hegel has made of his Logic:

> [Hegel's] dialectic will not furnish any information about given contents. One should therefore beware of raising objections to it based on representations. In place of a hasty doctrinal critique, therefore, one will substitute a patient reading. [...] If Hegel's philosophy has broken all ties with representation, it is no longer a doctrine. And if it is no longer a doctrine, there is nothing to object to it. It is only to a doctrine that one can legitimately make objections. As for a discourse, one can only adopt it, stroll through it or go elsewhere. One makes no objections to a discourse, no more than to a path or a landscape.[5]

Yet to defend Hegel's project by thus invoking its radical singularity is hardly satisfactory. True, the novelty of Hegel's position in philosophy lies in large part in the very status Hegel assigns to philosophical discourse. He proclaims that philosophy does not have an object outside itself *about which* its theories are developed. Thus philosophy is radically foreign to representational thinking. The *Science of Logic*, as the first part of Hegel's system of philosophy, is supposed to expound and justify precisely this point: it expounds the movement of thinking within which any object at all (whether it belongs to nature or to "spirit") is thought. Still, a philosophy to which nothing can be objected is of little interest. The surest way to rob Hegel's philosophy of its bite is to make of it a grandiose but self-contained enterprise. The fact that Hegel himself did a lot to contribute to this unfortunate result is of little solace.

Now I suggest that it is possible to get out of the Hegelian circle, by relating it back to its antecedents in the history of philosophy. The idea that philosophy is less defined by *what* it talks about than by the *type of discourse* it inaugurates is not completely new. It has its ancestor in Kant's philosophy. Kant is the first to have focused his attention on the mode of thinking that elaborates metaphysical concepts and thus determines their content. He criticizes metaphysics not so much for forming the ideas of the soul, the world, and God, as for the erroneous view that these ideas might have an object distinct from them or be anything beyond the expression of peculiar demands of reason. Or as Hegel might say: Kant criticizes the erroneous view according to which these ideas are representational, i.e. according to which they define objects that actually exist outside these ideas, which must thus be evaluated as to their truth by their adequacy to those objects. In the same way, Hegel claims for himself the merit of having broken with all representational modes of thinking in order to settle in the standpoint of what he calls "the Concept," where thought becomes conscious of its identity with itself in each and everyone of the contents it thinks.

Bringing Kant and Hegel together in this way may seem paradoxical. After all, is not Hegel's opposition to Kant especially vocal when it comes to Kant's Ideas of reason and Kant's view that these Ideas can have only a regulative role in cognition?[6] However, one should be careful in assessing the import of this disagreement. It does not concern the nature of the Ideas of rationalist metaphysics. On the contrary, Hegel recognizes Kant's merit for having shown that Ideas have no other content than the systematic unity reason brings to the operations of the understanding: that they have therefore no relation to any object given in sensible intuition. However, far from concluding, as Kant does, that they have neither objectivity nor truth, Hegel maintains that they have the highest degree of truth.

> Would one ever have thought that philosophy would deny truth to intelligible essences [*den intelligiblen Wesen . . . die Wahrheit absprechen würde*] because they lack the spatial and temporal material of sensibility? (*GW* 12, 23; *S.* 6, 262; *L.* 590)

One might then suggest the following: Hegel pushes to its limits a critique of representation that Kant had only just begun. Kant revolutionized philosophy by affirming that thought does not model itself on its object, but rather, the object of thought models itself on thought. In natural science, what is given in sensibility becomes an object of knowledge only by conforming to the categories of the understanding. In special metaphysics (rational psychology, cosmology, and theology), in which no sensible given provides a content to thought, Ideas have no other content than that of being the expression of reason's demand for systematicity. Hegel follows upon Kant's footsteps and maintains that thought is to itself its own object. He continues Kant's Copernican Revolution, but only to deprive it of all relevance: strictly speaking, once we have reached the standpoint of the *Science of Logic*, the respective priority of thought and its object is not even an issue any more.

The Kantian ancestry of his project in the *Science of Logic* is explicitly affirmed by Hegel:

> Critical Philosophy, had, it is true, already turned metaphysics into Logic . . . (*GW* 11, 22; *S.* 5, 45; *L.* 51)

> Former metaphysics [. . .] incurred the just reproach of having employed [the pure forms of thought] uncritically, without a preliminary investigation as to whether and how they were capable of being determinations of the thing-in-itself, to use the Kantian expression, or, to put it better, determinations of what is rational. –Objective Logic thus is the true critique [*die wahrhafte Kritik*] of these forms . . . (*GW* 11, 32; *S.* 5, 62; *L.* 64)

Critical philosophy has turned metaphysics into logic. Instead of an ontology or science of being as such, its ambition is to offer an inventory of the concepts a priori in which being is thought (A246–247/B303). And instead of rational doctrines of the soul, the world, and God, critical philosophy offers a logic of illusion, i.e. an exposition of the phantoms produced by reason when its inferences are not checked by their relation to some object given in sensibility. Now Hegel intends his own Logic – and particularly his Objective Logic, as we shall see – to finish what Kant's *Critique* was unable to finish for fear of becoming dialectical, i.e. for fear of the contradictions into which reason might fall. He intends his Logic to expound the content and import of the concepts of metaphysics, that is, of the a priori concepts of reason.[7] One therefore cannot affirm too strongly the relation between Hegel's project in the *Science of Logic* and Kant's project in the three *Critiques* (and, first of all, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*), whatever appearances one may find to the contrary.

An example of such contrary appearance is the fact that the *Science of Logic* seems to undermine Kant's enterprise at its very core. It opens with a lament of the loss of metaphysics and speculative reason. Kantian philosophy is held responsible for this loss.

> The exoteric doctrine of Kantian Philosophy – *that the understanding ought not to go beyond experience*, else the cognitive capacity would be *theoretical reason*, which by itself would generate nothing but *fantasies* [*Hirngespinste*] – this doctrine has provided justification, on the side of science [*von der Seite der Wissenschaft*], for renouncing speculative thought. In support of this popular doctrine came the cry of modern pedagogy, this misery of our times that directs attention to immediate need, according to which, just as for cognition experience is the primary factor, so for skill in public and private life any theoretical insight is harmful, and exercise and practical training in general are what is essential, and what alone is required. Science and common sense [*gemeiner Menschenverstand*] thus cooperating to bring about the downfall of metaphysics, it seemed that what was produced was the strange spectacle of a cultured nation [*ein gebildetes Volk*] having no metaphysics – like a temple otherwise richly ornamented, but without a holy of holies. (*GW* 11, 5–6; *S.* 5, 13–14; *L.* 25)

But rehabilitating metaphysics and speculative reason does not mean for Hegel returning to pre-Kantian philosophy, to a pre-critical metaphysics. Hegel himself is sufficiently explicit on the impossibility of such a return, for example in this footnote to the General Division of the *Science of Logic*:

> It is to be remembered that the reason I frequently refer to Kantian philosophy in this work (which might, to many, seem superfluous), is that however one may otherwise and also in the present work, consider its more precise determination as well as the particular parts of its exposition, it constitutes the basis and the starting point of recent German philosophy. This merit remains unblemished by whatever faults may be found in it. Another reason reference must often be made to it in the objective logic is that it enters into important, more determinate aspects of the logical, whereas later philosophical expositions have paid little attention to it, or else have displayed only a crude – not unavenged – contempt for it. (*GW* 11, 31n.; *S.* 5, 59n.; *L.* 61n.)

I am of course not the first to offer an interpretation of Hegel's philosophy as the end point of a path opened by Kant's Copernican Revolution. Richard Kroner, for instance, presented Hegel's philosophy as the ultimate outcome of successive attempts to resolve the contradictions left open by transcendental idealism.[8] For his part, Jean Hyppolite noted:

> Transcendental logic is already the seed of Hegel's speculative logic, which no longer recognizes the limits of the thing-in-itself. This logic of being replaces the old metaphysics that opened out upon the transcendent world. Hegel does not return to the prior dogmatism; he extends transcendental logic into dialectical logic.[9]

However, this way of approaching Hegel's master work is far from being completely explored. It is not only in its project, but also in the minute details of its categories, that Hegel's Logic is literally nourished by Hegel's discussion of transcendental philosophy. Its relation to Kant's philosophy is certainly not the only source of intelligibility for Hegel's Logic. But it is the most important, and Hegel's other philosophical references seem to me, at least in the Logic, to be conditioned by it. It is particularly significant in this respect that the Doctrine of the Concept (the third book of the *Science of Logic*) should open with a long discussion of Kant's transcendental logic. The reason for this, I want to suggest, is that Hegel's Logic is developed from beginning to end as a transformation – in the most literal sense – of transcendental logic.

In a famous letter to Schelling, Hegel wrote:

> In my scientific education, which began with the most elementary needs of man, I necessarily became oriented towards science, and the ideal of my youth necessarily became a form of reflection, transforming itself into a system.[10]

As Bernard Bourgeois shows, "becoming a form of reflection" means for Hegel assimilating the heritage of Kantian philosophy, and more specifically of the first *Critique*. It is through this assimilation that Hegel's project becomes specifically and explicitly philosophical (rather than being a more directly practical project of religious, social or political reform).[11] All the categories in which "the ideal of his youth" was expressed (very roughly: the thought of a totality that might integrate in itself all differences, especially in the realm of human interactions) are reformulated in this light.

This is the case, first of all, of the category of the Absolute, which plays a prominent role in Hegel's philosophy as well as in the philosophy of all other German Idealists. I intend to show that the intent Hegel proclaims in the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, that of "grasping and expressing the True, not as *substance*, but just as much as *subject*," provides its meaning to the Hegelian category of the Absolute, in virtue of the equation: the True = the Absolute = the transformation of Kant's notion of truth.[12] We must keep this equation in mind in order to understand any polemic pitting Hegel against Kant, and in particular that through which Hegel takes his place in the long cohort of dissatisfied heirs: the challenge against Kant's notion of the thing in itself.

The problem of the thing in itself is considered by all post-Kantians to be the cross of Kant's "Copernicanism." For, against the fundamental inspiration of Kant's Copernican Revolution, which places the source of the objectivity of cognitions in the subject of cognition, the thing in itself seems to reintroduce a pole irreducible to transcendental subjectivity. The entire history of post-Kantianism can be read as an attempt to resolve this contradiction.[13] Hegel is no exception. He too attacks the notion of an unknowable thing in itself. This is what allowed the Marxist tradition to make a "good" objectivist of Hegel (meaning a defender of the objective validity of cognition), contrary to the "bad" agnostic, Kant.[14] Now here as elsewhere, Hegel does not return to a pre-Kantian view. He does not affirm that we can know something that is in itself external to thought. Quite the contrary, his position is developed on the terrain staked out by Kant: that of a thought that finds the conditions of its objectivity within itself. But Hegel occupies this terrain in order to oppose Kant's view by demonstrating the inanity of the very notion of an unknowable thing in itself.

This problem of the thing in itself offers a good example of the twist Hegel gives to the transcendental enterprise, a twist that leads him to his own dialectical logic. So we will start with this problem, in

the hope that it will help us better define the singularity of Hegel's endeavor.

Kant, Hegel and the thing in itself

Hegel uses Kant's theory of objectivity to bolster his criticism of Kant's notion of the thing in itself. Kant's philosophy, in Hegel's eyes, has the merit of having made the "transcendental unity of self-consciousness," or unity of the "I think," the source of the objective validity of representations. This view, which belongs "among the most profound and correct insights to be found in the Critique of reason" (*GW* 12, 17; *S.* 6, 254; *L.* 384), is at the core of Kant's Transcendental Deduction of the Categories. Because there are objects of cognition at all only by virtue of their conformity to the categories (as the forms of the unity of consciousness that makes possible the representation of objects), the categories are a priori applicable to all objects of cognition.

> An *object*, however, is that in the concept of which the manifold of a given intuition is *united*. Now, however, all unification of representations requires *unity of consciousness* in the *synthesis* of them. Consequently the *unity of consciousness* is that which alone constitutes the relation of representations to an object, thus their *objective validity*, and it is that on which ... the very *possibility of the understanding* rests.[15]

We have here the justification of the whole transcendental enterprise: because the object of cognition, even though its "matter" ("that which corresponds to sensation," cf. A20/B34) is empirical, exists *as* an object of cognition only insofar as it is constituted by thought, it is possible to expound a system of a priori representations of objects. This is transcendental cognition, of which the *Critique* provides the outline (cf. B23–24).

Kant specifies: transcendental cognition is a cognition that concerns itself with concepts a priori *insofar as they relate* a priori *to objects*. Therefore what is transcendental is not the concept itself, but the reflection on its origin and its relation to an object. For example,

> [...] neither space nor any geometrical determination of it a priori is a transcendental representation, but only the cognition that these representations are not of empirical origin at all and the possibility that they can nevertheless be related a priori to objects of experience can be called transcendental. (A56/B81)

Space and time are called transcendental representations only insofar as one explains how, although they are a priori forms of intuition, they make possible the sensible intuition of any empirical object. The deduction of the categories is transcendental insofar as it explains how these categories are the a priori forms by virtue of which alone the appearances (*Erscheinungen*) become objects of cognition, phenomena (*Phaenomena*).[16] The unity of apperception is transcendental insofar as it is the unity of an activity of synthesis which alone makes possible the unity of the manifold of the intuition under the categories, and thus the transformation of this manifold into an object of cognition.

At this point, the crucial notion of Kant's theory of objectivity comes into play: that of the *transcendental object* = *X*. This is the mere thought of an object, by virtue of which the categories are more than mere forms of thought: concepts of an *object* corresponding to what is given in sensibility. For example, the category of substance is more than the mere thought of the logical subject in a proposition. It is a concept of an object given in sensibility, which is determined in such a way that it is known to be "in itself subject" with respect to its empirically given essential or accidental properties (A147/B186). How this determination of the object comes about does not concern us here. What does matter is that according to Kant, it is by virtue of the thought of the relation of all manifold of sensible intuition to a transcendental object = X, that the unity of apperception brings about that determination, as well as all other determination under the categories, and thus generates the representation of an *empirical* object, a phenomenon (which is of course distinct from the transcendental object, but whose empirical determination is made possible by the *thought* of a transcendental object).

> [The transcendental object] signifies [...] a something = X, of which we know nothing at all nor can know anything in general (in accordance with the current constitution of our understanding), but is rather something that can serve only as a correlate of the unity of apperception for the unity of the manifold in sensible intuition, by means of which the understanding unifies that manifold in the concept of an object. (A250)

The concept of a transcendental object is thus, in a way, the epitome of Kant's Copernican Revolution: far from thought having to model itself on its object, it is the object which models itself on thought, to the point where there is no object of cognition *except* by virtue of the unity granted to the empirical given by transcendental apperception,

projecting a transcendental object as what demands the unity and consistency of its representation (without itself being the empirical object of its representations).

But we can go further, and say that with the transcendental object we are already beyond Kant's Copernican Revolution. For what does this revolution consist in, as Kant presents it in the second preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason*? First in the assertion that the object of the senses models itself on our power of intuition, and second in the assertion that the representation thus obtained (the intuition) models itself on our concepts. In both cases, what is being described is a relation between two distinct elements: an undetermined given (the object) and the form on which it must model itself (which belongs to the knowing subject) (cf. Bvii). But with the transcendental object, we have a quite different relation between subject and object. The transcendental object is nothing other than the unity projected by thought, as the shadow of an object. The relation of the unity of apperception to the transcendental object is a relation that is internal to thought, and which must encompass within its circle the two steps of the "Copernican Revolution" described by Kant in the second Preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Instead of an external relation between two elements among which we must determine which models itself on which, with the relation of the unity of apperception to the transcendental object we now have a relation of thought to itself, i.e. the constitution *by thought* of the unity of its object. This is the aspect of Kant's doctrine that most inspires Hegel, as shown by the citation given earlier.[17]

But in leaving behind the Copernican Revolution, such an interpretation leaves behind the fundamental problem of the *Critique of Pure Reason*: the relation of the a priori to the a posteriori, of the understanding to experience, of spontaneity to receptivity. There would be neither transcendental idealism nor transcendental logic if the a priori forms of thought did not constitute an object *whose matter they cannot provide*. The transcendental object is the farthest that thought can go on its own, and this is not very far: the mere form of an object, the projection of an object, itself also "transcendental" inasmuch as it is by virtue of its being projected by thought that the appearances (*Erscheinungen*, undetermined objects of empirical intuition) can be represented as determinate objects (*Phaenomena*, objects thought under concepts).

However, at the precise point where, with the transcendental object, we might fall into the illusion that thought is not dependent on a content that is given, Kant's warning appears: we do not have knowledge of

the thing in itself. The transcendental object is one pole of Kant's theory of objectivity, the one by which the constitutive role of thought is most strongly affirmed. The thing in itself is the other pole, the one by which that constitutive role is recalled to its limits, and the external relation between the thinking subject and the object of thought is maintained, a relation in the context of which alone the Copernican Revolution can be defined. The two poles are complementary to one another, for the transcendental object itself has a negative function, that of recalling the understanding to its limits: it is because the transcendental object is *only* the transcendental object (the mere thought of an object = X, making possible the representation of any empirical object) that we do not have knowledge of the Thing in itself.

The thing in itself is what thought necessarily relates to receptivity, as the non-sensible ground of sensible representations.

> [I]t [. . .] follows naturally from the concept of an appearance in general that something must correspond to it which is not in itself appearance, for appearance can be nothing for itself and outside of our kind of representation; thus, if there is not to be a constant circle, the word "appearance" must already indicate a relation to something the immediate representation of which is, to be sure, sensible, but which in itself [. . .] must be something, i.e., an object independent of sensibility. (A251–252)

The thing in itself is what affects sensibility, and what the latter nevertheless prevents us from cognizing, since it presents the thing in itself only according to the a priori forms of sensibility, space and time. But the thing in itself is also, on the other hand, what might be the object of a non-sensible intuition, i.e. what an intuition that did not depend on sensibility would present (cf. A252).

We can now see how the thought of the transcendental object can be the beginning of the illusion that we have knowledge of things in themselves. Through the thought of the transcendental object, categories are more than mere logical functions, they are concepts *of an object*. To forget that these concepts can acquire determinate content only through their relation to sensible intuition is to suppose that the understanding has access *on its own* to an actually existing object: that it at least approximates an intuitive intellect.

By denying that we can even imagine what an intuitive intellect might be, Kant limits the understanding and asserts its dependence on receptivity (sensibility). But at the same time he forcefully affirms the active role of the understanding, its role in synthesis of what is given to

sensibility. For if the understanding does not have access to an object whose unity is already constituted outside itself, but only to the fleeting manifold of what is given in sensible intuition, then it is incumbent upon it to make of this manifold the unity of an object that can be known. However, because this unity is that of a manifold that is given, the understanding cannot attain complete determination of it. This is the bitter experience reason makes in the Cosmological Antinomies expounded in the Transcendental Dialectic of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, when, seeking "the unconditioned for the series of conditions" of an appearance, reason runs up against the fact that it cannot attain the ultimate ground of the series of conditions. The series can be known only element by element, according to forms of sensibility that are fundamentally heterogeneous to reason and understanding. To suppose that a complete determination of the series could be attained is again to encounter the mirage of the thing in itself. For this would mean that the understanding could finally reach cognition of an object completely determined by concepts according to the categories. Reason, says Kant, can *give itself* this complete determination *as a task*. But it is impossible to attain it. To claim the contrary, far from extending the power of the understanding, is only to throw it into hopeless contradictions.[18]

The thing in itself thus has a twofold character. As Jules Vuillemin notes, it is on the one hand,

> the ideal totality of the determinations sketched out by the spontaneous movement of knowledge: it is a regulative idea.

On the other hand,

> the definition of sensation as affection by the thing in itself refers the concrete epistemic determination back to the thing in itself understood quite differently, as the real, albeit unknowable, source of reality.[19]

As we have just seen, there is a systematic connection between these two characters of the thing in itself in Kant's critical philosophy. It remains nonetheless that this dual character of the Thing in itself, which mirrors the duality of spontaneity and receptivity in our cognitive capacities, raises difficult problems. As Vuillemin shows, this duality again and again threatens to introduce, in place of the constitutive role of transcendental subjectivity, an Absolute as the real source of knowledge and moral legislation. According to Vuillemin, the history of post-Kantian philosophy is the history of successive – and repeatedly

unsuccessful – attempts to reaffirm the constitutive role of the cognitive subject, and to eliminate the mirage of the Absolute.[20]

Now, what makes Hegel's position peculiar is that he wants *both* to restore the unconditioned – the Absolute – as the privileged concern of philosophy, *and* to give a completely new dimension to constitutive subjectivity. This twofold aspect of Hegel's endeavor is present in Hegel's critique of Kant's notion of a thing-in-itself. In considering this critique, I shall focus on two main aspects: Hegel's critique of the role Kant assigns to receptivity in cognition, and Hegel's critique of Kant's inconsistencies with respect to the notion of truth.

Kant's thing in itself is first criticized in that it is bound up with a misguided conception of the role of receptivity in cognition. More precisely, what Hegel criticizes is the very duality of terms: appearance/thing in itself, which expresses the dependence of the concept with respect to receptivity.

According to Hegel, Kant has the merit of having seen in the concept not the mere representation of an object, but a production of thought, of the "unity of self-consciousness."

But Kant, says Hegel, falls back into the element of representation by maintaining the dependence of concept on sensation and intuition. However, Hegel objects, intuition and sensation do not constitute the content of the concept. It is absurd to think that they can remain a component in the object of cognition when this object is *thought*. As we might say today: to define water as H_2O, or gold as the element of atomic number 79, is to move away from any sensible intuition of the object – even, and especially, if these definitions then allow us to return to sensible intuition and explain its characteristics. In the same way, Hegel does not deny the importance of sensible intuition as a starting point of cognition. But, he says, we must not confuse the *origin* and the *truth* of the thought process: if sensible intuition is the *condition* of all cognition, it is destined to be absorbed or digested in the concept which is its *ground*. For the concept can provide the reason or ground both for itself and for sensible intuition (cf. *GW* 12, 21–22; *S.* 6, 259–260; *L.* 588–589).[21]

If this is correct, then it is not true that we know only appearances. Appearances – *Erscheinungen* –[22] as Kant defines them, are not all there is to the object of knowledge; even less are they all there is to the content of thought in general. It is just as misguided to limit cognition to appearances as to claim cognition of a thing-in-itself independent of thought. What is present to thought is no more a mere appearance than

it is a thing-in-itself, purportedly independent of the forms of thought. The very distinction between appearance and thing-in-itself is therefore deprived of meaning. Or rather, it has meaning only for a thought whose standpoint restricts it to appearance; a thought which, remaining dependent on sensible intuition, and at the same time being conscious of the dependence of sensible intuition on the receptivity of the finite subject, opposes to the cognition of the appearances the cognition of the thing as it is in itself. Such an opposition describes the situation of common consciousness, which receives its object by way of sensible intuitions. It senses that beyond sensible impressions there exists the true object that consciousness does not know. Even from a standpoint more sophisticated than that of mere common consciousness, it is inevitable that such an opposition should be presupposed. For all cognition involves the consciousness of the inadequacy of its concepts to completely determine the object that it has given itself to determine. Hegel takes this to be just as much a necessary stage of consciousness, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, as it is a necessary stage of thought, in the *Science of Logic*.[23]

But this means that behind the false "problem of the thing in itself" lurks another: the problem of how to define truth, which is the second aspect of Hegel's critique of the thing in itself I mentioned above. The first aspect was Hegel's criticism of the role Kant assigns to receptivity in cognition. The second is Hegel's questioning of Kant's notion of truth, which launches Hegel's own view. The thing in itself, Hegel claims, is a timorous thinker's answer to the consciousness that knowledge of appearances cannot be *true*.

What is truth? Kant grants as "trivial" the traditional definition, which Hegel deems "of great, indeed of supreme value" (*GW* 12, 26; *S.* 6, 266; *L.* 593): truth is the agreement of cognition with its object (see A58/B82). But according to this very definition, says Hegel, cognition of appearances cannot be true. For in this case, cognition is the concept, and its object is the appearance (*Erscheinung*), the "undetermined object of a sensible intuition." Obviously they do not agree: how could a concept and a sensible image agree? If Kant had taken his own definition of truth seriously instead of simply granting it as trivial, he would have found it unacceptable to limit knowledge to appearances. His own definition of truth would have committed him to asking the question: how can one give this definition a content that escapes the inevitable paradoxes of all representational thought (a thought plagued with the

impossible task of matching two elements as heterogeneous to one another as a concept and a sensible image, or a concept and an object that is not thought)? There can be agreement only between two elements that are homogeneous to one another: between thought and thought, between cognition as thought and object as an object that is *thought*. In other words, for cognition of an object to be said true, the object itself must be transformed into an object that is thought. Then one can question the agreement of the concept and its object.

This is what Hegel attempts to do when he analyzes a proposition such as "the singular is a universal": it immediately appears that such a proposition lacks the agreement of the concept (the universal) and its object (the singular), unless one arrives at a universal, a concept, able to account for all the determinations of the singular object, and conversely one arrives at a singular object able to be thought entirely in conceptual terms. In other words, what is needed is a way to achieve complete homogeneity between *definiens* and *definiendum*. This progression is precisely what the whole Logic is about, especially in its third book.

This is why Hegel scornfully rejects Kant's avowed powerlessness to provide a universal criterion of truth on the pretext that it should be valid "without any distinction among objects" whereas truth concerns precisely the object (A58/B83). When he refers truth to the *object*, Kant forgets what he was talking about, says Hegel. Initially Kant had defined truth by the *agreement* of knowledge with the object. For this agreement, there is a universal criterion, which is this agreement itself: the agreement of cognition (the concept) with the object as an object that is thought (*GW* 12, 26; *S.* 6, 266; *L.* 593).

This conception of truth, Hegel maintains, definitively eliminates the problem raised by the distinction between appearance and thing it itself. For the question: "can we know the thing in itself?" disappears and leaves place to another: "can we attain truth, that is, the agreement of thought with itself?"[24] Hegel thinks he provides an answer to this question with the absolute Idea, expounded in the final chapter of the *Science of Logic*. In the absolute Idea, what is thought is the identity of any object with thought itself. Not, as a dogmatic metaphysics would jump to conclude, because any object external to thought nevertheless bears the forms of rationality. But because at the end of the journey recounted in the *Science of Logic*, thought makes the totality of its own operations its object, and in these operations the contingency of what was merely given has been fully absorbed and re-elaborated.

> The Idea, as unity of the subjective and objective Idea, is the concept of the Idea – a concept whose object [*Gegenstand*] is the Idea as such, and for which the objective [*Objekt*] is Idea. [...] This unity is consequently *the absolute and all truth*, the Idea which thinks itself – and here at least *as* a thinking or *Logical* Idea. (*GW* 20, 228; *S.* 8, 388; *E.L.* §236, 292)

This, therefore, is where the definition of truth can cease being a pious wish and instead, acquire content: when thought reflects on itself. Not, as in being, to find itself confronted with incomplete and contingent determinations. Not, as in essence, to run up against the incompleteness of its own operations. It must have proceeded through the moments of Subjectivity, where conceptualized unity deploys its forms (this is Section 1 of the Doctrine of the Concept); and of Objectivity, where it proves its capacity to take up any object (Section 2 of the Doctrine of the Concept); the Idea of knowing must have found its own ground in Life (Section 3, Chapter 1 of the Doctrine of the Concept) and deployed its theoretical and practical moments (Section 3, Chapter 2), before the thought of the whole, in the absolute Idea, can become completely adequate to the whole that is thought. *Then* there is conformity between subject and object, between *thinking* thought and thought that is *thought*.

Here, the reader who refuses to be fooled will ask for the scene to be played again, in order to detect by what sleight of the hand the disappearance of the thing in itself has been obtained.

We have seen that the thing in itself is linked for Kant to the irreducible contribution of receptivity in cognition, and to the resulting impossibility of establishing a complete synthesis of the object of cognition. We have seen that Hegel's critique of the thing in itself goes along with his critique of receptivity as an unavoidable component of all cognition. We have seen that this last critique is itself only an aspect of a more fundamental thesis: thought knows only determinations that are themselves thought. For this reason, the very notion of a thing in itself, if it means the thing as it exists independently of thought, is an empty, and even an absurd, notion. The only possible meaning of the thing in itself is therefore: the *truth*, which thought gives itself as a norm and which it recognizes it cannot attain. It remains thus to ask *what* truth *is*, and *what* an object of thought that corresponds to this definition *can be*. It is in this way that the problem of the thing in itself disappears into that of truth. The negative concern born by Kant's warning concerning the thing in itself (to cut short the pretensions of dogmatic

metaphysics) cedes the floor to a positive concern: to make the notion of truth the starting point and the end, in other words the norm, of any philosophical project.

I hope to have shown that Hegel's preoccupation does not take him back to a pre-Kantian view, to what Kant called dogmatic metaphysics. I still need to justify what I maintained at the beginning: Hegel prolongs Kant's "Copernican Revolution," but at the same time he strips it of any *raison d'être*, by making its protagonists disappear.

Absolute, Concept, Reflection

In the work already cited, Jules Vuillemin characterizes the opposition between Kantian and Hegelian philosophy, between transcendental and dialectical methods, in the following way:

> While the latter [the dialectical method] pushes the consequence of Copernicanism to the point of introducing negativity and death in the Absolute, the former [the transcendental method] remains hesitant with respect to the relations between the Absolute and the finite.[25]

This is an apt way to characterize the twist Hegel imposes on the transcendental enterprise. We have seen above how Vuillemin can say that Kant "hesitates between the Absolute and the finite."[26] How can he also say that, as a response to Kant's hesitation, "Hegel introduces negativity and death in the Absolute"? The answer, I suggest, is that Hegel transforms the very notion of the Absolute: for him the Absolute is not the thing in itself, but truth, i.e. the agreement between the act of thinking and what it purports to think; the agreement of the Concept and its object. The Absolute is not that impossible and literally unthinkable substance supposed to be independent of the (subjectively relative) categories in which the thinking subject thinks it. It is the fully accomplished and self-conscious agreement, reflected as such, of the categories and the object that is thought in them.

This is why, as an echo to the already mentioned characterization of the Absolute "not as substance, but as subject"[27] we find the following two characterizations of the Absolute. The Absolute is a result: it is the result of the complete movement of thought, at the end of which thought is capable of reflecting the object as its own product and to reflect itself in this object. The Absolute is subject: it is by the movement of the subject, the unity of the "I think" as constitutive of its object, that the Absolute is constituted as agreement of the subject and the object.

But if Hegel thus profoundly transforms the notion of the Absolute, he also transforms that of the subject. "I think" is not the thought of a finite subject. It expresses the unity of a process that has its own necessity over and above the particular individual circumstances of empirical subjects.

Here again, Kant had taken the most important step in distinguishing the transcendental unity of apperception from the mere empirical unity of representations.

> Kant distinguishes [the transcendental unity of apperception] from the *subjective unity* of consciousness, the unity of representation whereby I am conscious of a manifold as either *simultaneous* or *successive*, this being dependent on empirical conditions. On the contrary, the principles of the *objective* determination of representations must be derived, he says, solely from the principle of the *transcendental unity of apperception.* (*GW* 12, 18; *S.* 6, 254–255; *L.* 584. Cf. Kant, B139–140)

The notion of a "transcendental unity of apperception" is not a psychological or empirical notion. Rather, what it describes is the unifying activity, whatever its empirical realization may be, that makes it possible for all representations to be, eventually, accompanied by the proposition "I think." In other words, for Kant all cognition, and more generally, all thought, is grounded on a unifying project expressed in the mere proposition "I think." This project is not that of a particular, empirically determined individual subject, but is engrained in the very nature of thought.

But if the transcendental unity of apperception defines the fundamental structure of thought, as a project that is to be defined over and above the particular psychological features of empirical subjects, we might as well free it from any compromise with the latter, and give an independent characterization of this unity: this is what Hegel does in calling Kant's "I think" the concept, and expounding the latter as the unifying principle that organizes the whole *Science of Logic.* Thus a view already present in Kant is developed in full force: if thought is a teleologically oriented process, its telos is not assigned to it by individual empirical subjects. In other words, the subject "I" of the proposition "I think" is not an individual, personal one.

This best explains Hegel's odd use of "I" in the third person.

> Now *I* is *first* this pure self-related unity, and is so not immediately, but only insofar as it makes abstraction from all determinateness and content, and returns into the freedom the unlimited equality with itself. (*GW* 12, 17; *S.* 6, 253; *L.* 583)

But, Hegel asks, as long as transcendental unity of apperception, or the unity of thought expressed by "I" in "I think," remains conditioned by sensible intuition, how can one actually think that one has gone beyond the empirical unity of representations? How can one thus escape psychological idealism?

> Kantian philosophy did not go beyond the psychological reflex of the concept [*bei dem psychologischen Reflexe des Begriffs stehengeblieben ist*], and returned again to the assertion that the concept is permanently conditioned by a manifold of intuition. It declared the cognitions of the understanding, and experience, to have mere appearances for their content not because the categories themselves are only finite, but by reason of a psychological idealism, namely because they are *only* determinations that are derived from self-consciousness. (*GW* 12, 22–23; *S.* 6, 261; *L.* 589)

Locking up the subject in the empirical realm means subordinating the concept to the empirical subject. Categories are thus returned to the status of properties of the subject of knowledge, which uses them to order its sensory impressions.

Hegel establishes the opposite relation between subject and concept. For him, subjectivity is nothing but the movement of the concept. His explanation, strikingly, is as follows. On the one hand, *I* is the concept itself; this is *I* as universality, which is what the passage quoted above referred to: "Now *I* is *first* this pure self-related unity [. . .]. It is thus *universality* [. . .]." However, on the other hand, *I* exists in the concrete form of the individual subject – this is the aspect of its singularity.

> *Second*, *I* as self-related negativity is no less immediately *individuality*, *absolute determinateness*, which opposes itself to what is other and excludes it: *individual personality*. (*GW* 6, 17; *S.* 6, 253; *L.* 583)

This transformation of Kant's "I" is the key to Hegel "concept."

In the preceding pages, I used the term "concept" as if it meant the same for Hegel and for Kant. If I am right in what I just suggested, clearly it does not. However, in the Introduction to the Doctrine of the Concept ("On the Concept in General"), which inspired the analysis I just proposed, Hegel himself moves constantly from the Kantian meaning of "concept" (whether referring to empirical concepts or to a priori concepts, namely the categories) to the meaning of "concept" at work in the *Science of Logic*. We now have some of what we need to understand the transformation that takes place in this repeated shift. In the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories, Kant characterizes a concept

as the "consciousness of the unity of the synthesis [of a manifold of intuition]" (A103). This characterization is especially true of the pure concepts of the understanding, or categories:

> The concepts that give this pure synthesis [of the manifold by means of the imagination] *unity*, and that consist solely in the representation of this necessary synthetic unity, are the third thing necessary for cognition of an object that comes before us, and they depend on the understanding. (A79/B104)

How does Hegel's concept relate to Kant's concepts, and especially to the pure concepts of the understanding? First, Hegel's concept, like Kant's concepts, has a unifying function. Second, however, in the *Science of Logic* this function operates not on sensible intuitions, nor even on their synthesis carried out by the imagination, but on thought-determinations. There is *always already* a mediation by thought, that is, by the concept, of what is to be unified. And third, the unifying function is *itself subject*; it does not have to be *placed in* a subject, be it even a "transcendental" subject. It is subject, i.e. it is what is active in the constitution of cognitions, and more generally in all thought process.

What remains essential, then, is the fact that both Hegel and Kant characterize the concept as having a unifying function. This is what allows Hegel to consider Kant's characterization of concepts as homogeneous to his own, even while he criticizes it. More precisely, Hegel can consider Kant's conception as a precursor of his own, a precursor still immersed in the phenomenological illusion according to which cognition is an external relation between a consciousness and its object. Or as Hegel would put it: Kant remains within the standpoint of an *external* reflection. He does not reach the standpoint of an immanent reflection *of the content* of thought itself.

It is now time to say more about this notion of "reflection."

Reflection is one of the core notions in Hegel's Logic. Dieter Henrich goes so far as to characterize Hegel's entire Logic as a "logic of reflection." According to Henrich, the chapter on Reflection in the Doctrine of Essence provides the principle of the entire progression of the *Science of Logic*:

> This chapter is significant for several reasons, but above all for its relation to the problem of the method (*zum Methodenproblem*) of the Logic. For the concepts at the center of the final argumentation on method find their true place not here, but in the chapter on the determinations of reflection.[28]

Pierre-Jean Labarrière and Gwendolyn Jarczyk agree, writing in the presentation of their translation of Being, Book 1 of the *Science of Logic*:

> The movement of essence, in which is expressed [...] the ontological structure of all that is, is called by Hegel "the movement of reflection." And he defines its stages (positing reflection, external reflection, determining reflection) as that through which the different moments of any dialectical process become known. At the center of the work, this chapter thus clarifies what Hegel means when he talks of the "self-movement of the content"; as such, it gives us a key to understanding the whole chain of determinations of the concept, as well as the chain of determinations expounded in the first book, Being [...].[29]

It is a somewhat daunting task to try to explain a notion that is both so central to the Logic, and so revealing of the transformations undergone by Hegel's philosophical project. At the risk of gross simplifications, I shall nevertheless try to show how the interpretation of Hegel's Logic I am proposing illuminates the central role played in it by reflection.

In the evolution of Hegel's thought, reflection was at first the foil *against* which a thought trying to grasp totality and abolish all differences within it, defined itself. Then it became a necessary step on the path to speculative reason. And finally, according to comments I just cited, reflection became the most fundamental characterization of Hegel's method, i.e. the very method of speculative reason. Let me quickly rehearse each of these three stages in Hegel's thought.

In Hegel's early writings, reflection has an exclusively negative connotation. It was the method of the understanding, which remains external to its object and frames it in formal determinations that destroy its unity. As Bernard Bourgeois indicates:

> Reflection, this stepping back that puts being at a distance and allows thought to turn to it [...] is a process of ob-jectification, opposition, and separation, so that reflecting the youthful ideal, that is, the unity of all differences, is to destroy it.[30]

But soon after, Hegel comes to maintain that reflection, *understood in the way just stated* – as stepping back from the object in which thought was at first immediately immersed – is a necessary moment of thought, even, and especially, when the goal is to realize the ideal of a thought completely identical to its object, a thought that does not impoverish or destroy the unity of its object. Thus in *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, Hegel distinguishes the principle of speculation – the identity of subject and object – from reflection and

its arguments (*räsonierende Reflexion*), which only think "finitude and opposition."[31] But at the same time, he makes reflection an instrument for attaining the Absolute. For it is insofar as reflection, which divides and separates, becomes conscious of its own incompleteness that it can take itself beyond itself, towards speculation and the thought of totality. Consciousness of the separation and the loss it represents must have appeared in order for progress towards the Absolute to occur.

> The form the need for philosophy would assume, if it were to be expressed as a presupposition, allows for a transition from the need of philosophy to the *instrument of philosophizing*, to *reflection* as Reason. (*GW* 4, 16; *S.* 2, 25; *Diff.*, 94; Hegel's emphases)

From being a mere obstacle, reflection thus becomes an indispensable instrument for philosophical thinking.

However, it is only with the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that the full originality of Hegel's conception of reflection develops. It is with the *Phenomenology* that the difference between external – Kantian, according to Hegel – and Hegel's "absolute reflection" is clearly defined. The progression of the *Phenomenology* can be read as a methodical regression from the phenomenological appearance to the movement of thought that underpins the appearance. It shows successively that the reflection of consciousness on its object is the reflection of consciousness on itself and its own rational forms, and that these rational forms are not those of individual consciousness, but of Spirit, a *We* whose knowledge culminates in absolute knowing.

This movement is essential to understanding in what sense reflection is henceforth for Hegel "absolute reflection" or "infinite relation to itself " (*GW* 11, 257; *S.* 6, 35; *L.* 408). It is because he first showed that consciousness, in reflecting on its own object, only ever reflects its own modes of determination – which, moreover, are not its own, but "ours" – that Hegel can then affirm that reflection is the reflection in itself of a determinate content. There is a reflection of content in itself because the latter always already bears the unity of thought: not of a thought *on* content, but *in* content, the content that it alone constitutes.

But *what*, then, is this reflection? We can see how one can call the relation of a consciousness to its object, or to itself, "reflection." What meaning can we ascribe to the "reflection of content in itself"?

Here we must again return to what was explained earlier concerning the True, the Absolute, and the Concept. In absolute knowing – the kind of thinking at work in the Logic – we still have a subject and an

object. But the subject is not individual consciousness, but the concept itself as a unifying function in thought. The object is any determination that is thought by virtue of this unifying function. There is *reflection* insofar as the unifying function goes beyond the achieved unity towards further determinations and further unity of those determinations. What drives this movement along is what one might call the inadequacy of the true to itself, of the unifying function and the imperfectly unified determinations, of the concept and being. That is why reflection is the reflection of content *in itself*: the content is a content that is thought, the provisional manifestation of the unity of the unifying function and what it determines.

This interpretation seems to me to be corroborated by numerous striking statements in the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. For example:

> [The True] is the process of its own becoming, the circle that presupposes its end as its goal, having its end also as its beginning; and only by being worked out to its end, is it actual. (*GW* 9, 18; *S.* 3, 23; *Phen.* 10)

The true is at the start of the process of thinking, one might say as its regulative idea. But it is also the accomplishment of this process, when the agreement of the subject and the object is actually brought about. This is why the true is only "actual" by "being worked out to its end."

We can thus measure the extent of the transformation the term "reflection" undergoes when Hegel writes:

> Reason is, therefore, misunderstood when reflection is excluded from the True, and is not grasped as a positive moment of the Absolute. (*GW* 9, 19–20; *S.* 3, 25; *Phen.* 11–12)

Reflection is "a positive moment of the Absolute" in that, by the confrontation that occurs within it between the subject and the object (i.e. between "I" expressing the unity of the process of thinking, and the contents thus thought), the Absolute constitutes itself as the totality of the determinations of a thought conscious of itself. In other words, the dimension of alterity and the discrete concatenation of determinations subsists in reflection. But this alterity is the alterity of thought within itself, and the concatenation of determinations is guided by an immanent unifying ground.

Reflection thus appears from that point on as the method *par excellence* of philosophy, as indicated by this passage from the last chapter of the *Science of Logic*, The Absolute Idea:

> [In the circle of science], each individual member, being inspired by the method, is reflection in itself which, in returning to the beginning, is at the same time the beginning of a new member. (*GW* 12, 252; *S.* 6, 571–572; *L.* 842)

This "return to the beginning" is the return to truth as a goal, by virtue of which, like Antaeus touching the earth, each individual thought finds itself pushed beyond itself. In the absolute Idea, it is the whole Logic that has come back to its beginning. But at the same time, the result is, contrary to the beginning, completely determined, because it is

> pure concept that has itself for object and which, insofar as it, having itself as object, runs through the totality of its determinations, builds itself into the totality of its reality, the system of science. (*GW* 12, 252–253; *S.* 6, 572; *L.* 843)

Reflection therefore appears to be the engine that moves the *Logic* forward in its entirety. And yet, reflection also holds a particular, determinate place in it, since Essence is defined as "reflection within itself" (*GW* 11, 244; *S.* 6, 17; *L.* 393), and the three moments of "Reflection" are defined in Section 1, Chapter 1, of the Doctrine of Essence (*GW* 11, 249–257; *S.* 6, 24–35; *L.* 399–408). Interestingly, the situation is the same with the term "dialectic." Sometimes dialectic is presented as a specific moment of the method – for example, in the Preliminary Concept of the *Encyclopedia Logic*.[32] Sometimes it is the method as a whole – for instance in the chapter on the absolute Idea (see *GW* 12, 244–245; *S.* 6, 560–561; *L.* 832–834). Dieter Henrich offers the following explanation: reflection is the method of the Logic as a whole; but it is in the Doctrine of Essence, and more specifically in the chapter on reflection, that it becomes *itself* an object of investigation, and that its structure is therefore clarified.[33]

In Being (expounded in Part 1, Book 1 of the *Science of Logic*), the concept and its aim of the true are only implicit; the determinations of the object are received as immediate, and the mediation of their mutations by the movement of the concept is masked. This is why they "pass" into one another, without an explicit unifying principle. In reflection, or Essence (expounded in Part 1, Book 2) the role of the unity of the concept in pushing forward the movement of determinations is made explicit, although the concept does not yet manifest its capacity to produce from itself all determinations. This is why, according to the definition in the form of a retraction that Hegel gives of the cognition of essence,

> this cognition [. . .] starts from another, from being, and has a preliminary path to tread, that of *going beyond being, or rather of penetrating into it.* (*GW* 11, 241; *S.* 6, 13; *L.* 389; my emphasis)

In contrast, in the concept (expounded in Part 2 of the *Science of Logic*), each determination is produced from the unity of thought, and reflection is now a development (*Entwicklung*) of the concept rather than the "shining into another" that it is in essence. And finally, although in the chapter on the absolute Idea, as we have seen,[34] Hegel characterizes reflection as the method of Logic as a whole, in this same chapter reflection is often restricted to being a progression of thought grounded on the exteriority of particular determinations with respect to the concept, and is thus *opposed* to "true cognition" (*GW* 12, 239; *S.* 6, 553; *L.* 827). We can understand why. Reflection is the back-and-forth movement between the unifying function of thought and the objective determinations that resist unity. The resistance of these determinations is what provides the impetus for the movement of reflection, insofar as it is what pushes thought ceaselessly to shape anew the forms of unity in which the objects of thought can be framed. With the concept, the unifying ground that determined subliminally all previous attempts at unified thought is made explicit. From then on, in confronting the alterity in which the object is presented, it is always *itself as an object* that thought comes up against. Each determination is presented as a development of the concept, and this is why, in a sense, reflection is overcome. In another sense, however, the back-and-forth movement of reflection is still there, but it is internalized in the concept. Whether the concept actually overcomes the differences that predominate in essence is a key question for any evaluation of Hegel's claims in the *Science of Logic.* Indeed, on the answer to this question might well depend the credibility of the entire Hegelian system.

But this is not the question I have addressed in this chapter. The provisional conclusion I would like to draw from the few clarifications I tried to bring to Hegel's notion of reflection does not reach that far. But it is nonetheless fundamental for the comprehension of Hegel's enterprise.

"Reflection as a positive moment of the Absolute" or reflection of the content in itself, is every bit as disastrous for pre-Kantian metaphysics as was Kant's Transcendental Analytic of Pure Reason. For, as Jean Hyppolite puts it, it means "the disappearance of the ontological secret." To look for the essence of appearance, Hegel maintains in Chapter 1 of the Doctrine of Essence (The Essentialities, or Determinations of

Reflection), is not to look for some rational principle beyond things as they appear, but to look, within appearance itself, for the movement of thought by which the determinations of things that a non-critical thought takes to be ontological (or in Kant's words, transcendentally real) are constituted. It is to look for determinations brought about by the activity of thinking, where a non-critical thought was unable to recognize *a being that is thought*.

Again, as Hyppolite writes,

> It is true that the form is the identity of being or self, that identity that the classical rationalists put at the apex of ontology, but this identity is also contradiction, diremption [...].[35]

It is "contradiction, diremption," precisely because it is not an identity *given in being* between rational forms and particular, sensible existence, but rather the production, by a ceaseless confrontation between the imperfect unity of thought and the multiple determinations of being, of the thought of being, or being *as thought*.

Concluding remarks

There are therefore many places where Hegel can be called to account for the philosophy at work in the *Science of Logic*. We can do him the courtesy of considering his philosophy *debatable*. I provisionally propose, as a summary of what was just said, three elements for evaluating Hegel's project and its implementation.

"I posit in the self-movement of the concept that by which science exists ..." (*GW* 9, 48; *S.* 3, 65; *Phen.* 44). This statement, which could serve as an epigraph to the *Science of Logic*, evokes echoes for the contemporary reader whose importance is far from exhausted. "It is not a philosophy of consciousness, but a philosophy of the concept which can give a doctrine of science," wrote Jean Cavaillès. And the first pages of his book, *Sur la Logique et la théorie de la science* (*On Logic and the Theory of Science*), contain a critique of Kant's transcendental philosophy that is strangely reminiscent of Hegel. Here are some examples:

> Here one of the main difficulties of Kantianism appears: the supposition of a totally empirical given [*un empirique total*] that, being radically heterogeneous to the concept, does not allow itself to be unified by it. If experience is the singularity of an instant, no synthesis of imagination can integrate it into the unity of consciousness. [...] In other words, a negative position of the empirical, even if only to eliminate it, is unacceptable.[36]

Further along, Cavaillès explicitly refers to Hegel:

> The notion of matter is a limit notion, in itself devoid of meaning. This is what Hegel noticed. "A matter (or content) without its concept is an extra-conceptual, and therefore without essence."[37]

And on the last page, this characterization of consciousness, strikingly close to the one we saw in the Introduction to the Doctrine of Concept:

> There is not a consciousness generating its products, or simply immanent to them, but consciousness is always in the immediacy of the idea, lost in it and losing itself with it, and relating to other consciousnesses (what one might call other moments of consciousness) through the internal relations of the ideas to which consciousnesses belong.[38]

Hyppolite remarks that despite obvious analogies, the conception of science offered by Cavaillès differs from Hegel's, at least in that for Cavaillès there is no "immanence of the self in the content." Hyppolite concludes that strictly speaking, Cavaillès is closer to Spinoza than to Hegel.[39] Whatever the case may be on this point, it is significant that Cavaillès, who opposed on the one hand what he called "philosophy of consciousness," and on the other hand the logical positivism of the Vienna circle,[40] should in so doing find common grounds with Hegel. It seems to me that it is in this general direction, rather than that of a dialectical ontology (whatever this expression might mean) that we should seek the most lasting influence of Hegel's dialectic on Marx's method.

There is, however, also a more fundamental reason for being cautious when emphasizing the similarities between Cavaillès' view and Hegel's. Hegel, unlike Cavaillès or even Marx, does not offer an epistemology (of mathematics for Cavaillès, of social and historical sciences for Marx), but a revolution in metaphysics. The science he is talking about in the sentence cited above ("I posit in the self-movement of the concept that by which science exists") is philosophy itself, taking over the place of the old metaphysics. Here again Hegel's Kantian ancestry is evident. Kant's Transcendental Analytic is only the prelude to a new metaphysics (metaphysics of nature, metaphysics of morals), just as for Hegel the Logic is *a metaphysics as logic*, that is, a system of the rational forms in which being is thought. Hegel's project is even less epistemological than is Kant's. Hegel's goal is not modestly to follow the development of particular sciences. Nor is it, whatever illusions his system may have encouraged in this regard, to *ground* particular sciences. Rather, it is to call upon particular sciences to demonstrate the part they take in the

existence of reason, in order to bring reason into its proper domain, which is that of philosophy as an unprecedented kind of metaphysics. One could add: Hegel proposes so little to ground scientific discourses that on the contrary, his purpose is to dissolve their claim to objective validity, and thus to open the space for speculative philosophy.

What, therefore, is the Logic? It is not a dogmatic ontology. And yet, it is the systematic exposition of all that can be said about being. Better yet, this discourse is not presented as that of a subjective consciousness *on* being, but as that of being itself. That is to say, Hegel's claim is that there is an objective validity and an inescapable necessity of everything that is said in the Logic about being. For what is said is such that it exhausts all possibilities of postulating that there still remains something unsaid. Such, at least, is Hegel's ambition (you who claim to lay out an ontology, you do not say *more* than I; on the contrary, you say much less).

One may, as Gérard Lebrun does, interpret Hegel's Concept as a "pure work of language on itself."[41] But this characterization appears to miss the kind of necessity that carries forward Hegel's Logic. For what is this "work of language"? It consists in the fact that what is *said* is again and again found to be inadequate to the goal which the movement of the concept strives to achieve. There is, in the Logic, an intentionality of the concept – a striving towards its own agreement with its object – which one may perhaps grasp only by relating it back to Kant's transcendental apperception. The Logic does not only present the dissolution of meanings one took to be "well known," it also presents a stubborn striving towards the agreement of the concept and its object, of the true and itself (as we shall see: the true concept of a true object). This is the standard against which Hegel's Logic must be judged.

2

TWISTS AND TURNS OF HEGEL'S CONTRADICTION

Contradiction is ubiquitous in the Logic as well as in Hegel's system. Not just *a* contradiction, or *some* contradictions, determined in each case by the particular terms related to one another. Rather, what Hegel presents is contradiction as such, as a general figure of thought and therefore of being insofar as it is thought. Hegel offers what one might call a deduction of contradiction as an unavoidable moment of thought.

This deduction is given in the Doctrine of Essence. Not only is a chapter devoted to it (The Essentialities or Determinations of Reflection, which culminates with a section on contradiction: see *GW* 11, 258–291; *S.* 6, 35–80; *L.* 409–443), but one might maintain, as Mure did, that in a sense the whole Doctrine of Essence is an exposition of contradiction.

> [T]o Hegel every category of Essence is a contradiction of inseparably coupled moments. In Essence Being and Nothing have at length emerged respectively as essential and unessential, but these two moments are now together in each phase of every triad: Essence is only Essence as the Essence of Being. "Die Wahrheit des Seins ist das Wesen."[1]

Contradiction is, at the heart of each object that is thought, the unity of essence and being. This unity is manifested, for a thought that is not sufficiently critical, as the unity of essence and seeming (*Schein*) which is nothing but "the seeming of essence within itself" (*in sich selbst Scheinen*). The process expounded in the Doctrine of Essence is that of a thought which has disengaged itself from the illusion that it could have an immediate relation to its object; in other words, it is that of a thought which has renounced the immediacy of its own determinations. The journey through the incessant changes of being has led to the thought that the

meaning of each determination fades away as soon as it is elucidated, so long as it is only the developed expression of the immediate unity of thought and object, so long as it rests on the illusion that the object can give itself immediately as an object of thought, or that thought is the mere ordering of sensory perceptions. For in such case no determination is ever complete, and thought is perpetually led to admitting new determinations which have the same force of evidence as the previous ones, and so on *ad infinitum*. Each determination disappears into a further determination as long as all of the available determinations are not taken up again, digested and reformulated in a process in which the demand for unification of thought is opposed to the inexhaustible multiplicity of particular determinations. This is how, from the very beginning of the process of essence, being is relegated to the position of "inessential" or, more accurately, of "seeming."

> Essence, coming out of being, seems to stand opposed to it; this immediate being is *at first* the *inessential*.
>
> But *secondly*, it is more than merely inessential, it is being without an essence, it is *seeming*. (*GW* 11, 246; *S.* 6, 17; *L.* 394)

The reason being is from then on presented as inessential or as seeming is that it is now confronted with a demand for a cognition that is no longer immediate, but capable of accounting for its own determinations and their genesis – capable, therefore, of "holding them firm" (*festhalten*). Yet, to account for these determinations is to realize that they are not simply given, but always the product of a spontaneity of thought capable of constituting itself in a system, i.e. capable of unifying its own determinations. This is why the becoming of essence is marked by contradictory terms, which express the confrontation between the movement of the self-determination of thought and the determinations it "finds" before itself, or rather *within* itself, as a non-unified multiplicity. For example: essential/inessential, essence/seeming, content/form, essence/form (in Section 1 of the Doctrine of Essence, "Essence as Reflection within Itself"); thing/properties, thing in itself/existence, law/appearance, whole/part, force/exteriorization, interior/exterior (in Section 2, "Appearance"); absolute/modes of the absolute (in Section 3, "Actuality").

This enumeration, which is not exhaustive, is moreover defective in that it lists determinations whose nature and function are different in each case. I nevertheless offer it only to indicate this (which will be the main object of my demonstration in this chapter): if Hegel's

category of contradiction has any sense at all, it is that of defining the tension necessarily immanent to any process of cognition between the determinations of the given-to-be-known and those of the knowing.

> Because [essence] is self-repulsion or indifference towards itself, negative relation to itself, it thus posits itself over against itself and is infinite being-for-self only in so far as it is unity with itself in its difference from itself. (*GW* 11, 242; *S.* 6, 15; *L.* 390)

In essence, thought constitutes itself (its own determinations) only by going beyond itself, towards that which is other than itself, that is, unthought. If thought posits itself over against its object rather than, as is the case with being, identifying its determinations with those of the object as it presents itself, it promptly negates this return into itself, and acquires again some content by relating to an object. Its unity with itself has no other function than to carry it towards what is other with respect to it and is at the same time its own as the object of thought. This relation to the other as constitutive of self is precisely what is defined as contradiction:

> The self-subsistence of the determination of reflection . . . consists . . . in the fact that it is this determination itself and excludes from itself the determination which is negative to it. (*GW* 11, 279; *S.* 6, 65; *L.* 431)

My main purpose in this chapter will be to explicate this point. I intend to dispel persistent misunderstandings concerning Hegel's notion of contradiction by showing that Hegel intends neither to refute the logical principle of non-contradiction, nor to provide an ontological category defining a relation within being independently of thought. Neither a principle of formal logic, nor a category of a dogmatic ontology, contradiction has a role and meaning only in that dialectical logic which I argued above to be a rebellious heir of Kant's transcendental logic. It is just as important to see how Hegel's Logic is made possible by Kant's Copernican Revolution as to see how it strips the latter of any *raison d'être* by making its protagonists – an unthought "object" and a "subject" bearing "forms" in search of their content – disappear. It is in this relation, both positive and negative, to Kant's Copernican Revolution that the category of contradiction and its central role in the Doctrine of Essence are to be understood.

In Kant, the content of cognition remains irreducible to the categories of thought; if the understanding cognizes an object only insofar as it produces its form, this product nevertheless remains conditioned

by a sensible matter without which it would be empty. For Hegel, as we have seen, the idea of the thought object's "sensible content" is eminently problematic.[2] On the other hand, what remains an invaluable discovery is the tension, within any object of cognition, between the unity of the "I think" and the multiplicity that remains unthought, or incompletely unified by thought. Any (thought) object bears within it this tension; this is why all objects bear contradiction within them. What makes the Doctrine of Essence particularly interesting within Hegel's system is the fact that it is built upon this tension. Its proper function is to explore the successive forms of this tension, which is never superseded within the Doctrine of Essence. This is why the great lesson of the Doctrine of Essence is that "all things are in themselves contradictory [*Alle Dinge sind an sich selbst widersprechend*]" (*GW* 11, 286; *S.* 6, 74; *L.* 439).

This sentence is comprehensible only if one has carried out the conversion required by the Doctrine of Essence. One must consider "things" not as a given whose unity and characteristic determinations are given – the logic of Being, with the incessant transition from one determination to the next, is supposed to have done justice to this illusion – but as results of thought inscribing its own unity into that which is presented to it. Then each "thing" bears within itself the contradiction of unity and multiplicity, of complete determination and unpredictable contingency. In other words, the "things" that are "contradictory in themselves" are not the entities that were expounded in Book 1, "Being." Rather, they are entities now reflected as the reflection of essence within itself. Contradiction in things can be understood only in light of this transition from the realm of being to that of essence.

We find an echo of this theme in Hegel's criticism of Heraclitus: according to Hegel, Heraclitus has the merit of having become conscious of the universal contradiction in things, but he was not able to elevate himself to the consciousness of the true nature of this contradiction. He remained in a mode of thought incompatible with the true comprehension of contradiction.

> To come back to Heraclitus, there is only one thing wanting to the process, which is that its simple principle should be recognized as universal concept. [...] Heraclitus, indeed, says that everything flows on, that nothing is existent and only the one remains; but that is the concept of the unity which only exists in opposition and not of that reflected within itself.[3]

Heraclitus believes he can grasp the unity of opposites at the very level of immediacy where objects are presented to perception ("unity

which *is* in the opposition"). In contrast, Hegel wants to show that unity can be grasped only if being is understood as being that is thought; unity is, in being, only that of thought thinking being ("reflected within itself"). Only if one knows how to carry out this conversion from given being to being that is thought, only if one grasps being that is thought within a being that is apparently given, can one determine the true nature of contradiction. For the latter is, at the heart of each presented thing, a contradiction between its inscription within a rational unity and its irreducibility to unity. This is how contradiction is a category that belongs specifically to a dialectical logic that has assimilated the lessons of critical philosophy: ontology must give way to a logic of being that is thought. But this logic is itself built not on coexistence by friendly agreement between "thought" and "given," but on a genuine conflict between two irreducible poles of thought; this conflict is manifest in the very characterization of the objects of thought.

Understanding the context of Hegel's notion of contradiction also gives us some indication as to the relation that can exist between Hegel's contradiction and the Aristotelian principle of contradiction. Hegel is not concerned with restoring the legitimacy of contradiction where formal logic ("general pure logic," in Kant's terms: see A52–53/B77) denied it. Rather, he is concerned with showing the incapacity of formal logic not only to resolve the contradictions thought finds within itself, but to account for them. This critique of formal logic is expressed in the Remarks Hegel adds to the exposition of each "determination of reflection." In a general Remark (*GW* 11, 258–260; *S.* 6, 36–38; *L.* 409–411), and then in the Remarks on Identity (*GW* 11, 262–265; *S.* 6, 41–45; *L.* 413–416), Diversity (*GW* 11, 270–272;*S.* 6, 52–55; *L.* 422–424), and Contradiction (*GW* 11, 285–286; *S.* 6, 73–74; *L.* 438–439), Hegel explains the relation between his "determinations of reflection" and the laws of formal logic. These Remarks constitute a good introduction to the steps that give meaning to Hegel's notion of contradiction. I shall first review them before analyzing Hegel's proper exposition of the determinations of reflection.

Hegel and traditional logic

Hegel does not reject the principles of traditional logic.[4] On the contrary he takes them to be expressions of the "determinations of reflection."

> The *determinations of reflection* used to be cast into the form of propositions, in which it was said of them that they were of universal application. These propositions were counted as the universal laws of thought that ground all thinking, which are absolute in themselves and incapable of proof, but are immediately and without contradiction acknowledged as true by all thinking as it grasps their meaning. (*GW* 11, 258; *S.* 6, 36; *L.* 409)

But Hegel submits these principles to a relentless critique. According to him, as expressions of "determinations of reflection," they expound the minimal requirements of all thinking. Yet at the same time, they generate the illusion that through them, the most universal determinations of being are defined. Then they become either pathetic tautologies, or absurdities. Behind Hegel's score-settling with traditional logic, what is really at stake is thus not so much logic itself as the implicit or explicit metaphysics that it conveys.

> [T]hese propositions are defective in that they have for subject *being, every something*. In this way they resuscitate being, and assert the determinations of reflection – identity and so on – of the something, as a quality which the something has in itself ... (*GW* 11, 259; *S.* 6, 37–38; *L.* 410–411)

Consider the first example, identity. A phrase such as "Everything is identical to itself" is grammatically constructed in such a way that it seems to express not a principle of thinking, but a quality of entities, of "everything." Now the reason it is possible to assert identity in this way, in the form of a universal proposition, is precisely that it *is not* a determination of being. In fact, no traditional ontological determination has ever given rise to such a universal proposition. For instance, the table of Aristotelian categories is not presented in the form of universal propositions. This is because, since they are nothing but the systematic presentation of determinations of the perceived object, Aristotelian categories are fleeting and in need of completion by others. I cannot articulate a proposition such as "everything is quality" without feeling called upon to add, in order to be complete: "but also quantity, relation, etc." In contrast, the reason a proposition like "everything is identical to itself" possesses meaning and can be articulated without disappearing into another called upon to complete it, is that it does not, in fact, express a determination of an entity, but a "determination of reflection," that is, a requirement of thought: to characterize an object is to ascribe to it what makes it identical to itself, what is "stable" within it.

We are faced, therefore, with this paradoxical situation: even in the outdated form of those universal propositions whose subject is "every

being," the "principles" of logic do express determinations of reflection, in contradistinction from the previously expounded determinations of being. But at the same time, expressed in this form, they amount to blurring the very distinction between being and reflection. Determinations of reflection are principles for thinking, and because they are principles of thinking, they are principles of being as being that is thought. But they have nothing to do with determinations that are "given," received, or that are in any way independent of the spontaneity of thought. Or, to express the point even more provocatively: no entity just *is* identical to itself, and yet it is one and the same thought that thinks entities – that thinks *itself* in the entities – and which returns to itself to acknowledge its own identity in the self-identity that the entity has thus acquired. What is, is identical to itself only insofar as it is the "seeming of essence within itself": it is identical to itself only as the result of the movement of reflection. This is what is masked by a proposition such as "everything is identical to itself," which tends to make identity a quality on which to base the description and classification of perceived objects.

If the "laws of thought" are to be rejected, it is therefore only insofar as they convey an uncritical, dogmatic metaphysics. This outcome of the laws can be seen even better when one examines another formulation of the principle of identity: "A = A," "a tree is a tree," "a plant is a plant."

> [T]he pure Law of Identity is met all too frequently in experience, and one sees clearly enough in this experience how the truth it contains is viewed. If, for example, to the question "*What is a plant?*" one answers "*A plant is – a plant*," the truth of this proposition is straightway admitted by the entire company upon which it is tested; and it will be said with equal unanimity that thereby *nothing* is said. (*GW* 11, 264; *S.* 6, 43; *L.* 415)

"The entire company" is willing to agree that this proposition is at once true and utterly trivial; for we expect from a proposition beginning with "X is . . . " not the mere repetition of X, but its determination by a predicate that is different from it. However, what is then expressed is no longer an identity, but a difference, or rather an identity including difference in itself (*GW* 11, 264–265; *S.* 6, 44–45; *L.* 415–416).

In short, we can summarize Hegel's position in the following way: Hegel does not disagree with the principle of identity as a universal and minimal requirement for consistency in thought. We will see shortly that on the contrary, he tries to give an original ground to this principle. But in fact, identity is a principle of thought and *not* a structure of something ontologically given to which thought would have to conform.

And above all, what is of interest in the process of thought begins when this principle is at work in the constitution of objects of thought. Then it is revealed to be insufficient, and perpetually confronted with that which contradicts it. For the unity and self-identity of any object is constituted only over against the multiplicity of its determinations.

This point comes up again in Hegel's discussion of the principle of the excluded middle: "Something is either A or not A. There is no third." Here again, Hegel's argument rests on the idea that the meaning commonly ascribed to this principle reduces it to a proposition about being, thereby masking the movement of reflection that can alone give it its true meaning.

> It is an important proposition, which has its necessity in the fact that identity passes over into diversity, and the latter into opposition. Only it is not usually understood in this sense, but it is usually taken to mean that, of all predicates, either this predicate itself, or its not-being, pertains to a thing. The opposite here means only the lack [of a predicate], or rather *indeterminateness*; and the proposition is so trivial that it is not worth the trouble of enunciating it. If one takes the determinations of sweet, green, square – and one is supposed to take all predicates – and one says of spirit that it is either sweet or not sweet, green or not green, and so forth, then this is a triviality which leads to nothing. (*GW* 11, 285; *S.* 6, 73; *L.* 438)

The principle "leads to nothing" because the attempt to determine something under such a principle becomes caught in the inevitable incompleteness of the sphere of being: the determinations are lined up next to one another without any organizing principle, so that the only outcome is an eclectic list lacking any principle for applying this or that predicate to this or that object. Thus what is unacceptable, according to Hegel, is not the principle of the excluded middle, but the aberration that makes a principle of formal logic a pseudo-structure of being.

Presented in this way, Hegel's criticism might just repeat Kant's warning against any attempt to make formal logic an *organon* of reason. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant forcefully insists on the idea that formal logic can provide only a negative criterion of truth, and not a system of truths about objects (cf. A57–60/B82–84). Logic provides the formal rules for handling concepts, but does not define the relations between the objects determined by concepts. Kant is especially insistent on this point in the Appendix to the Transcendental Analytic, On the Amphiboly of Concepts of Reflection (A235–292/B316–349).

According to Kant, the amphiboly of concepts of reflection is the error committed by Leibniz when he confuses the relation between

concepts (in the understanding) and the relation between objects (in sensibility). The first two cases of amphiboly are of most direct interest for us here, for they concern (1) identity and diversity (see A263–264/B319–320) and (2) agreement and opposition (see A264–266/B321–322). Now identity, diversity (or difference), and opposition (culminating in logical opposition: contradiction) are the three major "determinations of reflection" for Hegel.

According to Kant, Leibniz confuses the (generic) identity of concepts and the (numerical) identity of objects given in sensibility. This confusion is expressed in the principle of identity of indiscernibles: according to Leibniz, no two things that are absolutely identical as to their intrinsic properties (and thus as to the concept that represents these properties), can be numerically distinct: conceptual identity is also numerical identity. But in fact, says Kant, two objects that are *identical* as to their concept can be numerically *diverse*, for empirical objects depend for their individuation not only on the concepts of the understanding but also on the forms of sensibility. Consequently,

> however identical everything may be in regard to that [the comparison of concepts], the difference of the places of these appearances at the same time is still an adequate ground for the *numerical difference* of the object (of the senses) itself. (A263/B319)

Second, according to Kant, Leibniz ignores the difference between *logical contradiction* and *real opposition*: more precisely, he confuses the impossibility of internal contradiction in the concept of a thing and the impossibility of real opposition between the determinations of one and the same thing. Two important consequences of this confusion are that for Leibniz, evil has no positive existence (it is a mere lack of perfection), and that a being containing all reality can contain no internal opposition (A273–274/B329–330). But, Kant objects, the fact that a concept contains within itself no contradiction says nothing about the nature of the relations that constitute the corresponding object.

> [T]he principle that realities (as mere affirmations) never logically oppose each other is an entirely true proposition about the relations of concepts, but signifies nothing at all either in regard to nature nor overall in regard to anything in itself (of this we have no concept). For real opposition always obtains where $A - B = o$, i.e., where one reality, if combined in one subject with another, cancels out the effect of the latter [...]. (A272–273/B328–329)

Kant's opposition to Leibniz might help us understand Hegel's charge against the misguided use of the principles of formal logic.[5] Kant summarizes his opposition to Leibniz in the following way: the formal rules defining relations between concepts cannot determine the relations between objects. That two objects cannot be distinguished as to their concept does not entail that they are numerically identical; that the concept of a thing does not contain any contradiction does not entail that the empirical object itself does not include "conditions [...] from which one had abstracted in the concept [...] in general, that make possible a conflict, which is certainly not a logical one [...]" (A282/B338). In formulating his view, Kant is not condemning formal logic – witness Kant's declarations on the "perfection" of Aristotelian logic (BVIII) – rather, he intends to limit its metaphysical pretensions. What is misguided is not logic itself, but the claim to ground on mere logic a metaphysics that ignores the radical distinction between an object of cognition and an object of mere thought.[6] Hegel expresses a similar suspicion with respect to the projection of formal principles onto determinations of being.

Comparing Hegel to Kant offers us even more interesting results. We can foresee the advantages Hegel can draw on behalf of his own dialectical logic from a proposition such as: identity (of concepts) does not preclude diversity (of objects), or, logical non-contradiction does not preclude real opposition. But Hegel cannot accept the situation of strict separation of powers which supports these propositions for Kant. For Hegel, there cannot be on the one hand a relation of concepts (identity, non-contradiction) and on the other hand a relation of empirical objects (diversity, real opposition). Such a separation is acceptable only on the condition laid down by Kant: the radical heterogeneity of understanding and sensibility. Since Hegel refuses this heterogeneity, the general direction and the results of Hegel's and Kant's respective criticisms are in the end very different. What Kant criticizes is Leibnizian apriorism: contra Leibniz, Kant claims that the relations of empirically given things cannot be determined by logical relations of concepts. What Hegel criticizes is what he calls "representation," i.e. the illusion according to which thought-determinations are parallel to and distinct from determinations present in empirically given things. Hegel thus sets himself in opposition to the rigid separation Kant established between the formal or conceptual order and the empirical order. He sees himself as attempting to bring to fruition a program that Kant defined but never carried out: to bring back the purely formal principles

of thought and the principles of the determination of empirical objects to one and the same source. Kant maintained that formal logic and transcendental logic – the logic of possible experience – have one and the same origin, the transcendental unity of apperception (see for instance A117n.). Hegel wants to show that indeed "formal" requirements (principle of identity, of non-contradiction, of excluded middle, as principles of thought) and empirical requirements (doing justice to diversity and real opposition within objects given in sensible intuition) have one and the same origin in the process of reflection that leads to the fully determined unity of the concept.

This explains, I suggest, Hegel's ambiguous assessment of the principle of the excluded middle I cited above:

> It is an important proposition, which follows from the fact that identity passes over into diversity and the latter into opposition.[7] (*GW* 11, 258; *S.* 6, 73; *L.* 438)

While taking this principle to be "important," Hegel gives it a meaning of his own. What interests him in the principle of excluded middle is not the formal principle of traditional logic. In its formulation he wants to see the confrontation between the unity of the object that is thought ("something") and a multiplicity of determinations in which distinctions and relations must be introduced in order to determine anything at all ("A *or* not A": diversity, and eventually opposition). Just as the principle of identity is not a mere formal rule but a principle of the activity that constitutes the identity of objects, so the principle of the excluded middle is primarily, for Hegel, a principle guiding the *activity* of distinguishing and relating determinations.

Now, this effort to combine unity and empirical diversity in one and the same process of thought is precisely what inevitably leads to contradiction as a necessary moment of thought. It should thus come as no surprise that among Hegel's "determinations of reflection," contradiction should be the one that is lacking in the corresponding list of Kant's concepts of reflection, only to crop up in the Transcendental Dialectic of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and there be denounced as the perverse effect of the illusions of reason.[8] In the Amphiboly, Kant opposes the diversity and "real" opposition of determinations in sensible things to the "logical" identity and non-contradiction in the concepts under which those things are thought. Hegel unifies the two poles and introduces contradiction within any object of thought as a necessary moment of the thought of that object.

This admittedly quick shortcut through the paths of Hegel's view should at least help us reach some provisional conclusions concerning the relation between Hegel's Logic and the principles of formal logic. One might say that regarding formal logic, Hegel's position is only a more negative version of Kant's. Hegel buries without ceremony what Kant was still honoring with some flowers. Kant proclaims the exemplary success of Aristotelian logic, only to disavow any attempt to draw any metaphysical conclusion from such a logic. He is content with taking the discursive model Aristotle provides for thought as the backbone for his own project of a *transcendental* logic. Hegel, on the other hand, opens his *Science of Logic* with repeated criticisms directed at formal Logic (*GW* 11, 15; *S.* 5, 35; *L.* 43–58). This does not stop him from making his own use of the forms of Aristotelian syllogistic logic in Book 3 of the *Science of Logic* (see *GW* 12, 90–127; *S.* 6, 351–402; *L.* 664–704). But it is clear that in taking up these forms Hegel is not concerned with expounding or justifying valid forms of inference. He is not even concerned with a theory of knowledge. Rather, he is concerned with a new kind of metaphysics, as speculative logic. This metaphysics follows in the steps of Hegel's critique of dogmatic metaphysics and its relation to formal logic, presented in the Objective Logic and more particularly in the Doctrine of Essence.

What is at stake in Hegel's stance with respect to logical principles is therefore not a logic against another logic, but rather a conception of metaphysics against another conception of metaphysics. Hegel's vituperations against formal logic are the expression of his opposition to what one might call an empiricist-formalist conception of thought, namely a metaphysics resting on the twofold illusion of (1) the exteriority of the being that is thought to thought itself, and (2) the parallelism between forms of thought and the structure of being. Against such a view Hegel's project is to show that to think being is to articulate, within one and the same process of thought, types of objects that belong to different moments of thought, each moment in some way dismissing what for the previous moment counted as a legitimate object for thought and a legitimate mode of determination of that object. Kant is Hegel's master in that in the Amphiboly of Concepts of Reflection, Kant addressed the metaphysical errors carried by the idea of an immediate correspondence between thought and the objects it thinks, and distinguished between the object as given in sensibility and the concepts by which it is thought. But Kant maintained between understanding and sensible intuition an exteriority that, according to Hegel, threw him back into

the representational schema of classical metaphysics. On the contrary, Hegel intends to show how the "given" is absorbed and perpetually redefined in the movement of thought.

Hegel's "determinations of reflection" are the landmarks of this ebb and flow of thought within itself. It is now time to expound them.

Towards contradiction

Before considering Hegel's notion of contradiction and its role in the Logic, it will help to consider Hegel's positive exposition of the determinations that lead to it: identity and difference, and the specifications of the latter: absolute difference, diversity, opposition (*GW* 11, 260–291; *S.* 6, 38–80; *L.* 411–443). Here Hegel's exposition is even more ponderous than usual, especially when discussing the various moments of difference. It is difficult for the reader not to give in to exasperation and slam the book shut when faced with the endless variations on the positive and the negative presented in these sections. Nevertheless, these preliminaries are indispensable to our understanding of Hegel's notion of contradiction.

First I need to say a word about the three main moments of reflection, which Hegel expounds in Section 1, Chapter 1 of the Doctrine of Essence, just before moving, in Chapter 2, to the exposition of the "essentialities or determinations of reflection" (identity, difference, contradiction). For the latter derive their meaning from the former. Recall that reflection is the process by which thought as a "function of unity" – to use another Kantian term – brings to unity the multiple determinations it finds within itself, only to go beyond the unity thus found towards more determinations to be unified anew, and so on ad indefinitum.[9] Reflection reduces being to what it is, that is, nothing, or at least nothing outside the movement of reflection. If reflection is the truth of being, it is such a reflection as a superseding (*Aufhebung*)[10] or negation, and even absolute negation – that is, not the negation of a particular determination, or even of several, but the negation of being as a whole, as a sphere seemingly independent with respect to thought. Already in being, every determination was defined as negation, in the classical sense of limitation: *omnis determinatio est negatio.* But it is within the developments of the doctrine of essence that negation acquires its specifically Hegelian sense. For as I stated above,[11] in the sphere of essence, alterity is no longer the alterity of a given with respect to another given, but the alterity of thought with regard to

itself. Similarly, negation is no longer limitation by an external other, but the superseding of what is given as immediate, and the positing of this same "immediate" within the overall movement of reflection. Thus it is reduced to "nothing," but a "nothing" that is none other than reflection itself. Thus the kinds of statements Hegel delights in:

> Becoming in Essence – its reflective movement – is hence the movement from Nothing to Nothing and through Nothing back to itself. (*GW* 11, 250; *S.* 6, 24; *L.* 400)

Essence is negation as the superseding of all immediacy, including its own. Neither origin nor determinate starting point can be assigned to reflection. This is especially clear when one considers its initial moment in Hegel's exposition: *positing reflection* (*GW* 11, 250; *S.* 6, 25; *L.* 400). Reflection is "positing" in that it supersedes immediacy to make of it a posited being (*Gesetztsein*), that is, something that is determined by thought. But it is positing insofar as it is *presupposing*, that is, insofar as it necessarily presupposes an immediate that it, at the same time, supersedes. In other words, reflection reveals what seemed to be immediate as being, in fact, thought, mediated, "posited"; but it had to be the case that *there was* something presenting itself as immediate for reflection to reveal it as identical to itself.

This first moment ("positing reflection"), might lead to the impasse of an immediate identification of the determinations of the presented given with the determinations of thought – which is precisely the error Hegel denounces in dogmatic metaphysics.[12] But this error is avoided by virtue of the fact that the first moment is completed and at the same time contradicted by the second moment of reflection, that of *external reflection* (*GW* 11, 252; *S.* 6, 28; *L.* 402). This second moment is one where it is recognized that the "presupposed" has a being of its own, or is self-standing. In other words, if the immediate is "posited," it is not by virtue of a mere transposition from the realm of the given to that of thought, but by virtue of the confrontation between what is given and the unity of reflection that *transforms* it into thought. What needs to be done then is to understand how the thought of the given is constituted *in* but also *against* the given – with the added complication that the "given" itself is not in fact given, but always already thought, always already the product of this same confrontation between "givenness" and thought. Through the emphasis placed on the given in its irreducibility to rational determinations, the moment of external reflection evokes empiricism; through the insistence on the fact that this "given" is always

already thought, it is an empiricism that develops into transcendental philosophy. We will see these two aspects at work below in the transition from *diversity* to *opposition*.[13]

Finally, the third moment of reflection is *determining reflection*, the unity of positing reflection and external reflection (*GW* 11, 255; *S.* 6, 32; *L.* 405). Determining reflection is *external* reflection in that, like this earlier stage of reflection, it confronts another, thus running the risk of getting lost in unpredictable given determinations. But it is also *positing* reflection in that the "other" in which it risks getting lost is already only *itself*. Or, as Hegel writes:

> External reflection that becomes determining posits an other – albeit essence – in the place of superseded being [...]. (*GW* 11, 255; *S.* 6, 32; *L.* 405)

This is why "determining reflection" (*bestimmende Reflexion*) gives rise to "determinations of reflection" (*Reflexionsbestimmungen*): determinations of being insofar as it is already pervaded through and through by reflection. In determining reflection, "positedness is thus a *determination of reflection*" (*GW* 11, 256; *S.* 6, 33; *L.* 406). Posited being is no longer merely disappearing semblance, which gives way to reflection. It is itself reflection, since the latter has lost and found itself in it. If the object is none other than reflection, the figures of the movement of reflection are now figures of the object itself. Hence the "determinations of reflection," aptly characterized by Pierre-Jean Labarrière and Gwendolyn Jarczyk:

> The three main essentialities that will be developed in this chapter (identity, difference, contradiction) are the determinations and in a way, the specific outcomes of the three constitutive aspects of reflection (positing reflection, external reflection, determining reflection).[14]

To assert the equivalence between "essentialities" and "determinations of reflection," as Hegel does in Section 1, Chapter 2 of the Doctrine of Essence, "The Essentialities or Determinations of Reflection" (*GW* 11, 258; *S.* 6, 35; *L.* 409), is to break with any kind of realism about essences. "Essence" for Hegel is nothing other than the movement of reflection in which "things" find their determination. Hegel does not look to define "the essences" of things. But he does define "essentialities" (*Wesenheiten*), one might say, "that by virtue of which 'essences' are attributed to things": their identity, their differences, their contradiction. But precisely, a "thing" is not identical to itself by virtue of its

individual "essence," but by virtue of the movement of thought that constitutes it as the thing it is, to which it therefore owes its individuality. A thing has an "essence" because it is construed as being identical to itself, it is not identical to itself by virtue of having an individual essence. Similarly, each "thing" is distinguished from others (things are diverse) by virtue of the unity of the process of reflection that distinguishes it from others while assigning it its identity, and thus generates the determinate oppositions of objects. And finally it is in this way that "all things are contradictory in themselves": not as isolated "things" but as moments of the movement of thought that constitutes them.

It is now time to enter into Hegel's detailed exposition of these determinations.

Identity and difference I have already said something about the meaning of identity for Hegel when I considered his discussion of the "principle of identity."[15] We do not need to spend too much time on it again. Nevertheless, the following is worth emphasizing. Just as in a sense, the three moments of reflection are but specifications of "positing reflection," similarly identity is the most fundamental of the "determinations of reflection," namely the one that determines the movement of the others and into which they all return. For the movement of reflection is geared towards the digestion of all determinations of object into a unified system, into a totality of determinations thought under one principle. To accomplish this digestion is to bring back all determinations in to the self-identity of reflection, an identity that is constantly threatened by the difference which the given opposes to it, i.e. by what reflection "finds" in itself. This is why Hegel writes that "identity is still in general the same as essence" (*GW* 11, 60; *S.* 6, 39; *L.* 412). And also: "This identity is . . . reflection in its entirety" (*GW* 11, 261; *S.* 6, 40; *L.* 412).

Identity is an active principle of totalization. This aspect is made even more explicit in the examples given in the *Encyclopedia Logic*. There one of the figures of identity is God, totality of possibilities which Kant analyzed as an illusion of reason, in the chapter on the Transcendental Ideal, in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (A571–583/B599–611).

Hegel writes:

> The true knowledge of God, it may be said, begins when we know him as identity – as absolute identity. To know so much is to see that all the power and glory of the world sinks into nothing in God's presence, and subsists only as the reflection of his power and his glory.[16] (*S.* 8, 238; *E.L.* §115a, 168)

Shortly after this passage, Hegel suggests another figure of identity: identity is "'I', that is, pure self-contained unity" (*S.* 8, 238; *E.L.* §115a, 168). This is the same as the "I" mentioned in the Introduction to the Doctrine of the Concept, which Hegel maintains is no other than the concept itself.[17]

Under these two aspects – God, I as concept – identity is the essence that has been able to integrate within itself the resistance of what is alien to it, of "merely given" determinations. But in determining it in this way, Hegel in fact anticipates the *result* of the movement of essence. At the beginning of the Doctrine of Essence, we have not yet reached this point. Identity is the unity yet to be developed that follows the collapse of the determinations of "Being" (in Book 1 of the *Science of Logic*). Nevertheless, already at this point its whole function is to reflect within itself what is alien to it. Indeed, just as "positing reflection" is only such insofar as it is "presupposing," similarly identity has meaning only through the difference it denies at the same time as it carries it within itself. This is why Hegel cannot define identity without defining difference, just as he cannot define difference without defining identity.

> Identity is the reflection into self that is identity only as internal repulsion . . . It is therefore identity as difference that is identical with itself. (*GW* 11, 262; *S.* 6, 40; *L.* 413)

> Difference is . . . itself and identity. Both together constitute difference: it is the whole and its moment. (*GW* 11, 266; *S.* 6, 47; *L.* 417).

Finally he gives this characterization announcing the section on Ground:

> Difference is the whole and its own *moment*, just as identity too is its whole and its moment. This is to be considered as the essential nature of reflection and as the *determined, original ground* [*bestimmter Urgrund*] of *all activity and self-movement.* (*GW* 11, 266; *S.* 6, 47; *L.* 417)

To understand what Hegel means here, it is necessary to accept at least provisionally the use he makes of the terms "identity" and "difference." This use is quite peculiar to Hegel, although according to him it clarifies the common use of the terms. In other words, the way Hegel uses the terms "identity" and "difference" is supposed to clarify what happens behind the speaker's or thinker's back, as it were, when he uses these terms. According to Hegel, being identical is being different. For to be identical is to be identi*fied*, and to be different is to be differen*tiated*. Yet one identifies only by differentiating, and one

differentiates only by identifying. These are one and the same activity. So in the "object" (the result), being identical is one with being different; identity is one with difference. For in the "subject" (the activity), the activity of identifying is one with the activity of differentiating, both activities being one in what Hegel calls "reflection." Identity and difference in the "subject" and identity and difference in the "object" are one. For reflection exhausts itself in the object; the object is nothing other than reflection.

If we keep all of this in mind, the twists and turns that initially seem most absurd – identity is different from difference, therefore identity is difference! (*GW* 11, 262; *S.* 6, 41; *L.* 413) – are somewhat clarified.

Difference and diversity From positing/presupposing, reflection becomes external. The determinations of the presented object are not directly translated into thought-determinations, but their independence, their own subsistence, is recognized. At this point, difference prevails over identity. The concern is not with providing a definition of each particular thing, and so transforming it into thought, but with "taking one's abode in things." It is thus that difference becomes *diversity.*

> Diversity constitutes the otherness as such of reflection. [...] Reflection has become in general external to itself ... (*GW* 11, 267; *S.* 6, 48; *L.* 418–419)

Diversity (*Verschiedenheit*) is for things at once the fact of being radically other in relation to the unity of reflection and – consequently – the fact of being other in relation to one another. Diversity is not a return to being, for it is a moment of reflection, while in being, the fact that things belong to the movement of reflection has not yet been made explicit. Nevertheless, the attempt to *think* the given is confronted at once with the relative exteriority of the given with respect to thought as a process of unification, as well as with the exteriority of things with respect to one another. Identity and difference are themselves caught in this exteriority. Identification and differentiation become the comparison of objects exterior to one another. Identity and difference are *likeness* and *unlikeness.*

Something is said to be "*like* something else in one respect, *unlike* in another" ("*in einer Rücksicht gleich, in einer andern aber ungleich*") (*GW* 11, 269; *S.* 6, 50; *L.* 420). Interpreting these terms – *gleich, ungleich, Gleichheit, Ungleichheit* – is not easy. I suggest we must be guided by the fact that the moment of diversity, like that of external

reflection, is the moment of empiricism in the dialectic of the Logic of Essence. The only resource thought has for identifying its objects at this stage is to submit them to a comparison that is as exhaustive as possible. One recalls Hume, for whom the first relation between ideas is that of resemblance.[18]

But the Hegelian mole is persistent. Even a thought as doomed to exteriority and dispersion as is "external reflection" must deal with the necessary transformation of the *given* into *thought*. The task is not only to note similarities and dissimilarities. These must be brought back to a principle. One cannot remain at a figure of thought in which diversity is given, and the distinction of objects is a fact irreducible to thought. If two terms are, in their existence as given, distinct for an external comparison, this distinction must originate in their complete determination by thought. Hegel finds this necessity expressed in Leibniz's "principle of the identity of indiscernibles." This principle is thus presented at once as the expression of an empiricist attitude, to which diversity belongs, and as expressing the demand to move beyond empiricism.

This twofold evaluation of Leibniz's principle is significant. For on the one hand, Hegel aligns himself with Kant in condemning the complicity of Leibnizian rationalism and empiricism. On the other hand, he aligns himself with Leibniz in expressing the demand for the complete determination of objects of thought. I will now examine in turn these two aspects of Hegel's view.

(1) Hegel thinks, like Kant does, that there is a deep complicity between dogmatic metaphysics and empiricism. For Hegel just as for Kant, identifying the object of perception with the object of thought leads Leibniz to think that one can bring back any numerical distinction to a distinction of essence, or (in Kant's terms) a conceptual distinction. Hegel cites as a ludicrous illustration of Leibniz's view the spectacle of noble court ladies claiming to put the principle of the identity of indiscernibles to the test by running all over their gardens in search of two identical leaves (*GW* 11, 271; *S.* 6, 53; *L.* 422).[19] In the Preliminary Concept of the *Encyclopedia Logic*, Hegel characterizes the relationship between empiricism and rationalist metaphysics in the following terms:

> *Empiricism* has this source [experience as the source of truth], in common with metaphysics, which like empiricism takes as a warrant for the legitimation of its definitions – of their presuppositions as well as of their determinate content – the representations, i.e. the content that initially comes out of experience ... (*GW* 20, 75; *S.* 8, 107; *E.L.* §38, 61)

In Chapter 1 of the Doctrine of Essence, Hegel opposes his own conception of the relation between reflection and seeming to the Leibnizian conception of representations.

> Leibniz's monad develops its representations out of itself; but it is not the force that generates and binds them together, rather they arise in it like bubbles; they are indifferent and immediate with respect to one another, and therefore with respect to the monad itself. (*GW* 11, 247; *S.* 6, 21; *L.* 396)

These "representations arising like bubbles" are a nice expression for Hegel's opposition to Leibniz's view. For Leibniz, all thought is perception. What we call sensible cognition is confused perception, while intellectual cognition is clear perception. Between the two types of cognition there is but a distinction of degree. The perceptions of which a monad is capable define its degree of perfection, and all monads tend towards accomplishing the perfection they are capable of. This is what is expressed by Hegel's sentence cited above. Every monad possesses, as innate potentialities, all the perceptions of which it is capable, as well as their proper unity. Making them clear is only a matter of activating a potentiality that is always already available within the monad.

This takes us back to the principle of identity of indiscernibles: this principle means that what, for a confused perception, is mere numerical diversity, is in reality, for a clear perception, a difference of essence. Similarly, what for a confused perception is external multiplicity, is for a clear perception a distinct, intellectually determinate, unified totality of determinations. Now for Hegel, on the contrary, the difference between "external" cognition and cognition of "essence" is not one of degree, but one of nature. To think is not to perceive, and the transition from confused to rational cognition is a task to be accomplished by the process of thought. Essence is not already present within seeming. Rather, it is defined *against* seeming, which is *negated* by essence, or reflection.

Let us now return to the similarities between Hegel's and Kant's position, and their limits. Kant presented the symmetry between rationalism and empiricism, between Leibniz's system and Locke's, in the following terms:

> Leibniz *intellectualized* the appearances, just as Locke totally *sensitivized* the concepts of understanding in accordance with his system of *noogony* (if I am permitted this expression), i.e., interpreted them as nothing but empirical or abstracted concepts of reflection. Instead of seeking two

> entirely different sources of representation in the understanding and the sensibility, which could judge about things with objective validity *only in conjunction*, each of these great men holds on only to one of them, which in his opinion is immediately related to things in themselves, while the other does nothing but confuse or order the representations of the first. (A271/B327; Kant's emphases)

According to Kant, Locke and Leibniz are victims of the same illusion, which consists in seeing only a difference of degree rather than one of nature between sensibility and understanding. Each makes one of the faculties the auxiliary of the other instead of seeing in them two principles that actively confront and transform each other. The difference separating one philosopher from the other is simply that the one makes the understanding an auxiliary of sensibility, while the other makes sensibility a confused form of the understanding. Hegel is thus faithful to Kant when he opposes the continuous transition Leibniz is supposed to think obtains between sensible and rational knowledge, between seeming and essence. The complicity Hegel sees between Locke's empiricism and Leibniz's rationalism was already denounced by Kant.

(2) But the agreement between Hegel and Kant stops here. Hegel cannot grant Kant the thoroughgoing denial of the principle of identity of indiscernibles. We have seen what Kant thought of this principle: the identity of concepts is not the identity of empirical objects, for empirical objects are not completely determined, i.e. individuated, by their concept.[20] Now for Hegel, Leibniz is correct in saying that the only true distinction is the distinction of essence, or distinction by the concept. *But according to Hegel, such a distinction does not apply to objects of sensory perception.*

According to Hegel, the reason Kant denies the principle of identity of indiscernibles is that like Leibniz, he remains at the level of the perceived object. This is demonstrated by the example he chooses in order to support his position:

> Thus, in the case of two drops of water one can completely abstract from all inner difference (of quality and quantity), and it is enough that they be intuited in different places at the same time in order for them to be held numerically different. [...] For a part of space, even though it might be completely similar and equal to another, is nevertheless outside of it, and is on that account a different part from that which is added to it [...]. (A263–264, B319–320)

By maintaining that objects of knowledge are sensible objects, Kant remains just as beholden to the standpoint of representation as Leibniz does: he is beholden, like Leibniz is, to empiricism. Indeed when Hegel derides Leibniz's "bubbles," he opposes his own conception of the relation between essence and seeming not only to that of Leibniz, but to that of a disparate group including Kant as well as Leibniz, but also Hume, and even Fichte! (*GW* 11, 246–247; *S.* 6, 20–21; *L.* 396–397). All these authors, according to Hegel, at least share this, that they grant subsistence to the sensible object as a permanent content of thought, while Hegel, on the contrary characterizes seeming as necessarily *disappearing*. Once again, the object insofar as it is thought *is no longer* the perceived object – although undoubtedly, it is the very same thing that is first perceived, and then thought: the movement of essence is the movement of being itself (*GW* 11, 241; *S.* 6, 13; *L.* 389). Nevertheless, in objects insofar as they are thought, there is no other distinction than the distinction of essence. The numerical distinction of perceived objects must be transformed into the distinction of essence in objects of thought.

To summarize: the principle of identity of indiscernibles, as Leibniz thinks it, remains caught in an empiricist view, expressing mere diversity. But it "expresses more": the demand of thinking the determination of objects, that by virtue of which they are diverse.

> Things in the plural immediately involve multiplicity and quite indeterminate diversity. – But the proposition "there are no two things which are entirely alike" expresses more, namely, *determinate* diversity. Two things are not merely two – numerical plurality is only sameness [*Einerleiheit*] – but they are diverse by virtue of a *determination*. (*GW* 11, 270–271; *S.* 6, 53; *L.* 422)

Thinking the *determinate* diversity of objects leads to what Hegel calls *opposition*.

Opposition I said above that diversity and opposition, two determinations of an external reflection, should be related respectively to empiricism and to transcendental philosophy.[21] Indeed, *opposition* appears with the awareness that diversity is itself the product of thought. Diversity is not the determination of a mere "given," for there is no mere given for thought. What must be shown in diversity itself is thus the unity of the movement of reflection that constitutes it. The relations between objects must be shown to belong, not to the mere exteriority

of the sensible given, but to the synthetic unity of a construction of thought. The representation of likeness and unlikeness is therefore taken up again and transformed by the movement of reflection. In diversity, likeness and unlikeness are the immediate determinations of an external reflection.

But from its immersion in exteriority, reflection is sent back to itself, to its own movement of constituting determinations. Likeness and unlikeness are not merely found. Rather, they are themselves reflected, and reflected *as products of reflection*. It then appears that each of these determinations derives its meaning from the other.

> The two therefore do not fall on different aspects or points of view in the thing, without any mutual affinity, but one throws light into the other. (*GW* 20, 149; *S.* 8, 242; *E.L.* §118, 170–171)

"One throws light into the other," that is, it is through likeness that unlikeness is defined, and it is through unlikeness that likeness is defined. One thing is said to be like another to the extent that it is also unlike it. Similarly, two things can be said to be unlike each other only if there is sufficient likeness to allow them to be compared.

There is thus a relative unity of likeness and unlikeness. Two things are not like one another on the one hand, and unlike one another on the other hand. It is in fact within a unified web of determinations that they are recognized as alike and unlike. Likeness and unlikeness thus belong to more than a merely external comparison. Determining likeness and unlikeness allows a progression towards the internal characterization of each of the things thus related. Likeness as a relation to the other allows a definition of likeness to oneself that is the *positive* in a thing. This positive (position of determination) is characterized only by opposition to a *negative*, which is, in contrast to the positive, the relation to what is unlike, thus also the unlikeness of the thing itself with respect to what had been given to it as a positive characterization.

> This likeness to oneself, reflected into itself, which contains within itself the relation to unlikeness, is the positive; and the unlikeness that contains within itself the relation to its non-being, to likeness, is the negative. (*GW* 11, 273; *S.* 6, 56; *L.* 424)

Here the analyses of Hegel are closely inspired by Kant's, even though Kant's name is never mentioned. This is clearly shown in the Remark to the section on Opposition, which is a paraphrase, sometimes almost word for word, of Kant's *Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative*

Magnitudes into Philosophy.[22] In this pre-critical essay, Kant explained for the first time his notion of "real opposition." On at least two points (to be expounded below), Hegel's presentation of "opposition" is close to Kant's "real opposition." However, Hegel's purpose in making use of this notion is in fact noticeably different from Kant's. This difference appears clearly when one considers a third aspect of Hegel's notion of "opposition," one that is totally absent in Kant. Let us look, then, at these three aspects in turn.

(1) Positive and negative, according to Kant, can be defined only with respect to each other. Something is not positive or negative *by itself*, but only insofar as it enters with another into a relation of opposition. Kant writes:

> A magnitude is, relative to another magnitude, negative, in so far as it can only be combined with it by means of opposition; in other words, it can only be combined with it so that the one magnitude cancels as much in the other as is equal to itself. [...T]he above designation does not signify a special kind of thing, which is distinctive in virtue of its inner constitution; it rather signifies the following reciprocal relation: magnitudes preceded by "−" are to be taken together in an opposition with certain other things which are designated by "+". (2:174)

Thus, for example, the route followed by a ship traveling east is defined as negative only insofar as it is *opposed* to the route west initially predicted for instance under opposite winds. Or a debt is negative capital in that it makes "a magnitude equal to itself" "disappear," in the estate of the person in debt. But one can also reverse the relation, and consider the route to the west as *negative* with respect to the route east, which is then positive. Capital can be seen as negative debt [*sic*!].

Hegel admits this first consideration, but presents it differently:

> The determinations of that constitute the positive and the negative consist, therefore, in this, that the positive and the negative are, *first*, absolute *moments* of the opposition; their subsistence is inseparably *one* reflection; it is a single mediation in which each *is* through the non-being of its other, and so *is* through its other or its own non-being. – Thus they are *opposites* in general; that is, *each* is only the opposite of the other; one is not yet positive and the other is not yet negative, but both are negative with respect to each other. (*GW* 11, 273; *S.* 6, 57; *L.* 425)

For Kant, opposition is a causal relation between objective determinations: according to the passage cited above, "the one magnitude cancels as much in the other as is equal to itself." In contrast, for Hegel,

opposition is a relation in thought that determines the meaning of the determinations thus related. This difference is not always clearly apparent, because the examples Hegel gives to illustrate his point are taken almost literally from Kant.[23] But its importance will be evident shortly.

(2) According to Kant, even though, as we just saw, positive and negative can be defined only in relation to each other, the entities thus characterized are, outside the relation in question, indifferent with respect to the determinations of positive and negative. Indeed Kant goes as far as to say that outside the relation, any determination of the object is fully positive.[24] Hegel too affirms the indifference of the terms with respect to their relation of opposition, and their subsistence as distinct realities: this is the second moment in the analysis of opposition, the one that, as in all of Hegel's triads, corresponds to the recognition of the exteriority of the given.

> But further, the opposites are not only *one* indifferent term, but *two indifferent terms*. For, as opposites, they are also reflected into themselves, and thus persist as diverse.
>
> Thus in $-8 + 3$ there are altogether eleven units; $+y$ and $-y$ are ordinates on opposite sides of the axis, where each one is a determinate being [*ein Dasein*] indifferent to this limit, and to their opposition; thus $+ y - y = 2y$. – Also the distance traveled east and west is the sum of a twofold effort or the sum of two periods of time. (*GW* 11, 276; *S.* 6, 61–62; *L.* 429)

But for Hegel, this double positivity is only a moment that is overcome as soon as it is recognized. For it is not true that once the relation of opposition is established, objects subsist, unfazed, outside this relation.[25]

Hegel just showed that what is known are not objects taken independently of one another, but their relations. Not relations of mere comparison (like/unlike), but relations of mutual determination, or rather – for one shouldn't introduce a causal reasoning that is absent from determinations of reflection – of mutual ascription of identity. The positive is what is posited, in its relation to its other, in a definable identity to itself; the negative is this same thing insofar as its identity is put into question through the characterization of its unlikeness to its other, and the recognition that it is only through this unlikeness that the self-identity is determined. How does this relate to Kant's real opposition? One might say that for Hegel, Kant's real opposition is an

example of a mode of thought that Hegelian opposition *reflects*: a mode of thought that goes beyond mere reflection on the given, to define things and their properties not as independent entities and determinations, but as terms in a relation. However, according to Hegel, ultimately Kant's notion of opposition remains at the level of given entities – Kant remains caught within the limits of representational thought. For him, *there are* positive determinations of objects, and we can establish relations between them. Hegel, for his part, doggedly continuing along the path of reflection, asks: how are determinations *re-defined*, or *re-constituted*, by virtue of being inscribed in relations to one another? What transformations does the *very notion* of determination undergo as a result of being thus constituted by thought?

This is the source of the third moment in Hegel's determination of opposition.

(3) What is defined as positive and negative in a relation of opposition does not subsist, unfazed, outside this relation. On the contrary, each determination, being defined, in itself, by its place in the relation, is *in itself* at once positive and negative.

> But, thirdly, positive and negative are not merely something posited, not merely an indifferent something, but their positedness, or the reference-to-other in a unity which they are not themselves, is taken back into each. Each is in itself positive and negative. (*GW* 11, 274; *S.* 6, 58; *L.* 426)

What predominates in the positive is the aspect of self-identity; the relation to the other has the sole function of securing this self-identity. On the contrary, what predominates in the negative is the aspect by which self-identity disappears in the relation to the other.

> The negative is the self-subsistent opposite, over against the positive, which is the determination of the superseded opposition, – in other words, the *whole opposition* resting upon itself, opposed to the positedness identical with itself. (*GW* 11, 275; *S.* 6, 59; *L.* 427)

We must pay attention to the terms of these new definitions. Hegel is saying that each determination is in itself positive, in that its identity has been established by the movement of reflection that opposes it to its other, or others; but it is in itself negative in that it *has no* identity, outside this movement. This is how I understand the definition of the negative as "the whole opposition resting upon itself." The negative is what is defined only by its opposition to its other; it is not only *a term* of the opposition. Rather, it is "complete opposition," crystallized in what it produces, the negative. In the negative, identity is "forgotten" so that

only what constitutes it is seen; this is why the negative is opposed to the "self-identical positedness" that is the positive. Now it is by the negative, that is, by the disappearance of identity, that cognition progresses and objects of thought are transformed. For it is the negative that pushes thought forward in search of a new identity.

Here it is clear that we are very far from the context in which Kant characterized *real opposition*. Does it mean that the reference to Kant is idle after all? I don't think so. For Hegel, just as for Kant in the critical period, the determination of opposition appears to be part of an effort to go beyond empiricism and to reveal in objects of cognition the products of the spontaneity of thought.[26] However, in Kant's case, objects of cognition have a subsistence, as sensible objects, that is not reducible to thought, even if the latter is a transcendental condition of their representation. The representation of opposition, like that of causal relation, is conditioned by sensible existence; it defines a relation between existences. In contrast, Hegelian opposition is a determination of reflection that defines a relation between thought-determinations, a relation between objects that are only taken up in thought-determinations, their very irreducibility to thought being again and always *thought*. Hegel uses Kant's demonstration to show that the external comparison of given entities, to which empiricism is satisfied to limit itself, offers more than what is foreseen by an empiricist approach: it reveals a mutual determination of thought-determinations, and of thought entities, by one another.

Presented thus, Hegel's definition of opposition is quite different from Kant's. Its significance is, in one sense, lesser, and in another sense, much greater. What is important in Kant's position is the idea that *real determinations*, as opposed to mere thought-determinations (determinations of concepts) can mutually destroy each other. Now, if my interpretation is correct, this aspect disappears from opposition as it is expounded in the Doctrine of Essence. It disappears to the benefit of a more general point: Kant's notion of real opposition, in the use Hegel makes of it, is a new weapon for challenging dogmatic metaphysics which would like to grant an autonomous subsistence to *things* with respect to thought.

The interpretation of Hegel's notion of opposition I propose, in its debt *and* contrast to Kant's, is somewhat surprising, especially if one tries to export this interpretation to other areas of Hegel's thought. Before saying more about what is at stake here, we need to finally consider the determination that was our main concern in this chapter: Hegel's determination of *contradiction*.

Contradiction Insofar as it is at all possible to give a clear definition of "positive" and "negative" at the end of Hegel's exposition of "opposition," this definition might be the following: the *positive* is that aspect according to which something maintains itself as identical with itself in its relation to other things, the *negative* is that aspect according to which, in its relation (in thought) with other things, any self-standing identity disappears. Positive and negative thus become, not determinations of distinct objects, but the determinations of one and the same thing considered as a totality of relations: *one and the same thing* is positive *and* negative with respect to the very same determinations. *Opposition* becomes *contradiction*.

The transition to contradiction means therefore that each term (positive, negative), which kept a degree of independence in the relation of opposition, has lost all of its own subsistence with respect to the process of thought that puts it in relation with other terms. Each is positive in itself, in that its identity is assigned to it, but also negative insofar as this identity is only assigned to the extent that it is denied, since it is nothing outside the process of reflection that constitutes it within a network of oppositions to other determinations. Similarly, each is negative, since it is determined only through its opposition to others; but being negative, it is also positive, since through its unlikeness to others it becomes like itself. The positive and the negative are therefore contradiction: the unity of a being and a non-being, a unity that is not that of two determinations external to one another, but that of two determinations equally constitutive of what they determine.

But, Hegel adds: the positive is only contradiction "in itself." The negative, for its part, is "posited" contradiction.

> This, then, is that same contradiction which the positive is, namely positedness or negation as self-relation. But the positive is only *implicitly* this contradiction, whereas the negative is the contradiction *posited*; for the latter, in its reflection in itself which makes it a negative in and for itself or a negative that is identical with itself, has the determination of being non-identical, or to exclude identity. (*GW* 11, 280; *S.* 6, 66; *L.* 432)

In the negative, one could say, contradiction is explicit. The negative *is* only by excluding, and therefore by excluding *itself* as simple identity. It exists only by disappearing. On the contrary, making contradiction appear in the positive necessitates referring its self-identity back to the process that constitutes it. The positive is the self-subsistence of the object, while the negative is the revelation of this subsistence as

mere seeming, through the revelation of the process of essence that constitutes it.

This transition from self-subsisting "things" to the explanation of the relations in which this seeming self-subsistence is constituted, is a process incessantly at work throughout the Doctrine of Essence. That it gives its meaning to contradiction explains the eminently transitory character of the latter. For if contradiction expresses the fact that each determinate thing is at once autonomous with respect to a system of relations, and constituted by these relations, contradiction disappears to the extent that the constitutive totality itself comes to the fore. This is the transition to the next determination, "Ground" (*GW* 11, 291; *S.* 6, 80; *L.* 444). Significantly, it is "ground," not "contradiction," which in the *Encyclopedia Logic* appears as the third determination of reflection, after "identity" and "difference." Contradiction is granted only one line. It appears as a quick transition, introducing the holistic viewpoint that is "Ground":

> Both Positive and Negative are therefore explicit contradiction; both are in themselves [*an sich*] the same. Both are also for themselves [*für sich*] the same, since each is the abrogation of the other and of itself. Thus they go to the Ground. (*GW* 20, 151; *S.* 8, 247; *E.L.* §120, 175)

In the *Science of Logic*, contradiction is granted a more important role, as a moment in its own right. Nevertheless, its dissolution and disappearance into ground are presented almost as soon as contradiction itself is introduced.

Contradiction resolves itself.

> In the self-excluding reflection we have just considered, positive and negative, each in its self-subsistence, supersedes itself; each is simply the transition, or rather the self-transposition, of itself into its opposite. This ceaseless vanishing of the opposites within themselves [*in ihnen selbst*] is the *first unity* which results from contradiction; it is the *zero*.
>
> But . . . the result of contradiction is not merely zero. – The positive and negative constitute the *positedness* of self-subsistence; their negation of themselves by themselves sublates the *positedness* of self-subsistence. This is what, in truth, perishes in contradiction. (*GW* 11, 281; *S.* 6, 67; *L.* 433)

The result, this time, is

> A uniting with itself which is positive unity with itself. (*GW* 11, 281; *S.* 6, 68; *L.* 433)

I gave these fairly lengthy quotations from Hegel in order to bring out the *two aspects* of the outcome of contradiction. On the one hand, this outcome is zero: the determinations that seem to have an existence of their own disappear; that existence is denied them. But on the other hand, this outcome is the unity of essence, the movement of thought that constituted them implicitly, and is now reflected in them. These two aspects are the two aspects of all positing reflection: positing reflection suppresses at the same time that which it posits, and only posits by suppressing. We already saw this with the overcoming of being by essence:[27] being is superseded, but it is, through this very superseding, posited as appearance. Similarly here, the seemingly self-subsisting determinations are superseded, their positedness itself is superseded; their positedness was their endorsement as the self-subsisting terms of an opposition. As such they belonged to a reflection that was still marked by exteriority. More precisely, their positedness "falls to the ground," *zu Grunde geht.* Hegel is playing with the double meaning of this expression. *Zu Grunde geht* = *zugrunde geht* = perishes, collapses. But also: *zu Grunde geht* = goes to its ground, i.e. is brought back to its ground or to the reason for its being. Positedness is suppressed only in order to be posited all over again, that is, posited as the appearance of another, of a reflection of a higher order. Reflection posits itself, that is, suppresses itself as external reflection to return to its unity with itself. This is how the outcome of contradiction is the "uniting with itself," or ground.

This dissolution of contradiction into ground has given rise to the objection that Hegelian contradiction is nothing more than a return to identity. Whatever one thinks of this objection, it is somewhat paradoxical that contradiction, this trademark of Hegel's philosophy, should occupy, when all is said and done, such a small place in the *Science of Logic.* Just what *is* the import of Hegel's trumpeting that "all things are in themselves contradictory," a proposition which, Hegel says, is the characteristic assertion of the determination of reflection "contradiction" (*GW* 11, 286; *S.* 6, 74; *L.* 439)?

Indeed like the other determinations of reflection, contradiction has its corresponding proposition. But, while the other propositions only imperfectly accounted for the movement of reflection, in contrast the "proposition of contradiction" is a more adequate expression of reflection. This is because the other propositions tended to transform the determinations of reflection into qualities of existents. This one, on the contrary, returns from the "given" to the activity of thought that constitutes it. Indeed it is clear that such a proposition would be

nonsensical if it made a claim about entities. Of these it is clearly true that they are, for instance, either yellow or not yellow. But that is not what the proposition of contradiction is about. What it is supposed to express is the fact that the identity of a thing is determined only to the extent that this thing is constituted as other to itself, having its identity not in itself but in the system of relations that opposes it to the other things. To understand the full force of this proposition is to affirm *both* identity *and* its disappearance – not to "forget" identity on the pretext that its disappearance was just affirmed, not to "forget" that disappearance has the function of constituting identity. Thus the proposition of contradiction gives access not only to the universality of contradiction, but also to the true meaning of the other essential determinations, by dispelling any misunderstanding with regards to them. In other words, the determination of reflection "contradiction" retrospectively illuminates all previous determinations of reflection.

First, identity:

> Contradiction, which comes forward in opposition, is only the developed nothing that is contained in identity, and that was manifest in the expression that the law of identity says *nothing*. (*GW* 11, 286; *S.* 6, 74–75; *L.* 439)

Identity, as a determination of reflection, drives the process by which thought brings back to itself the other that is the unthought multiplicity. Reflection according to identity, one might say, pushes thought towards the multiplicity that gives it its content, and at the same time *transforms* that multiplicity into an object-of-thought. The reason the proposition of identity seems so empty is that it expresses the requirement of identity by making otherness purely and simply disappear. "A is . . . A." That this void is felt universally signals the gaping lack of something else at the heart of this proposition, i.e. the presence of *difference* at the heart of *identity*: contradiction. This is why the thought of the identical passes over into that of diversity, and then into that of opposition.

> This negation further determines itself into diversity and into opposition, which now is posited contradiction. (*GW* 11, 286; *S.* 6, 75; *L.* 439)

Contradiction, as a determination of reflection, is therefore even further from the description of a given than were identity and the three moments of difference (difference, diversity, opposition). These determinations define the structure, made explicit and clear to itself, that thought imprints on the object in attempting to determine it. In this process, the moments of difference represented the passage through

otherness, that is, through the recognition of an object that resists, that possesses its own relative self-standing, that is "presupposed to thought" but only to be "posited" by it, and even – in a typically Hegelian redundancy – that is presupposed because posited as presupposed. In contrast, contradiction does not even have this much dimension of exteriority anymore. It is the organizing form of determining reflection, that is, the return of external reflection into positing reflection, this time full of content. This means that, from a strictly Hegelian point of view, any attempt to make of contradiction a structure of exteriority, independent of thought, is a misinterpretation. Exteriority, in the process of reflection, is represented by the moments of difference. Contradiction is already beyond it. Making contradiction a category that *represents* anything is radically contrary not only to Hegel's characterization of this category itself, but to the whole dialectical process which is that of the Doctrine of Essence.

What about Hegel's comments in the third Remark to the section on Contradiction, in which Hegel does seem to indicate that contradiction is manifest in what is? He gives numerous (and disparate) examples that seem to grant contradiction an immediate existence. They are, moreover, the major sources of "famous quotes," particularly for Marxist authors, and thus ring familiar. Contradiction, says Hegel, is "the root of all movement and vitality; it is only in so far as something has a contradiction within it that it moves, has impulse and activity" (*GW* 11, 286; *S.* 6, 75; *L.* 439). "Motion is *existent* contradiction itself" (*GW* 11, 287; *S.* 6, 76; *L.* 440). We also learn that "Something ... is alive only insofar as it contains contradiction within it ..." (*GW* 11, 287; *S.* 6, 76; *L.* 440) and – better and better – that common experience itself never ceases to make use of the category of contradiction. For after all, what are "above and below," "right and left," "father and son" if not instances of contradiction itself? (*GW* 11, 288; *S.* 6, 77; *L.* 441) Was it worth going through so many complexities to arrive at such apparent absurdities?

In fact, Hegel's intention is not to identify contradiction with such representations. It is to show that representational thought itself, which pretends that *there is no* contradiction, that contradiction is not something *present* (*vorhanden*), nevertheless is replete with representations that can give rise to a thought of contradiction. Contradiction is not "present"; but what is present are objects which lead us to the recognition of contradiction. The latter is not a new object, but a new way to think the object. Indeed any object, according to Hegel, can and

must be thought as contradictory. But some objects display this necessity more clearly. Which ones? Mostly those that display the conflict between their consideration as a unified, indivisible totality, and their consideration as the sum of particular determinations; or again, those for which the construction of the unified totality of their determinations goes mostly through the destruction of particular determinations as they can be immediately represented. Such is the meaning of the proposed examples. They do not offer a representation of contradiction. Rather, they make visible the necessity of becoming conscious of contradiction in order to resolve the paradoxes that arise from the decomposition of the object into immediately given, separate determinations: the moving object is "here and not here," the living being is composed of such and such material elements, and so on.

The seemingly most egregious example is that of the relational determinations cited above (father/son, right/left, above/below). The sole virtue of these examples is to lead back from particular determinations to the relation that gives them meaning.

> Father is the other of son, and son the other of father, and each *is* only as this other of the other; and at the same time the one determination is only as this other to the other: their being is *one* persistence. The father, outside the relation to the son, is also something on his own [*für sich selbst*], but then he is not father, but a man in general; just as above and below, right and left are also reflected in themselves and are something apart from the relation, but then only places in general. (*GW* 11, 288; *S.* 6, 77; *L.* 441)

Of course, contradiction is not between father and son, above and below, and so forth. It is between the fact that an object is father, when thought in relation to the son, and that *this very same object* is *something else* – "he is not father" – when abstracted from this relation. Consequently, even with this "trivial" example – the term is Hegel's – Hegel's idea is not to describe a relation between determinations of object, but to clarify the problem posed to thought by the fact that an object has determinations only in the relations in which it is inscribed. Any thing is from that point on contradictory in itself, for each of its determinations can be affirmed just as well as denied, or rather, if it can be attributed to the thing, it is never as a determination belonging to it insofar as it is an independent "thing." A man is not identified as a father on his own (as a man), but insofar as he has a son, and thus the determination is negated as an intrinsic determination and reaffirmed as a relation. According

to Hegel, the point can be generalized, and gives its meaning to the notion of contradiction as the culminating point of the determinations of reflection. To go from particular determinations to the relations that constitute them is at once a necessary process of thought, and one that generates contradiction, for its outcome consists in negating what was the point of departure of the whole process: the object itself, the thing, as a self-standing support for its own determinations.

In order to make this difficulty more perspicuous, Hegel recapitulates the different moments of thought, all of which contain contradiction within them, but in a more or less explicit way. Those moments are "representation," "reflection, rich in spirit," and finally "thinking reason," which will be seen fully at work only with the concept.

> Though representation [*Das Vorstellen*] everywhere has contradiction for its content, it does not become aware of it; it remains an external reflection, which passes from likeness to unlikeness, or from the negative relation to the reflection-into-self of the different things ... (*GW* 11, 288; *S.* 6, 77; *L.* 441)

This is the moment we have seen reflected in the determination of diversity and then again in that of opposition, which maintains the positive and the negative face to face.

> Reflection that is *rich in spiri*t [*die* geistreiche *Reflection*; Hegel's emphasis], to mention it here, consists on the contrary in grasping and enunciating [*aussprechen*] contradiction. Even though it does not express the concept of things and their relations, and has for its material and content only determinations of representation [*Vorstellungsbestimmungen*], it still brings them into a relation that contains their contradiction, and which *allows their concept to shine through* the contradiction [*die ihren Widerspruch enthält und durch diesen* hindurch ihren Begriff scheinen läßt]. (*GW* 11, 288; *S.* 6, 78; *L.* 442; Hegel's emphasis)

This last remark is especially important: it puts contradiction within the context of a reflection that still has representational determinations for its content. Only the *concept* brings about the complete absorption of the entity into the determinations that thought gives to itself. Then we have the outcome that only "thinking reason" can bring about:

> Only when the manifold entities have been driven to the point of contradiction do they become active and alive with respect to one another, and acquire in contradiction the negativity which is the interior pulse of self-movement and life [*Lebendigkeit*]. (*GW* 11, 288; *S.* 6, 78; *L.* 442)

Contradiction, in Hegel's terms, "allows" this power of reason "to appear," but at the same time it expresses its relative impotence. It "allows" the thought totality "to appear," the thought totality in which alone the determinations of objects acquire their meaning, but at the same time it recognizes the irreducible independence of the object, of the thing. Contradiction expresses at once the holistic power of rational thought, and the limitation of this power. This twofold character appears under a particular aspect each time one reaches, in the course of the Doctrine of Essence, a moment of explicit totalization. This is the case, for example, first with the *unconditioned absolute* that is the outcome of the search for ground (*GW* 11, 316; *S.* 6, 115; *L.* 472). Second, it occurs with the exposition of *the relation of whole and parts* (*GW* 11, 354; *S.* 6, 166; *L.* 513). In each of these two cases, the recurrence of contradiction comes from the revival of the holistic ambition of reflection over against the irreducible independence of what is given to be thought.

Let me first consider the case of the "absolute unconditioned." Hegel's explanation of the relation between conditions and conditioned, and his explanation of the constitution of the absolutely unconditioned, is the third moment in his exposition of "ground." Ground is the unity of thought into which the given thing "disappears." This unity is fully realized (*complete ground*) when a system of relations exhaustively connects the things initially presented as contingent and dispersed. Complete ground is thus the unity of "conditions" (the things, *conditions* of thought) and the "conditioned" (thought unification itself). The process of thought is thus "conditioned" by the things *presupposed* to this process; but according to a familiar progression in the Logic, the "presupposed" is at the same time "posited," and the given things are themselves conditioned by the relations that organize them; this reciprocal presupposition of the condition and the conditioned is a very important aspect of Hegel's notion of "ground," to which I will return in detail in the next chapter.

Now it is precisely in this reciprocity that contradiction, which concluded the previous chapter, reappears within the chapter on "Ground":

> The fact that the condition is the being-in-itself [*das Ansichsein*] for the ground constitutes therefore that side of it which makes it mediated. Similarly, the relation of ground, in its self-subsistence, also has a presupposition, and its being-in-itself is external to it. – Thus each of the two sides is the *contradiction* of indifferent immediacy and essential mediation, both in a single relation, – or the contradiction of independent persistence and the determination of being only a moment. (*GW* 11, 316; *S.* 6, 115; *L.* 471–472)

The thing that is a "condition" for the relation of ground (*Grundbeziehung*) is contradictory because it is both a self-standing existence (it is given to thought as being in itself independent of the relation of ground) and an existence that can be thought *only* through this relation. For its part, the complex thought-determination that is the relation of ground is contradictory because it is both defined by itself and defined exclusively with respect to the "conditions" in which it is a unifying relation.

We find here the exact echo of the explanations Hegel gave about the "positive" and the "negative." The relation of ground, as a moment in the return to the self-identity of thought, is the positive. It bears the negative in itself, in its definition. Correspondingly, the "condition," a thing or set of things to be negated in its particularity and contingency, and to be related to the universal in which it is taken up, is consequently unlike itself in its identity to itself: it is the negative. But as such, it carries within it the positive, its definition by the relation of ground.

Consider now the relation of whole and parts. This relation comes on the stage at the end of the section on Appearance (*Erscheinung*).[28] This section corresponded to a moment of dependence of thought with respect to exteriority or to the given. This opens the way to a unity that is not abstract and empty, but instead, fully integrates within itself the content provided by experience, i.e. the appearance. Here I deliberately use the term "experience," which is more Kantian than Hegelian. This is because here, Hegel's polemical relation to Kant is more important than ever. Hegel intends to show that admitting the contingency of the given does not entail maintaining the exteriority of this given to forms of thought, nor, consequently, giving up its complete determination by forms of thought. In fact, Hegel's exposition of the *relation of whole and parts* follows his refutation of the radical separation Kant establishes between the world-in-itself and the world of appearances (*GW* 11, 347; *S.* 156; *L.* 505). According to Hegel, far from being an inaccessible beyond, the world-in-itself is the totality of thought-determinations that organizes the world of appearances. It does not exist outside or beyond appearances. This point is recalled in the first lines of "The Relation of Whole and Parts":

> The first side, the *whole*, is the self-subsistence which constituted the world in and for itself; the other side, *the parts*, is the immediate existence which was the world of appearances [*die erscheinende Welt*]. In the relation of whole and parts the two sides are these self-subsistences, but in such a

> manner that each has the other shining in it [*jede die andere in ihr scheinen hat*] and at the same time is only as this identity of both. (*GW* 11, 355; *S.* 6, 166–167; *L.* 514)

The relation between whole and parts is thus not a mere mereological relation between a sum and its elements, but a relation between two moments of thought, unification and receptivity to what is given.

This being so, one should not be surprised to find the terms in which Hegel expounds this relation to be very close to those in which he expounded the relation between condition and conditioned. Indeed Hegel explicitly refers to the latter: the relation between the whole and the parts, he says, is "the same thing" as the relation between the conditioned and the condition. But, "the relation here considered is at the same time higher than the relation of *conditioned* and *condition* . . . " (*GW* 11, 356; *S.* 6, 168; *L.* 515; Hegel's emphasis). This is because here thought has gone through a multitude of more specific determinations (the whole sphere of appearances) while in the chapter on "Ground," all we had was the exposition of a general abstract process, that of the reflection of thought on its own most general figures.

The link with the issue of contradiction is also even more explicit than in the case of the relation between conditioned and condition: now it is the relation of each term with the other term inside itself. Each part is at once only itself – "the self-subsistent" – and only a moment in a totality.

> The whole is the self-subsistent, the parts are only moments of this unity; but equally they, too, are the self-subsistent, and their reflected unity is only a moment; and each is, in its *self-subsistence*, simply something *relative* with respect to another. Thus this relation is in itself immediate contradiction, and sublates itself. (*GW* 11, 355; *S.* 6, 167; *L.* 514).

"The relation between parts and whole is in itself contradiction": this cannot but evoke Kant's Antinomies of Pure Reason. For Kant too, contradiction arose from the attempt to determine in thought the totality of appearances. The Antinomies are generated when reason seeks to determine "the transcendental concept of absolute totality in the series of conditions for a given appearance [. . .]" (A340/B398). It may seem, of course, that strictly speaking the whole/part relation can be related only to one of the Antinomies: the second Antinomy of Pure Reason, which opposes the assertion that the matter that constitutes the world is a whole of discrete parts, and the assertion that matter is continuous (infinitely divisible). And indeed, in the Remark following the exposition of the whole/part relation, Hegel discusses the second

Antinomy of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. However, it is more accurate to suppose that the contradiction present in the whole/part relation has a more general import than the reference to the second Antinomy alone would lead us to believe. Hegel's answer to Kant's Antinomies will be properly elucidated only when we consider the definition Hegel proposes for the unconditioned, in the division of the chapter on "Ground" entitled "complete ground."[29] Nevertheless, to conclude our examination of the relation between contradiction and totalization of determinations of thought, it will help to consider it in light of Kant's doctrine of the Antinomies of Pure Reason. We can thus clarify an idea put forth rather elliptically at the beginning of this chapter: in challenging the influence of formal logic on metaphysics, Hegel goes so far as to assert the omnipresence of contradiction, which is precisely the step Kant did not take.

According to Kant, it is in its attempt to constitute the "absolute totality of the synthesis of appearances," that pure reason engages in arguments that put it into conflict with itself. This conflict is inevitable, for in engaging in such an attempt, reason forgets that it knows only what is *given* in the forms of sensibility. It would be able to produce a complete synthesis of conditions for each given conditioned only if it were not dependent on the occurrences, each time contingent and outside its power, of the given.[30] The illusion according to which a complete synthesis of the series of conditions of appearances is possible can have two opposite results: either it confuses the empirical conditions of the synthesis of appearances – their being *given* in the a priori forms of space and time – with the determinations of the thing in itself. Or it confuses the categories produced by the understanding to guide the synthesis of the phenomenon with determinations of things in themselves: it uses these categories dogmatically. This is what generates the Antinomy of Pure Reason, whose thesis depends on the second of the confusions just mentioned, while the antithesis depends on the first. In other words, the antinomy is always the conflict between, on the one hand, the demand for purely intellectual synthesis according to the categories, and on the other, the presence of an inexhaustible multiplicity of what is given in sensibility.[31]

It is precisely this external opposition that Hegel condemns. The three moments of reflection, then the three "determinations of reflection" that correspond to them (identity, difference, contradiction) are supposed to have shown that the demand for complete determination in thought and the recognition of the inexhaustible multiplicity of the

empirical given are in no way external to one another, but are two moments of thought inseparable from one another and in perpetual interaction. Thus, what in Kant is an external opposition of propositions representing two different points of view becomes a contradiction internal to any conceptual construction.

A second objection formulated by Hegel against Kant is that precisely because of the exteriority of their terms and formulation, the antinomies cannot but have a false solution, which consists either in purely and simply rejecting both propositions (this is Kant's solution to the first two antinomies (A517–32/B546–560) or in reconciling them from an external point of view (Kant's solution to the last two antinomies) (A530–565/B560–593).

Finally, if Kant is right that the antinomy always has its source in the conflict between the demands of reason and the conditions of experience, there are, then, many more antinomies, that is, contradictions, than Kant has expounded.

> The antinomies are not confined to the four particular objects taken from cosmology. Rather, they appear in *all* objects of every kind, in *all* representations, concepts, and Ideas. To know this and to cognize objects in this property belongs to what is essential in philosophical consideration; this property constitutes what further determines itself as the *dialectical* moment in what is logical. (*GW* 20, 85; *S.* 8, 127–128; *E.L.* §48, 78)

Any contradiction in thought must find its solution. But Kant neither provides such a solution nor shows the way to it, since the points of view expressed in each thesis and antithesis are components of all cognition which, according to Kant, remain irreducibly separate from one another. As long as one remains within the representational conception according to which the perceived object, that is, the given (whatever nuances one introduces into the notion of the "given") provides its content to cognition, contradiction has no solution. In contrast, contradiction can be resolved to the extent that the terms that are opposed (the given on the one hand, the demand for complete determination by the understanding on the other hand) both disappear in the process of thought that gives them meaning: to the extent that they are posited at the same time they are cancelled.

Let us take stock. We have seen that, according to Hegel, contradiction is the determination of reflection according to which within each thing can be found the opposition of the positive and the negative, i.e. the opposition of its identity and of the dissolution of this

identity in the very moment it is posited. We have seen that defined in this way, contradiction has only a transitory role to play, leading thought to find its basis no longer in the "thing" that is contradictory in itself, but in *ground*, that is to say the unity of thought which assigns its determinations to each individual "thing." We have seen that contradiction is not a determination of the thing as perceived, but rather that it marks the transformation of determinations that have illusory immediate evidence into determinations that are thought. And finally, we have seen that contradiction is, consequently, essentially linked to any transformation of a *given*, whatever it may be, and whatever may be its degree of elaboration by thought, into *thought*; this transformation is the transformation of an undetermined multiplicity into a unity of determined relations: what I have called totalization. It is this link between contradiction and totalization that we already saw appear in Kant's Antinomies.

These results are surprising. Where are the images of the struggle of all against all, or the antilogical apocalypses, that a century and a half of post-Hegelianism has accustomed us vaguely to expect from Hegel? In fact Hegel's notion of contradiction may well be charged, by some, with as many vices as it is, by others, endowed with virtues it does not have, at least as expounded in the Doctrine of Essence. I would like to assess this point by examining some of the criticisms leveled against Hegel's notion of contradiction.

Some objections to Hegel's notion of contradiction

I shall consider the objections formulated against Hegel's dialectic by two Italian Marxists: Galvano Della Volpe and Lucio Colletti. Their positions seem particularly interesting, first because they dispute the validity of Hegel's notion of contradiction by focusing on its logical and epistemological status rather than on its particular "realizations" in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* or the *Principles of the Philosophy of Right*; and second because they express a typical, and perhaps unavoidable, misunderstanding in a particularly clear form. The misunderstanding consists in reading Hegel's Logic as a theory of knowledge. Since the conclusions I just proposed may not be completely immune to such a misunderstanding, my goal in making the detour through these two criticisms is to get a better grip on a difficulty inherent in any attempt to understand the *Science of Logic*.[32]

The two critical views I will be considering are not exactly identical. Nevertheless, their main emphasis is the same. It can be characterized in the following way: Hegel's contradiction is supposed to be a decisive link in a thought that denies the sensible given any autonomy and therefore refuses Kant's distinction between logical contradiction and real opposition, a refusal that results in purely and simply rejecting the principle of non-contradiction.

Galvano Della Volpe's position is the most interesting, because it is the most radical. Della Volpe challenges Hegel's view in the name of empiricism. This empiricism is first expressed in Della Volpe's judgment on Kantian philosophy. The relation between sensation and the understanding as distinct and equally important sources of knowledge is credited to the Copernican Revolution. On the other hand, the doctrine of synthetic judgments a priori contradicts, according to Della Volpe, the most fruitful inspiration of Kant's philosophy. It renews ties with a "deplorable abstract formalism" in granting the understanding a priori principles that in no way depend on contact with the object. Only aesthetic judgment fully affirms the positivity of feeling and retains what is greatest in Hume. Now in contrast, says Della Volpe, Hegel completely eliminates the irreducibility of the sensible given: this is apparent in the first three chapters of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where "sense certainty" finds its truth in "perception," which in turn is absorbed in the understanding and its representation of "force." Certainly, the developments on difference, diversity, and opposition in the Doctrine of Essence of the *Science of Logic* nevertheless constitute an attempt to think the resistance of the sensible given to rational unification. But the multiplicity thus recognized as a moment must be superseded and taken up in the unity of reason. This omnipotence of reason annihilates not only sensibility, but also the understanding. For Hegel is the prisoner of a romantic conception of unity that

> prevents Hegel, and all Hegelians, from *grounding the intellect* (and from developing a fully *critical* concept of *reason*), since it obscures the positive nature of the relation of the intellect to the senses or feeling, to multiplicity.[33]

Now, says Della Volpe, if it is true that all thought tends towards the unity and universal validity of its own determinations, the latter only have meaning when articulated with contingent particulars given in sensibility. From this point of view, the critique to which Hegel's dialectic must be submitted (a critique that, according to him, was in

large part formulated by Marx) is analogous to the critique formulated by Aristotle against Plato's *diairesis*, which Aristotle called an "impotent syllogism." We must criticize Hegel, as Aristotle criticized Plato, for conferring an illusory independence to the universal, which allows him to present thought as a dialectic of "participating genera" and "participated genera." And this is where the question of the "sensible conditioning" of thought, for Della Volpe, meets the question of the role played by the principle of non-contradiction. While Plato's *diairesis* is a process grounded on the composition of opposites in the "participating genera," Aristotle restores this process to its only possible ground: the position of opposite determinations to define the primary substances furnished by empirical intuition. It is on this terrain of empirical knowledge that definition depends on the *distinction* of opposite attributes, and therefore the admission of the principle of contradiction affirming the impossibility of composing opposite attributes in one and the same substance.[34] To the *composition of opposites* in the participating genre Aristotle opposes the *impossibility of combining opposites* in the sensible object. This impossibility is what grounds the principle of non-contradiction.

The principle of non-contradiction is therefore not only a *logical* principle. It is a principle belonging to a theory of knowledge whose inspiration is empiricist and anti-dogmatic. Della Volpe goes so far as to write:

> The participation of the principle of non-contradiction in the conditioning of the object [...] is none other than the inescapable participation of the senses as such, of matter in its purity and positivity. [...] It is here that the concrete non-contradiction finds its proper role, constitutive of knowledge as a unified and consistent discourse [...].[35]

However, he also writes that without this "participation of the senses,"

> the negativity that is characteristic of contradiction, of the dialectical-functionality of thought, is not possible [...].[36]

How can this second idea be reconciled with the first? Well, there is in fact, for Della Volpe, a dialectic of thought, a relation of the same (the universal) and the other (the differentiations of this universal) that one may, if one wants, call contradiction. But Della Volpe prefers the term "tauto-heterology," which in his view better expresses the dialectic of the moments of unity and distinction as radically distinct moments; he cites, to illustrate what he calls the "dialectical-functionality of thought,"

Kant's "category as a function, and the heterogeneity of the intuition and the concept."[37]

Like Della Volpe, Lucio Colletti links the affirmation of the heterogeneity of the empirical given with respect to rationality, and the affirmation of the principle of contradiction. But he remains more strictly faithful to a Kantian/transcendental position. Thus his argument consists mainly in defending Kant's "real opposition" against Hegel's "contradiction." According to Colletti, Hegel's contradiction absorbs opposition into the unity of thought and thus cancels the distinction Kant carefully maintained between empirically given existence and concept. The primacy of real opposition and the importance of the principle of non-contradiction must both be restored.

> That distinction [between "logical opposition" and "real opposition"], in fact, by implying the irreducibility of "real" opposition to "logical" opposition, or of existence (Kant's "something more") to a concept, also implies the irreducibility of its particularity or *specificity* to universal or *generic* opposition; i.e., it implies the fact that opposition is determined as what it "is" precisely through the exclusion or negation of *everything* that it *is not*. All of which confirms [...] that it is impossible to disregard the principle of *non*-contradiction precisely when one wants to point out *material* oppositions or contradictions, i.e. *specific* ones [...].[38]

Hegel, on the contrary, in absorbing opposition into contradiction, makes the materiality of real conflicts fade away into the unity of reason.

It is all too easy to underline the hasty character of some of the grievances brought against Hegel. They give rise to demonstrations that sometimes verge on the comical. Thus Della Volpe points out that Hegel, in calling on the examples of above/below, father/son to illustrate contradiction, does make use of the principle of non-contradiction (father is not son, above is not below). Or, again, he points out that Hegel, in order to develop his own system, is in fact obliged to call upon the principle of contradiction as a principle of coherence. How can this be reconciled, asks Della Volpe, with Hegel's radical critique of the principle of non-contradiction? I hope to have shown that this type of objection rests on a misunderstanding of Hegel's position. Hegel did not claim to show that there is a contradiction between above and below; and his determination of contradiction is not a refutation of the principle of non-contradiction as a "principle of coherence." Nevertheless, the critiques I just sketched out do raise two important questions, touching on what makes the true originality of Hegel's Logic.

Hegel, we are told by Della Volpe and Colletti, denies the role of sensibility in cognition. That is to say he denies the irreducibility of what is to be determined by thought; this is why all diversity and opposition is supposed to be absorbed in rational unity, and this absorption is what contradiction is supposed to express. Now it is true that one can cite dozens of texts that seem to corroborate this interpretation. Here is one example, which will speak for all the others:

> [E]very determination, every concrete, every concept is essentially a unity of distinguished and distinguishable moments, which pass through *determinate and essential difference* into contradictory moments. This contradictory element [*dieses Widersprüchliche*] resolves itself into nothing – it passes back into its negative unity. Now the thing, the subject, or the concept is itself just this negative unity: it is in itself something contradictory, but it is also *resolved contradiction*; it is the *ground*, which contains and supports its determinations. (*GW* 11, 289; *S.* 6, 79; *L.* 442)

To understand what Hegel might be saying here, it is useful to start with the question of the sensible. Della Volpe maintains that sensibility is the indispensable source of any cognition, and that it is external to concepts. Now Hegel never said the opposite, if one takes the point of view of a "theory of knowledge" or better, of a "psychology of knowledge" (cf. for example *GW* 12, 19; *S.* 6, 256–257; *L.* 586).[39] But Hegel is not interested in the sources of knowledge. What interests Hegel (heaven forgive him) is "the exposition of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and a finite mind" (*GW* 11, 21; *S.* 5, 44; *L.* 50). And what is the exposition of God before the creation of nature and finite minds? I suggest it is the exposition of what is always already there for there to be a nature at all, that is, the different forms of the unity of the "I think" that orders everything that is thought, however merely "given" it may seem to be.[40]

In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, consciousness goes from the "negation" of sensation to perception, and from the "negation" of perception to the understanding. Not because sensation disappears or is purely and simply dismissed in perception (we can credit Hegel with some minimal amount of common sense) but because what is cognized and *said* is not the content of sensation but that of perception, and because the understanding is always already present in perception. Is sensation cancelled? No, and psychology can tell us a great deal about it. But its *object* is never *said* as an object of "mere" sensation, i.e. of what Hegel calls "sense-certainty"; and what is more than "mere" sensation, in Hegelian terms, is perception.

The first three chapters of the *Phenomenology* thus help us understand what happens in the Logic. For the *Phenomenology* presents, "from the point of view of consciousness," a process of thought that, in the Logic, is presented for itself. We have had a glimpse of this with the transition from being to essence and with the three moments of reflection. The transition from being to essence is not a progression in which one just leaves behind a certain type of representation to adopt another. It is a progression of philosophical reflection on what is, that is to say on what is thought. What *is* is not the being of dogmatic metaphysics, which has been submitted to a radical critique through the incessant "transition into another" of all its determinations. What *is* is always *thought* as being, that is, it is always to some degree or other the product of a synthesis of the "I think." The transition from being to essence in the Logic is Kant's Copernican Revolution understood as a revolution in metaphysics. This is why settling in essence is *sich-erinnern*, going within and remembering what was always already there in the categories of being without being reflected as such: the movement of thought that is at work in any determination of being.

These indications are indispensable for understanding what Hegel means when he says that opposition becomes contradiction. Opposition is the structure of the existent insofar as the latter is reflected as the product of a synthesis of the "I think." It becomes contradiction with the explanation of the fact that the thing possesses no determination by itself. Contradiction is not a determination for the *cognition* of things. It is a determination that defines *the nature of being insofar as it is an object of philosophical reflection.* Or rather, the nature of being is revealed by philosophical reflection to be nothing other than reflection itself. The "determinations of reflection" are not categories of empirical cognition. When opposition "becomes" contradiction, which "disappears" into ground, this does not mean that empirical cognition disappears. It means that empiricism as a *philosophical* position is an insufficient position because it does not know how to grasp the presence of the "I think" all the way down in the structures of the "given." It remains at the level of a naive conception of the relation between a priori and a posteriori. As Jean Hyppolite aptly wrote, Hegel did not object to empiricism as a method of knowledge, but to philosophical empiricism – I would even say metaphysical empiricism. Indeed the critiques I just recounted justify Hegel's diagnosis: what is in question behind the unconditional defense of the principle of non-contradiction is not a logic, but a metaphysics, a philosophy that reduces the object of thought to its immediate seeming.

In all fairness, relying on the Doctrine of Essence alone is not sufficient to account for the use Hegel makes of the notion of contradiction in the rest of his philosophical system. But it is at least necessary to consider Hegel's treatment of contradiction in the Doctrine of Essence in order to grasp the role of that notion in Hegel's critique of metaphysical dogmatism. In this context, the explanations proposed above must be considered not as epistemic principles, but as necessary preliminaries to any attempt to express what is: as belonging in a critique of the traditional ontology Hegel, like Kant, inherited from Christian Wolff and classical German philosophy.

3

GROUND AGAINST *CONCEPT*?

In presenting the section on "Ground," I shall develop the three following points. First, I will show how on the ruins of dogmatic metaphysics after Kantian critical philosophy, Hegel rebuilds a metaphysics of being as being thought, whose corner-stone is his explanation of "ground." Second, I will show how, with the different figures of "ground," a totality of thought-determinations is progressively constituted. This constitution, like any process of reflection in the Doctrine of Essence, goes through a moment of dogmatic metaphysics, a moment of empiricism and critical (transcendental) philosophy, and a moment of dialectical logic. These different moments introduce a surprising degree of flexibility into the constitution of the totality. They lead us to examine the relation between *ground* and *concept* in Hegel's system. Third and finally, I propose to show how Hegel's rejection of the Kantian problem of the thing in itself is confirmed by a new definition of the "unconditioned."

Hegel's ground and Kant's transcendental unity of apperception

It is with "ground" that Hegel leads us from his criticism of the illusory independence of the determinations of being to the exposition of the productivity proper to essence. The border between these two aspects of essence as "reflection in itself" is of course porous. Hegel's examination of identity, difference, and contradiction already showed that it is through reflection that the determinations of being are presented. Nevertheless, if those "determinations of reflection" were considered in isolation from their completion in the determination of "ground," the outcome of the examination could be only negative, they could lead to nothing more than skepticism. The identity of each "something"

dissolves into its difference from all the others, and this dissolution leads to the result that no "something" is what it is through itself alone: it is only the seeming that results from a process of comparison and opposition. Its being is its non-being, it is contradiction: "all things are in themselves contradictory." Indeed, Hegel emphasizes the proximity between the "negatively dialectic" that is the reflection of essence, and skepticism.

> The dialectical moment is the proper self-sublating [*das eigene Sichaufheben*] of such finite determinations, and their transition into their opposites.
>
> (1) The dialectical moment [*das Dialektische*], when the understanding takes it separately, especially as presented in concepts of Science [*in wissenschaftlichen Begriffen aufgezeigt*], becomes skepticism; it contains mere negation as the result of the dialectical moment. (*GW* 20, 119; *S.* 8, 172; *E. L.* §81, 115–116)

But the result of the dialectic cannot be only negative, precisely by virtue of what was said of essence and of the nature of essential determinations. Essence has from the start been defined as the unified process of thought that *posits* being. Only if they were received passively would the determinations of being simply disappear. Then their collapse would leave nothing. But transcendental philosophy revealed that no determination, however immediate, *is* truly immediate. It belongs to the unity of the process of thought that constituted it. This is expressed, in Hegel's Logic of Essence, by the collapse of being into reflection and the exposition of the determinations of reflection. The latter would lead to mere skepticism, to the suicide of thought, only if one forgot what made them possible: the revelation of the reflexive unity that constitutes all finite determination and tells its "truth" – its "truth" is not its conformity to the thing in itself, but its role and function in this unified process.

This is why Hegel is quick to specify that the skepticism to which he relates his dialectic is not the modern skepticism of Hume, but the antique skepticism of Sextus Empiricus.

> One should not confuse with the noble skepticism of Antiquity, the modern skepticism ..., which partly preceded the critical philosophy and partly sprang out of it. This recent skepticism consisted solely in denying the truth and certainty of the supersensible, and in pointing to the sensible [*das Sinnliche*] and what is present in immediate sensations as that to which we have to hold ourselves. (*S.* 8, 176; *E.L.* §81a, 119)

For Hume, the sole source of cognitions is sensible impressions, and imaginative synthesis itself is only the associative result of the repetition of joint impressions. If the latter cannot provide access to anything beyond the senses, to any thought of universal validity, then nothing can. The result of Hume's examination of the nature and powers of sensible cognition is purely negative. For Hegel, on the contrary, just as for Kant, our having thoughts that go beyond what is provided by the senses is an uncontroversial fact. If no examination of sensible cognition can account for such thoughts, then this just shows that they are produced elsewhere and in another way that needs to be accounted for. As we have seen repeatedly, however, according to Hegel Kant does not hold consistently to this "profound and correct" point of view. More than in Kant, Hegel sees in the ancient skeptics a fully developed criticism of sensible determinations. It is not my purpose to examine whether this view of ancient skepticism is correct or not. What concerns me is Hegel's view according to which the "determinations of reflection," in which the nullity of sensible determinations finds its logical expression, necessarily lead to "ground." What is this "result" of contradiction which is at the same time the true starting point for the reclaiming of the determinations of being by reflection, or essence?

Ground is

> one *of the determinations of reflection* of essence; but it is the last, or rather it is that determination which consists in being sublated determination. (*GW* 11, 291; *S.* 6, 80; *L.* 444)

Ground is still a determination of reflection: it belongs to this first part of the doctrine of essence, "essence as reflection in itself," where Hegel expounds the figures of thought by which any determination of being is sublated into the realm of reflection. But at the same time, "ground" is already no longer a mere determination of reflection. In "ground," what is in play is the cancellation of reflection and its return to what is always already there, the multiplicity of presented determinations which constitutes the other pole of thought, the pole of resistance to the unifying goal of the act of thinking.

Ground is the unity of thought that stabilizes the constant flux of determinations present in the moment of "difference." As such, it is also the source of the objectivity of determinations, i.e. of their relation to an object, their unity in an object. The source of the unity of determinations is also the source of the unity of objects. But to relate determinations to objects is to revert to what is "real," to that in which

determinations exist. Significantly, the chapter on Ground opens the way to the section entitled "The Appearance" (*Erscheinung*) which begins with a chapter dedicated to "the thing and its properties" (see *GW* 11, 323, 327; *S.* 6, 124, 129; *L.* 479, 484). "Ground" is the determination of reflection that makes it possible to think the unity of the thing in the multiplicity of its properties.

> Reflection is *pure mediation* in general, ground is *real mediation* of essence with itself. (*GW* 11, 292; *S.* 6, 81; *L.* 445)

"Pure mediation" is this "movement from nothing to nothing" in which positing reflection consisted, which denied the autonomy of being to reveal in its determinations a pure reflection of essence, or reflection, within itself. "Real mediation" is the return to being, the affirmation that the determinations of being are indeed the determinations of *something*, that they have a firm support, and that this support can be thought. In "pure mediation,"

> because opposition as yet has no self-subsistence, neither is essence, that which casts its light into the seeming, something positive, nor is the *other* in which it casts its light a negative. Both are substrates properly only of imagination; they are not yet such that they relate to themselves [*sie sind noch nicht sich auf sich selbst beziehende*]. (*GW* 11, 292; *S.* 6, 81; *L.* 445)

This "imagination" as the sole context for reflection and its "seeming" cannot but recall Hume. If there were no return to ground as the source of the unity of determinations, reflection would be nothing but Hume's imagination. But there *is* a return to ground, and this return was already foreshadowed in the previous determinations of reflection. In fact, already in the exposition of "difference" we were told that "ground" was at work in all the other determinations of reflection.

> Difference is the whole and its own *moment*, just as identity too is its whole and its moment. – This is to be considered as the essential nature of reflection and as the *determinate, original ground* [*bestimmter Urgrund*] *of every activity and self-movement.* (*GW* 11, 266; *S.* 6, 47; *L.* 417; Hegel's emphases)[1]

With this characterization of ground, we see once again both Hegel's proximity to Kant, and his distancing himself from Kant. The proximity: Hegel's "ground," like his "concept," is the heir to Kant's transcendental unity of apperception in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. The distance: Kant's transcendental unity of apperception belongs primarily in a theory of

knowledge. Hegel's "ground," in contrast, is a metaphysical notion (albeit of a peculiar kind), characterizing a structure of being internalized to reflection. Hegel expounds this structure more specifically in the three parts of the section on "Determinate Ground": "Formal Ground," "Real Ground," and "Complete Ground" (see *GW* 11, 302–314; *S.* 6, 96–112; *L.* 456–469).

The proximity between Kant's and Hegel's understanding of "ground" is attested, I suggest, by some striking passages from Kant's Transcendental Deduction of the Categories, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Here it is not only the reference to Kant that illuminates Hegel's thought. It is also Hegel's notion of ground that retrospectively throws light on Kant's text, by extracting it from the strictly epistemological context in which, following the neo-Kantians, we tend to confine it. By epistemological context I mean a problematic in which what is in question is the method of knowledge (e.g. the familiar question of the relation between theory and experience), rather than the nature of being and its determinations. Reading Kant in light of Hegel's questions, however, delineates the second problem behind the first.

Kant writes:

> [Spontaneity] is now the ground of a threefold synthesis, which is necessarily found in all cognition [...]. (A97)

Regarding the synthesis of reproduction in the imagination:

> There must therefore be something that itself makes possible this reproduction of the appearances by being the a priori ground of a necessary synthetic unity of them. (A101)

Regarding the synthesis of recognition in the concept:

> Every necessity has a transcendental condition as its ground. A transcendental ground must therefore be found for the unity of the consciousness in the synthesis of the manifold of all our intuitions, hence also of the concepts of objects in general, consequently also of all objects of experience, without which it would be impossible to think of any object for our intuitions [...]. (A106)

Finally, the ground of the three syntheses – the synthesis of apprehension in the intuition, the synthesis of reproduction in the imagination, the synthesis of recognition in the concept – is again defined in the following way:

> [P]ure intuition (with regard to it as representation, time, the form of inner intuition) grounds the totality of perception a priori; the pure synthesis of the imagination grounds association a priori; and pure apperception, *i.e., the thoroughgoing identity of oneself in all possible representations*, grounds empirical consciousness a priori.
>
> Now if we wish to follow the inner ground of this connection of representations up to that point in which they must all come together in order first to obtain unity of cognition for a possible experience, then we must begin with pure apperception. (A115–116; my emphasis)

In the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant does not go through the detailed exposition of the threefold synthesis. The new version of the Transcendental Deduction makes it all the clearer that transcendental apperception is the sole ground for any connection between representations and thus for their objective validity.

> When I make the empirical intuition of a house into a perception through apprehension of its manifold, *I have as a ground* [my emphasis] the *necessary unity* [Kant's emphasis] of space and of outer sensible intuition in general, and I as it were draw its shape in agreement with this synthetic unity of the manifold in space. This very same synthetic unity, however, if I abstract from the form of space, has its seat in the understanding, and is the category of the synthesis of the homogeneous in intuition in general ... (B162)

> Since all possible perception depends on the synthesis of apprehension, but the latter itself, this empirical synthesis, depends on the transcendental one, thus on the categories, all possible perceptions, hence everything that can ever reach empirical consciousness, i.e. all appearances of nature, as far as their combination is concerned, stand under the categories, on which nature (considered merely as nature in general) depends, *as the original ground* [my emphasis] of its necessary lawfulness (as *natura formaliter spectata*). (B164–165)

I quoted these passages at some length because they help us see the extent to which the theme of *ground* is present in them. If we remember the praises Hegel heaped on Kant's Transcendental Deduction of the Categories, particularly in the Introduction to the Doctrine of the Concept, the comparison becomes even more significant.[2] Now, Kant's main idea is the following. There would be no unity in our representations unless unity was brought to them by the spontaneity of thought. But the very same function that introduces in our representations the unity that allows them to be representations of objects, is the source

of the unity of appearances (empirical objects) under laws. Although the exposition of the "threefold synthesis" in the first edition makes the exposition of this point more confused and ponderous, it has the advantage of emphasizing even more the degree to which all representations of object are dependent on this spontaneity: not only the *concept* of the object, or its determinate cognition, but the very *perception* of the object and its properties, and even the consciousness of the *sensation* that makes this perception possible, have as their "ground" a function of the spontaneity of thought. This is why the forms of this spontaneity (the categories) are a priori true of the objects thus represented.

The same thing happens with Hegel's "ground." But there is an important difference. The "ground" Kant is talking about is a ground *in cognition*. Kant is particularly explicit in the exposition of the "threefold synthesis": synthesis *in the intuition*, synthesis *in the imagination*, synthesis *in the concept*. We never lose sight of the cognitive capacities. Of course as we just saw, in the B edition the Transcendental Deduction concludes with a statement *about appearances*:

> [A]ll appearances of nature [. . .] stand under the categories, on which nature (considered merely as nature in general) depends, as the original ground of its necessary lawfulness [. . .]. (B165)

Nevertheless, throughout the Deduction the emphasis is not placed on the world or on nature, but on the structure of experience. In contrast, what Hegel is talking about *is* the world. It is in the world that he wants to expound the unity of things, as appearances. From a principle of experience, "ground" becomes a principle of being, or a principle that reveals the labor of reflection that was always already at work in the determinations of being and then drove in the Logic, their being superseded into determinations of reflection. This is how transcendental apperception, which for Kant is constitutive of the unity of the object, is redefined by Hegel as the unity of the ground and the grounded.

> [T]he *determinateness* of essence as ground thus becomes twofold, that of *ground* and that of *the grounded*. It is, *first*, essence as ground, *determined* as essence over against positedness, determined, that is, as *non-positedness*. *Second*, it is the grounded, the immediate, which however is not in and for itself; it is positedness as positedness. (*GW* 11, 294; *S.* 6, 84; *L.* 447; Hegel's emphases)

"Ground," as the unity of essence or reflection, should not be sought elsewhere than in that which it grounds: the unity of ground and the

grounded, i.e. the world as a world that is thought, and the developed form that this unity takes. This is why Hegel immediately presents "ground" as the dialectical unity of essence and form, then of form and matter, and finally of form and content (see *GW* 11, 294–302; *S.* 6, 84–96; *L.* 447–456). Each pair of determinations expresses under a particular aspect the immanence of ground in that which it grounds, or of thought in the world-as-thought. I shall not consider the details of these first developments on ground. More directly relevant to my point are the next developments, on *determinate ground*, in which Hegel expounds the more specific forms taken by the introduction of the unity of reflection into the exteriority of the real. This is where what I announced above is sketched out: the complex constitution of a totality of thought-determinations. Figures of thought that will be important to the later developments of the Doctrine of Essence are elaborated: "formal ground" will later be echoed in "law" and "force," and then in "formal actuality"; "real ground" will later be echoed in "causality"; complete ground will be echoed in "reciprocal action."[3] These are only a few examples of the ways in which the structure of "determinate ground" becomes the structure of the whole development of "Appearance" and then "Actuality."[4]

In sum, "ground" structures the whole Doctrine of Essence, just as "syllogism" will structure the Doctrine of the Concept.[5] Interestingly, however, "determinate ground" offers a less triumphant picture of what thought can generate from its own resources than do Hegel's "concept" and "syllogism," expounded in the Subjective Logic. Indeed, "ground" seems to challenge in advance familiar charges against Hegel, by providing its own criticism of any claim to an a priori genesis of the unpredictable multiplicity of objective determinations from the unity of thought. In what follows I shall say a few preliminary words about this striking situation before considering the detailed structure of "determinate ground."

Determinate ground: a self-criticism of Hegelian speculation?

In the Remark that closes his general introduction to "Ground," Hegel distinguishes his notion of ground (*Grund*) from that which is at work in Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason (*Satz des zureichenden Grundes*). He insists that the latter, not the former, has a teleological connotation. Teleology, Hegel adds, belongs to the Doctrine of Concept, not to the Doctrine of Essence (see *GW* 11, 293; *S.* 6, 83; *L.* 446–447). Now, a familiar criticism commonly formulated against Hegel's philosophy

of history is precisely its teleological character: the end of history is supposed to be anticipated by the immanent purposiveness of the Idea and all historical processes are supposed to be nothing but the self-unfolding of the Idea. The Remark just cited certainly does not suffice to make Hegel's view of "ground" a critique of the teleological, "expressive totality" that recent critiques of Hegel see at work in his philosophy of history, especially since Hegel's "ground" is itself destined to find its "truth" in the concept. Nevertheless, "ground" does seem to present, within the Logic, a notion of totality significantly different from the one that will unfold with the development of Hegel's "concept." As we shall see, Hegel's exposition of the moments of "determinate ground," more particularly the moments of "formal ground" and "complete ground," could have provided later critiques of Hegelian speculation with the blueprint for the arguments they mounted against Hegel. Hegel's exposition of "formal ground" strangely foreshadows Marx's critique of Hegel's "hypostases," and Hegel's exposition of complete ground offers a definition of ground as a totality of relations, or "relation of relations" oddly close to the "efficacy of a structure on its elements" defined by Louis Althusser *against* what he calls Hegel's "expressive essence."[6] These comparisons would be more illuminating if we examined Hegel's "concept," expounded in Part 2 of the *Science of Logic* in as much detail as we are going to examine "ground." Only then could we come to a sufficiently informed evaluation of the role played in Hegel's system by the surprising developments of "determinate ground." More particularly, only then could we determine what remains of these developments after Hegel's "concept" is expounded in its own right. Instead I shall be able to offer only hypothetical and partial conclusions at the end of my examination of Hegel's "ground." I hope at least that they will be a first step towards an interpretation of the relation between "essence" (in Hegel's Doctrine of Essence") and "concept" (in Hegel's "Subjective Logic, or the Doctrine of the Concept").

Let me first recall the place and meaning of Hegel's "determinate ground."

"Determinate ground" comes after the exposition of "absolute ground," i.e. the exposition of the pairs of concepts in which what is thought is the immanence of the ground in that which it "grounds," i.e. in all determinations of things. However, just as reflection presupposes something in which it unfolds its determinations – which it reflects and in which it reflects itself – so ground presupposes a content for which

it is the ground. "Determinate ground" is the exposition of this mediation of ground and a content in which it is expounded or in which it is at work. Unsurprisingly, in this relation of ground to what it grounds we will find again the three moments of reflection (positing, external, determining). They are present in the guise of formal ground, real ground, and complete ground.

Formal ground. Formal ground belongs to an overly hasty reflection which, transforming the empirical given into thought-determination, ends up thinking nothing at all. A typical example is the familiar "dormitive virtue of opium." In ordinary life, says Hegel, this kind of explanation is held in derision. But we are not sufficiently aware that many so-called scientific explanations come down in the final analysis to this kind of explanation.

> For instance, the ground of the movement of the planets around the sun is said to be the *attractive* force of the earth and sun with respect to one another. As regards content, this expresses nothing other than what is contained in the phenomenon, namely the relation of these bodies to one another, only in the form of a determination reflected into itself, in the form of force. (*GW* 11, 304; *S.* 6, 98; *L.* 458)

Formal ground amounts to noting an empirical regularity and raising it to the dignity of an explanatory principle, which moreover is presented as an entity in its own right (here a "force").

Hegel gives another example:

> If a crystalline form is explained by saying that it has its ground in the particular arrangement into which the molecules enter with respect to one another, then the existing crystallization is this arrangement itself which is given as the ground. (*GW* 11, 304; *S.* 6, 99; *L.* 459)

This example shows what Hegel takes to be the tautological character of such explanations: the empirical description of the phenomenon is transformed into a pseudo-explanation by being reformulated as a general idea. There follows a paradoxical reversal, in which what one claims to be ground is in fact grounded – by that which it was supposed to ground.

> The ground, on the one hand, is ground as the reflection into itself of the content-determination of the existence which it grounds; on the other hand it is the posited. It is that from which the phenomenon is to be understood; but conversely, it is the ground that is inferred from the

> phenomenon and the former is understood from the latter. The main business of this reflection consists, namely, in finding the ground from the phenomenon, that is, converting the immediate phenomenon into the form of reflected being; the ground, instead of being in and for itself and self-standing, is on the contrary what is posited and derived. (*GW* 11, 305; *S.* 6, 100; *L.* 459)

Far from overcoming empirical dispersion, cognition according to formal ground is imprisoned in what is empirical. The supposedly rigorous exposition of the logical developments of the general representation cannot mask the fact that it is in fact guided by mere empirical data.

> Uncertainty [as to what is ground, what is grounded] is increased, especially if the exposition is not rigorously consistent, but is more *honest*, by the fact that one comes across traces and circumstances of the phenomenon which point to a content that is more manifold and diverse than what is merely contained in the principles. Confusion finally becomes even greater when determinations which are reflected and merely hypothetical are mingled with immediate determinations of the phenomenon itself, and the former are enunciated as though they belonged to immediate experience. (*GW* 11, 306; *S.* 6, 101; *L.* 460)

Interestingly, the criticism of the notion of attractive force present in the first text cited above echoes a criticism that was formulated by Newton himself.

> "To tell us," he proclaimed in his scientific testament at the end of his *Optics*, "that every Species of Things is endow'd with an occult specific quality [like gravity] by which it acts and produces manifest effects, is to tell us nothing."[7]

If Hegel's statements about astronomy are not always felicitous, in the present case at least he is not to be faulted. In any event, what is of interest to us here is the demonstration in the service of which Hegel calls upon this example. Formal ground is, according to Hegel, an abstract generalization of what is empirically given, the phenomenon. Thinking according to formal ground paradoxically reverses the relation of grounding and grounded: a regularity that is inductively derived is presented as the ground of that from which it is inductively derived.

Hegel's criticism becomes clearer when Hegel indicates that his main charge against this mode of explanation is the confusion it introduces between what is an empirically given object and what is a construction

of thought. For example, in thinking according to formal ground one is led to take centrifugal force, ether, an isolated light ray, electrical or magnetic matter, and so on, for empirically real entities, whereas they are only abstract representations of such entities: one mistakes such representations for "things or relations which . . . are given *in perception*" (*GW* 11, 306; *S.* 6, 101; *L.* 460–461; Hegel's emphasis). An extreme case of such confusion was already denounced in the chapter "Force and the Understanding" in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* under the title "the Inverted World" (cf. *GW* 9, 95–98; *S.* 3, 126–130; *Phen.* 96–99), and there already Hegel denounced the reversal of the relation of grounding and grounded that is carried by such a confusion.[8]

Now interestingly, the theme of "reversal" is at the core of what will later be Feuerbach's criticism of Hegel's "speculative essence": the latter rests, according to Feuerbach, on a reversal of the relation between empirical reality and thought, where what is in fact a predicate becomes the fiction of a subject, and conversely what is subject is fictionally presented as predicate. Via Feuerbach, the same criticism is found in Marx, with a terminology that is even closer to Hegel's criticism of formal ground. Not only does Marx reproach Hegel for having transformed into the illusion of an actually existing entity what is actually nothing but an abstraction from empirical reality, but moreover Marx shows, as Hegel did with respect to formal ground, that the empirical given takes its revenge by showing through at every step of the speculative exposition. This is a recurring theme in Marx's *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*:

> Family and civil society are the presuppositions of the state; they are the really active things; but in speculative philosophy it is reversed. The Idea is made subject, and the real subjects – civil society, family, circumstances, caprice, etc. – become unreal, and take on the different meaning of objective moments of the Idea.[9]

The result is that in Hegel's exposition,

> The development always proceeds from the predicate (of the predicate) or mystified predicate, the "real subject" or the empirical subject transformed into a predicate; and thus one gains no content, only the form of the old content changes.[10]

Indeed, the development is based in each case on wholly empirical grounds [. . .].[11]

To pursue this comparison further we would need to examine Feuerbach's and Marx's criticisms of Hegel's system as a whole. Nevertheless, within the limits of the present study it is interesting to note the proximity between the explicitly empiricist inspiration of Feuerbach and the young Marx (advocating the return to the empirical object and the refusal of a priori claims), and Hegel's criticism of formal ground.[12]

However, if there is an empiricist inspiration in the Logic, it has a transition function, as an alarm clock waking us up from dogmatic slumbers. It is no sooner formulated than taken up again in a transcendental problematic: for Hegel, the result of the dead-ends of formal ground is what we might call a return to what is empirically real, to the recognition of a multiplicity of determinations for which one cannot arbitrarily posit a principle of unity: this is the transition to "real ground."

Real ground Here it will help to return for a moment to the general explanation of Hegel's notion of "ground." In comparing it with Kant's transcendental apperception, I characterized ground as the unity of thought that constitutes all objectivity; we saw that with ground, the dissolution of the independent determinations of being, the characterization of identity and difference as determinations of reflection, and the characterization of contradiction have their final outcome in the inscription of all the determinations of being into the unity of thought. Ground is the principle of unity in an object, the principle of the unity of the determinations of being in general. A principle not in the form of a merely subjective rule, but realized as an objective determination. The chapter on "determinate ground" expounds the different forms taken by the reflection of this principle of unity.

This reminder will perhaps help us explain the import of the critique of formal ground and understand how "real ground" and "complete ground" follow from it. Formal ground is the illusory objectification of the unity of appearances into an occult quality (for instance, a force). With real ground, we do not give up on such a unity; what we are dealing with is still "ground," as defined above. But "real ground" is an attempt to construct this unity while doing justice to the difference, or diversity, of the real determinations. I will not try to detail all of Hegel's transitions, but propose only to show how the unifying perspective that governs the process of "real ground" requires that it be superseded in order to move towards the determination of "complete ground." In this last moment Hegel propounds an interesting characterization of a totality of thought-determinations.

Let us first consider "real ground." At this stage, the inexhaustible richness of the empirical determinations with respect to the unity of the ground is acknowledged. So the "ground" becomes only what is "essential," with respect to which other determinations are "inessential." However, difficulties arise again when one asks about the relation between the "essential determination" and all the others. For example: why is *this* determination, rather than any other, "essential," bearing the unity of the whole? How can one explain the fact that it bears *this* phenomenal unity, and not another? How can one explain the conjunction, in the reality it "grounds," of determinations which are clearly connected to it, and of others which are inessential and contingent with respect to it? Thus it is the relation between ground – essential determination – and grounded, which in turn needs to be grounded. In other words, the unifying goal cannot be satisfied with the characterization of one or more particular, partial determinations as the "ground" of the whole.[13]

One of Hegel's examples, clearly borrowed from Kant, is that of the relation between nature and the world.

> If it is said of nature that it is the *ground of the world*, then what is called nature is, on the one hand, *one* with the world, and the world is nothing but nature itself. But they are also different, so that nature is rather the essence of the world identical with itself, and indeterminate, or at least determinate only in those general differences which are laws; and before nature can be the world, a multiplicity of determinations must be externally added to it. But these do not have their ground in nature as such. On the contrary, nature is indifferent to them, and with respect to it they are contingent. (*GW* 11, 309–310; *S.* 6, 106; *L.* 464)

Recall that in concluding the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories, Kant warned that the categories make possible an a priori knowledge of the laws of a "nature in general," but do not suffice to provide the particular, empirical laws of appearances. Only experience can provide the latter (A95–97). We find a similar idea here. But Hegel expresses it not in the form of a relation between a priori determinations and empirical determinations, but in the form of a relation between "essential" and "inessential" determinations. Why is a system of laws that in no way grounds particular empirical determinations nevertheless defined as "essential" determination, grounding the unity of the world? The unity of the laws and the empirical multiplicity is not grounded in the laws themselves. In fact, says Hegel, real ground is guilty of the same formalism as formal ground. For it only "grounds" what is identical to itself

(a system of regularities among appearances, that does not capture all the empirical determinations of appearances).

An echo of this grievance is found again in the chapter on "*the law of appearance*" (*GW* 11, 342; *S.* 6, 150; *L.* 500). The law appears to be a mere generalization of what is empirically given, the abstract representation of the most "constant" aspects of empirical reality. It does not ground the unity it expresses, for example the unity of spatial and temporal determinations in the law of free fall. It merely describes it. It is powerless to ground itself and just as powerless to ground its own relation to the reality for which it is the "essential" determination (*GW* 11, 345–347; *S.* 6, 154–156; *L.* 504–505). Does this mean that we must give up "real ground"? No, but real ground itself needs to be "grounded." Just as the self-criticism of "formal ground" led to "real ground," so the self-criticism of "real ground" leads to "complete ground."

Complete ground Complete ground is a "relation of relations."[14] It grounds the "real" relation – "real ground" – in a universal relation which must be thought in order for the real ground to be thought as well.

Hegel's point is that the essential determination (defined in "real ground") does not suffice to ground its own unity with that for which it is essential. No deductive procedure makes it possible to progress from the laws of nature to the empirical determinations of nature. And yet, the laws of nature are thought to be the "ground" of the world. How is such a grounding relation possible? It is possible only insofar as the relation between laws and the world is not grounded in the laws, but in this relation itself. The relation between laws and the world must be thought in order for the laws themselves to be thought. It can even be said that the laws are laws only insofar as their relation to the world is thought. This relation between real ground and the universal reflection of this ground is reflected by "complete ground."

Complete ground is thus the grounding of real ground (the relation of laws and the world) in the reflection of real ground (a reflection according to which there is a necessary grounding connection between the laws and the world). In other words, the relation is grounded in the reflection of this same relation. This puts us back into the framework of formal ground. "Complete ground" is thus a ground unifying "formal ground" and "real ground." It takes into account "real ground" insofar as a multiplicity of real determinations is thought in it, together with the predominance of "essential" real determinations over those which are

"inessential." But it is also "formal" in that this relation between "essential" and "inessential" determinations is in turn "grounded" – in its own reflection. The reflection of unity "grounds" unity. This is strange: are we now accepting a tautology that was criticized and dismissed in the exposition of formal ground?

Indeed we are accepting it, because now the tautology is inseparable from a heterology. Formal ground is inseparable from real ground. The reflected relation exists only in the context of the real relation, in *this* particular real relation. It is not the "essential determination" that grounds the relation. Rather, the relation in which the totality of the determinations of a thing is thought is what grounds the "essential determination" and its relation to "inessential determinations." The unity must be thought before the respective roles of the determinations can be thought. No determination bears "in itself" the fact that it is essential, or that it bears the unity of all the others. This is why complete ground is at once a tautological reflection of real ground, and anything but a hypostasis (in the sense denounced by Marx). It does not instate a new reality as a ground for the first. "Complete ground" does not exist outside real ground, but is a progress in thinking real ground (by grounding the unity, i.e. reciprocal determination, of "essential" and "inessential" determinations).

This way of presenting "complete ground" seems to me to be quite close to a conception of totality that has recently been introduced in opposition to the Hegelian notion of totality: the definition proposed by Louis Althusser of a "whole structured with a dominance." By introducing this expression, Althusser means to challenge Hegel's conception of totality and argue for the superiority of Marx's conception. Let me briefly recall Althusser's argument.

According to Althusser, the analysis of social structures forced Marx to pose a question that had never been asked before: how does one account for the efficacy of a structure on its elements? Hegel, says Althusser, had attempted to answer this question. But his answer, like Leibniz's, is flawed because of the conception these authors have of totality. While Hegel's totality is defined as the Idea, a single principle positing its own differences by self-generation, the totality whose efficacy Marx tries to define is a complex totality of different structures, in which one structured whole of determinations (e.g. the totality of economic determinations, or "infrastructure") may play a dominant role in the constitution of all other structural components of the complex whole.

> If the whole is posed as *structured*, i.e., as possessing a type of unity quite different from the type of unity of the spiritual whole, [...] not only does it become impossible to think the determination of the elements by the structure in the categories of analytical and transitive causality, *it also becomes impossible to think it in the category of the global expressive causality of a universal inner essence immanent in its phenomenon.* The proposal to think the determination of the elements of a whole by the structure of the whole posed an absolutely new problem in the most theoretically embarrassing circumstances, for there were no philosophical concepts available for its resolution.[15]

To define the whole as a structure organizing its elements as well as organizing other subordinate structures that have their own independent organizing efficacy, has one important consequence: these elements or subordinate structures cannot simply be "deduced" from the whole, as the particular is supposed to be deduced from the self-positing Hegelian Idea. They have their relatively autonomous development, their own existence, and yet an existence organized within this structure, a structure which itself has no existence except through them. The result is a kind of reciprocal efficacy that Althusser attempted to define by the concept of *overdetermination*. According to Althusser, overdetermination is *par excellence* that which opposes Marx's dialectic to Hegel's.

But if my analysis of complete ground is accurate, it turns out that contrary to Althusser's claim, Hegel's "complete ground" presents a conception of totality that fully grants the autonomy and unequal development of real determinations. For "complete ground" characterizes the respective efficacy of each real determination as defined not in itself, but in virtue of its relation to all the others. There is thus no doubt in my eyes that Marx could find in Hegel the inspiration for a conception of totality such as that defined by Althusser. This point is made all the more relevant by the fact that during the period in which Marx wrote *Capital*, both he and Engels were busy (re)reading Hegel's *Science of Logic*, and, particularly, the Doctrine of Essence.[16]

One might reply that in characterizing Marx's conception of totality as opposed to Hegel's, Althusser does not challenge Hegel's view of essence or ground in the Doctrine of Essence, but rather his view of concept and the Idea in the Doctrine of the Concept, which structures Hegel's philosophy of right and philosophy of history. What do we care about Hegel's view of "ground," if it is destined to be superseded by "concept" and "Idea"? This raises the question: what role does "ground" play in Hegel's system? Is it supposed to provide a model or method for

knowledge? Is it supposed to define a structure of reality? Is it supposed to do both? Similarly, what role does "concept" play? How and why must ground find its "truth" in the concept?

In the first chapter of this book, I characterized Hegel's concept as a descendant of Kant's unity of apperception, realized in contents of thought. The concept is implicit in being and becomes explicit in essence, where it is nevertheless distinct from the particular contents of being. In the concept, the unity of essence and being is realized, the unity of thought manifests its capacity to produce all content of thought. In the current chapter, I have also characterized ground as the unity of apperception. This is because it is itself the concept, but insofar as the latter is still distinct from its contents. It is the *concept* because it makes explicit the unity of thought at work in any "real" determination, and even more so in any unified "thing." But it is *separate from its contents* since, as we just saw, the reflection of the unity of the thing or complex of things remains to be conquered and remains, up to complete ground, unsatisfying. Even complete ground itself is, on the one hand, real ground, on the other, the reflection of this real ground in its relation to what it grounds. The separation has not yet been overcome. Should one consider, then, that with "ground" Hegel is proposing a structure of reality and therefore outlining a method of knowledge of that reality "superior" to that which is at work in being, but still "inferior" to the one the concept will expound? What was just explained would tend rather to show that, more than a progression, the transition from being to essence, and above all to ground, is a regression towards that which was always already there in what is (thought). This is why Hegel is so fond of the term "erinnern" by which he defines essence. Essence is the "sich erinnern" of being. The interiorization of being towards that which determines it implicitly, and the recollection of that which presided over its constitution. Hegel thus gives his own idiosyncratic meaning to Plato's "reminiscence."[17] And yet this regression is *also* a progression. It is a progression of philosophical knowledge, made possible by a progression of knowledge in general. The exposition of "ground" is made possible by the fact that the dynamic unity of thought surfaces in the modern forms of knowledge.

Here again a comparison of Hegel's view with Kant's Copernican Revolution will be useful. In citing Galileo and Torricelli in the Preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant makes of the "Copernican Revolution" that grounds his philosophy a moment of the self-reflection of reason made possible by its own realizations, its own accomplishment

in knowledge. It was always true that "reason has insight only into what it itself produces." If we grant Kant's thesis in this Preface, reason in Aristotle's mode of cognition is just as responsible for what it knows as it is in Galileo's or Newton's. But with Galileo this "essence" comes to the surface in the methods of cognition themselves, reason's concepts are an explicit component in the characterization of its object. This is why, according to Kant, together with the law of falling bodies, we owe Galileo the fact that "a light dawned on all those who study nature": the activity of reason in the very determinations of the objects it knows was revealed. Progress in science opens the way to a revolution in philosophy (cf. BXII–XIII).

We find this same twofold dimension in Hegel's exposition of *ground*. But while in Kant the discovery of the unity of reason is fixed in a system of categories, Hegel's position is more flexible: his intention is to show that the unity of thought is implicitly at work in all thought of being, and that it becomes explicit in any attempt to ground the unity of the object. The various moments of ground are there to show that it is indeed unity of thought which is at work whenever the (implicit or explicit) use of the principle of sufficient reason "brings a thing back to its ground." The error of philosophical or scientific thought is then to try to fix this unity in one thing. The "return" to complete ground is the return to the thought that "ground" is nothing beyond the "relation of relations" in which a completely determinate content is unified. This system of relations cannot be fixed in a pseudo-entity that is distinct from that determinate content. The unity, as a unity of thought, is present in "formal ground," then in the grounding of "real ground" in "complete ground." Throughout this process, what is expounded in Hegel's "ground" is not a particular method for cognition. Rather, what is expounded is Hegel's thesis according to which, whatever the method adopted at a particular stage in cognition, and whatever the degree of explicit consciousness that accompanies this method, cognition is caught in the system of grounds just defined. "Complete ground" is not a ground of cognition. It is a ground of being as absolute knowing reveals it.

Here, then, are a few tentative conclusions.

There is in Hegel a conception of totality analogous to that which Althusser attributes to Marx. But in Hegel, this conception is not a principle of cognition. It is a new kind of metaphysical principle. This principle is destined to being superseded by the concept. For just as essence is the "truth" of being in that the determinations of being

disappear unless they are recognized as pervaded by the movement of reflection, and thus essence, so the concept is the "truth" of essence, and consequently of ground, because there was no determination of essence but through the implicit presence of the concept. But the concept will not be a principle of cognition any more than ground is. Hegel proposes to show how what we call cognition is only a recollection of a thought unity whose self-determination can be expounded as soon as the movement of essence has demonstrated its identity through all content of thought. What Hegel is recommending is a full-fledged exit from the cave, a conversion from being to essence and from essence to concept. But this conversion does not change anything to finite cognitions, which, for their part, can go on their merry way, so to speak.

Fine, one will say. But if Althusser's opposition between Marx and Hegel rests on nothing but a misunderstanding, why mention it? Well, it is not uninteresting to find out that a category structuring the Doctrine of Essence in its entirety (that of "ground," and more specifically "determinate ground") should find its homologue in a supposedly materialist dialectical method. Marx's materialism means the restoration of the irreducibility of matter to thought. Now, if I am right, in the Doctrine of Essence Hegel takes the resistance of matter to be an active element in the constitution of the figures of thought. This is why the two main features of the Doctrine of Essence are the incessant resurgence of contradiction and the incompleteness of totality. This explains why a "negative dialectic" like Adorno's, which attempts to rethink Hegel's project by refusing to close the concept upon itself, seems in many ways to play Hegel's Doctrine of Essence against the Doctrine of the Concept.[18] More generally, it is always tempting to mitigate Hegel's "concept" by thinking it in terms of ground, which reintroduces a separation between the concept and what it "grounds." This is what Bernard Bourgeois noted in concluding his presentation of the *Encyclopedia Logic*.

> Hegel's philosophy presents itself clearly as a philosophy of the *concept*, the unity of itself and its other, and this is why the Logic, the genesis of the meaning of being as concept, is, in Hegelianism, the founding science of all the philosophical sciences. The Logic, which in truth is the concept, is the ground for the real. Or rather, since ground is an abstract determination of essence, which reveals itself to be in truth the concept, we should say that the logical is only the ground for the real in

> that this ground is in itself the concept. But precisely, this temptation to explain the concrete (rational) category of the concept by the abstract category (stemming from the understanding) of ground [...] perhaps expresses the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of grasping *as concept* the relation of the logical and the real, of thought and being. We are reaching here [...] a major problem – perhaps the problem – posed by Hegelianism.[19]

Now of course, according to Hegel it is strictly speaking not possible to oppose the perspective of ground to that of the concept. For it is already a misinterpretation to understand ground from a perspective of separation between ground and the grounded. Ground is nothing outside that which it grounds, and what it grounds is nothing independently of ground: such is the unity of *ground* and *conditions*, which leads to Hegel's definition of the *absolutely unconditioned*, to which I now turn.[20]

Ground, conditions, absolutely unconditioned

"Complete ground" presented us with a reflection that was at once *positing* and *presupposing*. Ground posits being as a unity of determinations. This means that ground constitutes this real unity at the same time as the latter is "superseded," since it exists only through the ground that posits it. This is the side of "positing" reflection. But on the other hand, reflection is "positing" only insofar as it is "presupposing." What is "posited" must have already been there, presupposed, in order to be reflected. "Complete ground" presupposes real determinations, and reflects the relation between these determinations as posited by itself. Thus "ground" is the side of unity (in thought). "Condition" is the side of real determinations, of empirical multiplicity. Each of these two sides is, with respect to the other, relatively independent, i.e. relatively unconditioned. First, the *condition* is relatively independent with respect to the ground for which it is the condition.

> Posited as condition, determinate being [*das Dasein*] has the determination [...] of losing its indifferent immediacy and becoming the moment of something else. Through its immediacy it is indifferent to this relation; but, in so far as it enters into this relation, it constitutes the *in itself* of the ground, and is for the latter the *unconditioned*. (*GW* 11, 315; *S*. 6, 114; *L*. 470)

Likewise, ground is relatively independent with respect to the condition, and unconditioned by it:

> [Ground] is the empty movement of reflection, because reflection has the immediacy outside it as its presupposition. But it is the whole form and the self-subsistent mediating process; for the condition is not its ground. Insofar as this mediating process, as a positing, is related to itself, it is from this side also an immediate and *unconditioned*; of course it presupposes itself, but as a positing that is externalized or superseded . . . (*GW* 11, 315; *S.* 6, 114; *L.* 471)

In reading these lines, one cannot but think of the relation between concept and intuition in Kant. But here what is at stake is the relation between two dimensions of being as it emerges from the analysis of "ground": being is at once this indeterminate immediacy of being-there, and the unity that constitutes it into determinate being. Each is unconditioned with respect to the other, for the other finds it before itself. But each is only *relatively* unconditioned, for each is only through the other. On the other hand, what is absolutely unconditioned is the unity of the two sides. Being *is there* only through the unity of ground, ground *is there* only through the being it grounds, and nothing else is there; there is nothing else to think.

> The two sides of the whole, condition and ground, are therefore one essential unity, equally as content and as form. They spontaneously pass over into one another or, since they are reflections, they posit themselves as superseded, relate themselves to this their negation, and *reciprocally presuppose one another.* But at the same time this is only a *single* reflection of both and therefore their presupposing is also only one; or rather this reciprocal presupposing becomes presupposing of their one identity as their subsistence and substrate. This identity of their common content and unity of form is the *truly unconditioned, the very thing* [*die Sache an sich selbst*]. (*GW* 11, 318; *S.* 6, 117–118; *L.* 473–474)

Clearly this *Sache an sich selbst*, the thing itself, the very thing, takes the place of Kant's *Ding an sich*, the unknown and unknowable thing in itself. I pointed out earlier that for Hegel, the Kantian "problem" of the thing in itself disguises another: that of truth. For the real question is, what is the truth of the appearance? Hegel is now telling us that the truth of the appearance is that it is a synthesis of a thought unity and a multiplicity. And this synthesis is possible only because unity and multiplicity are constituted by one and the same thought process. This is the "very thing," the true unconditioned. What is "truly unconditioned"

is that there is being, and that being only *appears* – *erscheint* – as the unity of determinations constituted by the thought process through which it appears.

To understand this rather unexpected "absolutely unconditioned" it is perhaps helpful to remember again Kant's Antinomy of Pure Reason, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant explains the root of the fourth Antinomy (which discusses the existence of an absolutely necessary being) in the following way:

> [A]n odd contrast shows itself in this antinomy: namely, that the same ground of proof from which the thesis of the existence of an original being was inferred, is used also in the antithesis to prove its non-existence, and indeed with equal rigor. First it is said There is a necessary being because the whole past time includes within itself the series of all conditions, and thus with it also the unconditioned [. . .]. Then it is said There is no necessary being just because the whole of time that has elapsed includes within itself the series of all conditions (which therefore, taken all together, are once again conditioned). The cause is this. The first argument looks only to the absolute totality of the series of conditions, each determined by another in time, and from this it gets something unconditioned and necessary. The second argument, on the contrary, takes into consideration the contingency of everything determined in the time-series (because before each [member] a time must precede, in which its condition must once again be determined conditionally), and this completely gets rid of everything unconditioned and all absolute necessity. (A459/B487)

Thesis and antithesis rest on the same argument for they are only two different ways of defining one and the same thing, the "series of all conditions." Moreover, these two different ways have one and the same ground of proof, which is reason's demand of the unconditioned. This demand is expressed on the one hand by the a priori affirmation of the completion of the series of conditions: the *totality* of the series is posited as the *condition* of the series itself. On the other, the demand for the unconditioned is expressed in the rule that commands not to arbitrarily close the empirical search for the conditions: the inexhaustible *empirical series* is posited as the *condition* of its own totalization.

It is on purpose that I have just presented this antinomy in terms that are in fact Hegel's: totality, which Hegel calls ground, is the condition of the empirical series, which Hegel calls condition. Conversely, the empirical series is the condition of totality: ground and condition condition each other mutually. Finally, rational unity is the ground of

both sides of the antinomy. Hegel would say: ground is itself the unity of ground and conditions. We have here, therefore, the anatomy of Hegel's notion of the unconditioned. The Hegelian unconditioned is not, as one might too hastily think, the expression of Hegel's unilateral adoption of the thesis of the Kantian Antinomies in the name of a triumphant rationalism. Rather, Hegel's "unconditioned" is the very structure within which the antinomy appears, *about which* both sides of the antinomy are true. In other words, what is absolutely unconditioned is the unity of the empirical series of conditions – which, as Hegel expressly indicates, exceeds the unity of ground (*GW* 11, 319–320; *S.* 6, 119–120; *L.* 475) – and of this same series as ground, that is, as totality. And the unity of these two sides is not the expression of the timorous transaction of a regulative reason, it is *the very thing*, die *Sache selbst*. For nothing is thought but this being that is ordered, by virtue of being thought, in the unity of an *I think* that reveals itself progressively in its determinations. So although it is true, on the one hand, that the conditions are, as empirical existence, *Dasein*, open to an infinite regress, it is also true, on the other hand, that the world and things in the world are thought as a completed unity. The same function prevails on both sides and the same thing is thought under the two guises. It is no use having admitted that our world is constituted by the unity of the *I think* if one is not able to recognize, in the paradoxes created by the constitution of this world, "the very thing" and if one needs the hypostasis of a thing in itself in order to admit that the world is necessarily thought as a whole, just as all things, whatever they may be, are defined as a unity of determinations: it is this *unity* that defines them as things (*Sachen*).

Such is the meaning of the statement that closes *ground*, and with it Section 1 of the Doctrine of Essence:

> *When all the conditions of a thing are present*, it enters into existence. (*GW* 11, 321; *S.* 6, 122; *L.* 477)

This statement is not the description of a temporal becoming. Rather, it is the description of the "reminiscence" that confers its status to the thing as a unity of empirical determinations. Indeed Hegel continues:

> When all the conditions of the thing are present, that is, when the totality of the thing is posited as the groundless immediate, then this scattered multiplicity internalizes itself [*sich erinnert*] in itself. – The whole thing

> must be present in its conditions, or all the conditions belong to its existence, for *all* of them constitute the reflection [...]. (*GW* 11, 321; *S.* 6, 122; *L.* 477)

And finally:

> accordingly this emergence is the tautological movement of the thing towards itself [...]. (*Ibid.*)

Nothing is more immobile than the universal movement of the Logic: it only reveals that which is as an *always already thought*. The thing exists because the empirical multiplicity that constitutes it is thought as a whole, and this whole comes out of the same reflection that already allowed the thought of the empirical multiplicity itself. All subsequent progression will only increase the degree of self-equality of the unity that is thought. This is why *ground* can hardly be opposed to *concept*. What is thought, from one to the other, is the same "ontology."

4

WHAT IS RATIONAL IS ACTUAL, WHAT IS ACTUAL IS RATIONAL

Hegel's notion of *Wirklichkeit*, actuality, is known above all through the sentence that appears in the Preface to the *Principles of the Philosophy of Right*:

> What is rational is actual; and what is actual is rational. (*S.* 7, 24; *R.* 20)

A scandalous statement, and even more scandalous in the translation that long prevailed:

> What is rational is real, and what is real is rational.

For in identifying Hegel's notion of *Wirklichkeit* with the more familiar notion of reality, this translation makes plausible an interpretation according to which, by elevating "the real" to the dignity of "the rational," Hegel indulges in the speculative sanctification of what is, of the existing world. But in fact, Hegel's notion of *Wirklichkeit* has a quite specific content which resists any overly simplistic interpretation of the sentence just cited. This content is progressively laid out in Section 3 of the Doctrine of Essence (*GW* 11, 369–409; *S.* 6, 186–240; *L.* 529–571), where the exposition of *Wirklichkeit* (actuality) provides the transition to the concept (Book 2 of the *Science of Logic*). The concept, in turn, is what opens the way to the system expounded in the second and third parts of the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*: the Philosophy of Nature and the Philosophy of Spirit.

In a way, then, the notion of "actuality" at work in the *Principles of the Philosophy of Right* is beyond that which is explained in the Doctrine of Essence of the *Science of Logic*. For in the latter actuality prepares the ground for the concept, while in the former it presupposes it.[1] Is it not premature, then, to propose to analyze solely in the context of the

Doctrine of Essence a notion that, in the system, goes hand in hand with the concept?

I want to suggest the contrary. I want to suggest that the whole section on "actuality," in the Doctrine of Essence, can be read as Hegel's (metaphysical) deduction of the notion of actuality precisely insofar as it is also the beginning of a metaphysical deduction of Hegel's "concept."[2] It is a deduction of the notion of actuality in the fully determinate sense that will be given to it once the transition to the concept is accomplished. Why then does Hegel's notion of actuality find its initial exposition in the final section of the Doctrine of Essence? This situation, I suggest, should be seen as Hegel's warning: it is impossible to understand in what sense something is said to be *wirklich*, actually real, or actual, unless one understands how and why essence finds its "truth" in the concept.

We thus find ourselves at a crucial point for the comprehension of Hegel's philosophy. In the next section of this chapter, I shall endeavor to clarify Hegel's notion of "actuality" and its place in the *Science of Logic*. In the following sections, I shall consider in turn the three stages of Hegel's exposition of "actuality": "formal actuality," "real actuality" [*reale Wirklichkeit*], and "absolute necessity."[3]

The meaning of Hegel's "actuality"

Actuality, the topic of Section 3 in the Doctrine of Essence, is the manifold unified by the movement of reflection. It is the appearance that no longer needs to be opposed to essence as a world of being-in-itself, for it is completely determined by the movement of essence, by the forms that reflection produces. It has no determinations except those produced by thought.

> Actuality is the *unity of essence and existence*; in it, *formless* essence and *unstable* appearance, or mere subsistence devoid of all determination and unstable manifoldness have their truth. (*GW* 11, 369; *S.* 6, 186; *L.* 529; Hegel's emphases)

In the Addition to §142 of the *Encyclopedia Logic*, Hegel explains what he means by "actuality" by comparing it to Aristotle's *activity* (ἐνέργεια). This reference is interesting both for the agreement Hegel wants to emphasize between himself and Aristotle, and for the irreducible difference that one can just as soon point out between Aristotle's notion and Hegel's own.

Hegel writes:

> Actuality is . . . the principle of Aristotle's philosophy, albeit not the common actuality of what is immediately present, but the Idea as actuality. Aristotle's polemic against Plato consists in his describing Plato's Idea as mere δύναμις, and maintaining against this that the Idea, which both of them equally recognize as alone being the true, must be considered as ἐνέργεια, in other words, as the inner that is completely outer, and thus as the unity of inner and outer, or actuality in the emphatic sense that is here given to the word. (*S.* 8, 281; *E.L.* §142a, 202)

Aristotle criticized Plato for separating the world of Ideas from the sensible world.[4] Instead he affirmed that the form (εἶδος) is immanent to matter, as a principle of determination. In Hegel's eyes Aristotle thus has the merit of having characterized the world of outer sense as being not merely sensible, but also intelligible. Conversely, the intelligible, or form, is only potential, δύναμις, as long as it is not realized in an object in which alone it exists in act – ἐνέργεια. Aristotle's ἐνέργεια is thus similar to Hegel's actuality insofar as it is the realization of the Idea or the form. It is reality as thought – and the ambiguity of the term "thought," both a substantive and an adjective, must be preserved here.[5] What interests Hegel in Aristotle's view is the attempt to overcome the opposition between what is intelligible and what is sensible and to put an end to the separation between subject and object of thought. What is thought is nothing but thought itself and its own forms. Recall Hegel's striking formulations in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*:

> The chief moment in Aristotelian philosophy is the affirmation that thinking and what is thought are one, that what is objective and thinking (energy) are one and the same. (*S.* 6, 162–163; *H.P.* 2, 148)

> Aristotle's speculative philosophy consists precisely in this: considering every thing in a thinking manner, transforming every thing into thoughts. (*S.*19, 164; *H.P.* 2, 149)

And yet, there is of course a great distance between Aristotle's ἐνέργεια and Hegel's *Wirklichkeit*. For Aristotle, existence in act (ἐνέργεια) is the full realization of the form in the sensible object. But Hegel never misses an occasion to denounce the illusion that consists in mistaking the universal forms of thought for determinations of an object as immediately given (see above, his criticism of the "laws of thought") or conversely, the illusion that consists in extracting from the immediately given object the universal forms that define it (see his criticism of "formal ground").[6] Because Aristotle does not escape

this illusion, his thinking remains confined within the boundaries of an "empirical analysis of the speculative" (to borrow Bernard Bourgeois's apt characterization of Hegel's criticism of Aristotle).[7] Aristotle accepts the object as it is given and then attempts to extract the concept from it, to "transform it into thought." Hegel's effort, in contrast, is to show how the determinations of the object, as thought-determinations, are gradually generated from the confrontation between reflexive unity and (relatively) immediate multiplicity. For Hegel, actuality is not something that is ontologically given, but the ultimate moment of reflection.

Why, then, does Hegel so insistently refer to Aristotle when he introduces his notion of "actuality"? The reason, I suggest, is that in his polemic against Plato Aristotle occupies the position Hegel sees himself as occupying in his own polemic against Kant. There is no "intelligible" world of the beyond to oppose to the "sensible" world, because the sensible world is itself thought, or "transformed into thought." However, in Hegel's case, and contrary to Aristotle, this expression – "transforming all things into thought" – should be taken in its full force. What is *wirklich* is indeed the product of a full-blown transformation. To borrow Yvon Belaval's expression, Hegel is post-Kantian in that for him the relation between the "I think" and what actually exists is not a relation of description, but a relation of constitution.[8] *Wirklichkeit* is reality as constituted, in all its determinations, by thought. So if Aristotle is called to the stand as a witness against Kant, nevertheless the kind of unity of the intelligible and the sensible affirmed by Aristotle yields to another unity: a unity that emerges at the cost of dissolving and thoroughly digesting the sensible object. There is, for Hegel, no immanence of rationality in the immediately present object, and even less (such a hypothesis has, in the terms of Hegel's Logic, strictly no meaning) any immanence of the rational in a reality external to thought. Gérard Lebrun is right to say that such a conception would belong to the optimist conception of "theories of knowledge" of classical metaphysics, which Hegel's primary goal is to refute.[9]

Here's a first paradox, then: if anyone is guilty of speculative sanctification of what is, it is not Hegel, but rather classical metaphysicians, all of whom are heirs to Aristotle at least in sharing with him a conception according to which the goal of knowledge is the revelation of rationality within the empirically real object.[10] Suppose even that the formulation from the *Principles of the Philosophy of Right* cited above does represent a relapse on Hegel's part into the rationalist ideal of theories of knowledge. Why should Hegel rather than his rationalist predecessors be the object of scandal? Why is his philosophy more than any other

accused of being the speculative sanctification of the existing order of things?

I suggest this is because Hegel's *Wirklichkeit* bears more serious sins than the rationalist ideal of a metaphysical knowledge of the rational in the real. In order to show this, we first need to go back to the way the movement of essence leads to *Wirklichkeit*.

"The movement of essence is in general the *becoming towards the concept*" (*GW* 11, 366; *S.* 6, 182; *L.* 526). The movement of essence is the act of bringing the determinate multiplicity that resulted from the exposition of being back to the unity of the "I think." This is not the "I think" of Kant's transcendental apperception, but that of the concept,[11] which means that the unity, in Hegel, does not remain merely regulative, but is actually realized in the object. Let me say more about this difference between Kant and Hegel.

In Kant, the unity of transcendental apperception remains dependent, for the determination of its object, on a matter received in the a priori forms of sensible intuition. The synthesis of objects by the understanding always remains conditioned and incomplete. Between the universal laws produced a priori by the understanding and the empirical laws that govern particular objects, there is a gap that can be bridged only imperfectly, by making the complete unity of thought-determinations a merely regulative principle expressing the ultimate demands of reason. The subject of cognition can achieve neither the rational synthesis of the sensible given, nor knowledge of the thing in itself.[12]

Now, from the same starting point – it is the spontaneity of thought that produces the determinations of objects as well as the unity of these determinations – in Section 2 of the Doctrine of Essence Hegel has developed a view that is opposed to Kant's. In that section, he expounds the mutual transformation of the two poles, that of unity and that of empirical multiplicity. This transformation goes through the stages of the relation between thing in itself and existence, law and phenomenon, phenomenal world and world-in-itself. As Hegel indicates in the sentence I cited earlier,[13] the unity, which was "formless," acquires more and more form, which also means that it acquires content. Conversely, multiplicity, which was "non-subsisting," acquires thought-determination and thus subsistence. How is this possible? It is possible because what Hegel presents us is not a confrontation between a subject bearing rational forms of thought and a given (un-thought) object, but a confrontation of the two poles of thought within itself. This

is why the dynamic movement of Section 2 in the Doctrine of Essence, "Appearance,"[14] ends with the full immanence of intelligible totality, which has gained its content in the course of this movement, to multiplicity thus transformed into totality. In the *essential relation* (the last chapter of Section 2), unity as "reflection into self" and multiplicity as "reflection into other" end up being two identical totalities: the identity of the "inner" and "outer." Here is how Hegel concludes this section:

> What something is, therefore, it is wholly in its exteriority; its exteriority is its totality, it is equally its unity reflected into itself. Its appearance is not only reflection into another, but into itself, and consequently its exteriority is the manifestation of that which it is in itself. [...] Essential relation, in this identity of appearance with the inner or essence, has determined itself in *Actuality*. (*GW* 11, 368; *S.* 6, 185; *L.* 528)

The "appearance" which is "reflection into itself," the "exteriority" which is the "manifestation of that which it is in itself" are this same "unity of inner and outer" that we have seen Hegel attribute to Aristotle in the addition to §142 of the *Encyclopedia*. But we now see how much Hegel has transformed the Aristotelian standpoint. We also see the link between this transformation and Hegel's relation to Kant, both complicit and polemical. Complicit: Hegel's "actuality" is that of Kant's Second Postulate of Empirical Thought, the determined object taken up in the unity of the "I think." Polemical: "actuality," according to Hegel, is not to be opposed to a thing in itself or to a complete totality of determinations whose concept is only regulative. On the contrary, something deserves the name of "actuality" precisely insofar as it presents a complete totality, the complete system of thought-determinations.

We can now return to our initial warning against any hasty interpretation of Hegel's notion of actuality. "Actuality" is not just any "reality." Hegel takes pains to remind us of this at the beginning of Section 3, Chapter 2, entitled "Actuality": neither being, nor existence, nor the appearance, are what he calls "actual." Being, existence, and appearances are, to various degrees, a reality that is still immediate, reflected as external and not taken up and constituted by reflection. The situation is different with actuality.

> Its immediacy is posited as reflection-into-itself, and conversely. (*GW* 11, 380; *S.* 6, 201; *L.* 541)

But if actuality was already defined at the end of Section 2 ("Appearance"), why does Hegel still take the trouble to devote a whole

section, three long chapters, to its exposition? If at the end of Section 2, "Appearance," the object was completely taken up in thought, if "exteriority" was the "manifestation of that which it is in itself," why do we not go directly to the *concept*, with which this identity will be expressed as the dynamic unity of the general, the particular, and the singular? Let us refrain for now from the pleasure of making trite remarks about Hegel's mania for mediations. Instead, let us give Hegel the floor. He will tell us that the unity of reflection and its object must still be taken on by reflection itself. The constitution of the object as a totality of thought-determinations must be recognized as the *product* of reflection, and not considered in turn as a given, a mere being-there, again the object of an external reflection. The reason Chapter 1 of Section 3, "The Absolute," is devoted to Spinoza's substance, is that according to Hegel Spinoza offers a good example of such an error. Having brought back the constitution of each determinate object to the absolute unity of the substance, Spinoza, according to Hegel, nevertheless considered the substance as given to an "external reflection." He did not know how to think what he had discovered. He imagined he was defining a reality independent of reflection while he was defining the highest product of reflection. Spinoza expresses in his own way the externality of reflection with respect to its own product.

So against Spinoza, Hegel wants to expound how reflection gives itself its own production process as what is, itself, to be reflected. Reflection must appropriate actuality as being produced by itself, as being nothing but itself. Then one reaches "actuality proper" (*GW* 11, 369; *S.* 6, 186; *L.* 529)[15] or actuality reflected *as* actuality. Then any misinterpretation of a statement like "the actual is rational" will be warded off. For one will have answered the question: what is this "actual" I am talking about? What is it, for thought, to think actuality?

Now, to answer such a question is to meet with the problem of modal categories. This is why Chapter 2 of Section 3 deals with modality: actuality (*Wirklichkeit*), possibility (as opposed to impossibility), and necessity (as opposed to contingency). But, as one would suspect, Hegel profoundly transforms the traditional meaning of these modal determinations. To understand this transformation, we must once again recall the result of Kant's Copernican Revolution: actuality is not only the object of thought, it is its production.

For classical metaphysics,[16] the meaning of modal categories is at once logical and ontological. Modal categories characterize the degree of coincidence – or as the case may be, the distance – between the forms

of rational inference and the real chains of causes. What is possible is what does not entail contradiction. If there is a distance between the possible and the actual, it is because material chains of causes cannot be reduced to logical connections of concepts. We can know causal chains only empirically. For Leibniz just like for Descartes, universal laws of motion cannot be deduced from logical laws, and under universal laws of motion an infinity of possible particular laws fall, only a few of which are actually instantiated. For us, the distance between what is possible and what actually exists can be filled out only by experience.[17]

What is necessary is that whose non-existence is impossible. Only God is an absolutely necessary being, for in him essence and existence are identical, existence logically follows from God's definition. Only in this case is there no distance between possibility and actuality. In contrast, the chain of finite things does not follow from any rational deduction. The distance between rational deduction and actual chain of finite existences characterizes the contingency of the world. That distance is bridged by the relation between what is contingent and what is absolutely necessary, a relation established in the various proofs of the existence of God: the ontological proof which deduces God's existence from God's essence or definition; and the cosmological proof which argues that the contingent can exist only if there is something whose existence is absolutely necessary, i.e. something that posits its own existence at the same time as the hypothetical, relative necessity of the existence of causal chains of finite things. Rationalist metaphysicians' conception of modal categories is thus theological as well as logical and ontological. It is from the point of view of God that one can ask the question: might what actually exists, not have existed? What is actual owes its existence not to its mere possibility, but to a special act of God or to its causal relation to other entities whose existence depends on a special act of God.

With Kant, modal determinations are not defined from God's point of view, but from the point of view of the subject of cognition. The question is not: is it possible that what is, might have never come into existence? Rather, it is: what is the degree of determination brought to the existence of the object by our cognitive power? Especially illuminating, in this regard, is Kant's application of modal categories in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*. Here I will follow the analysis that Jules Vuillemin offers in *Physique et métaphysique kantienne*.[18]

In the First Postulate of Empirical Thought in General, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant defines "possible" in the following way:

> Whatever agrees with the formal conditions of experience (in accordance with intuition and concepts) is possible. (A218/B265)

In the *Metaphysical Foundations*, possibility is the modality of rectilinear motion.

> The rectilinear motion of a matter with respect to an empirical space, as distinct from the opposite motion of the space, is a merely *possible* predicate. The same when thought in no relation at all to a matter external to it, that is, as *absolute motion*, is *impossible*. (4:555)

Motion of matter with respect to a given frame of reference is "merely possible," that is, it would be equally compatible with the formal conditions of experience (logical non-contradiction and a priori forms of space and time) to assert that the rectilinear movement is that of the surrounding space and that the body under consideration is at rest. No empirical consideration decides in favor of one assertion rather than the other.

In the case of circular movement, in contrast, the movement cannot be indifferently attributed to the body or to the surrounding space. Here an empirically given element makes the decision. That element is the *force* that explains the circular movement. *Actuality* (*Wirklichkeit*) is therefore the modality proper to circular movement. According to the Second Postulate of Empirical Thought, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*,

> That which is connected with the material conditions of experience [...] is actual. (A218/B266)

In conformity with this definition,

> The circular motion of a matter, as distinct from the opposite motion of the space, is an *actual* predicate of this matter; by contrast, the opposite motion of a relative space, assumed instead of the motion of the body, is no actual motion of the latter, but, if taken to be such, is mere semblance. (4:557–558)

Finally, what is necessary is,

> That whose connection with the actual is determined in accordance with the universal conditions of experience [...]. (A218, B266)

In the *Metaphysical Foundations*, *necessity* is illustrated by the law of equality of action and reaction.

> In every motion of a body, whereby it is moving relative to another, an opposite and equal motion of the latter is *necessary*. (4:558)

This is a necessity that is defined only in the context of the conditions of possibility of experience. The necessity of existence is not deduced from a concept or a conceptual chain. An existence must be *given* for another to be asserted as necessarily given, by virtue of its connection to the first in accordance with a universal law. In other words, such necessity is always hypothetical.

Thus for Kant, modal determinations do not express an ontological determination of things as they are in themselves, independently of the cognitive powers of the knowing subject. Rather, modal categories are defined in each case in relation to a particular cognitive power: for the possible, the understanding; for the actual, judgment; for the necessary, reason (cf. A74/B100n.; A219/B266). This does not mean that modal determinations are merely subjective, since for Kant, our cognitive powers are constitutive of objectivity. Nevertheless, modal determinations characterize nothing more than the relation of the object, as an object of cognition (intuitions thought under concepts), to the unity of the cognizing subject's experience.

Hegel's exposition of modal categories in Section 3, Chapter 2 of the Doctrine of Essence, retraces this Kantian transformation of the problem of modality. According to a schema that should by now be familiar, Hegel starts with the critique of what he calls a "formal" conception of modality ("Contingency or Formal Actuality, Possibility and Necessity," *GW* 11, 381; *S.* 6, 202; *L.* 542); then he reconstructs the transcendental definition of modal categories, transforming it by substituting his "concept" for Kant's "I" of apperception ("Relative Necessity, or Real Actuality, Possibility and Necessity," *GW* 11, 385; *S.* 6, 207; *L.* 546); finally, in "Absolute Necessity," Hegel sets out to expound his own speculative view of modal categories. In brief, Hegel owes to Kant the idea that the modal categories express nothing other than the degree of unity between existence and a unified system of thought-determinations. But he opposes Kant in that for him, that unity leaves no room on the side of existence for a world of the beyond. And on the side of thought-determinations, the unity brought about by reflection is not that of an immutable subject faced with an object external to it. Rather, it is that of a thought process that is immanent to existence, and transformed in its very forms by its confrontation with multiplicity. Thus modal categories are not only a way of characterizing existence (existence is "possible" [or impossible] or also "actual" [or not] or even "necessary" [or contingent]). They characterize existence in the context of a specific position and figure of thought with respect to existence. One might go so far as

to say: reflection is *accountable* for the modality it attributes to existence, for the latter is the product of the process of reflection. What is *wirklich*, *actual*, is such because thought (reflection) presents it as such. There is no affirmation of actuality outside the activity of thinking. Possibility and necessity express specific positions of the activity of thinking with respect to this presented (reflected) actuality.

And here is finally where we get at the root of the scandal elicited by the statement from the Introduction to the *Principles of the Philosophy of Right* with which I opened this chapter. That statement does not assert the rational character of "what is actual" by virtue of merely observing it. Rather, it asserts a rational character that is actively constituted, as the result of a movement teleologically determined by the search for the unity of the concept. This is what makes Hegel's *Wirklichkeit* the transition towards the concept. With the concept, totality as thought, having digested all otherness, becomes the criterion by which any object must be measured in order to be said to be "true." This is foreshadowed as early as the note to §142 of the *Encyclopedia*:

> Actuality, as distinguished from mere appearance, primarily as unity of inner and outer, is so far from standing opposite to reason as something other than it, that it is rather what is thoroughly rational, and that which is not rational must on that very ground fail to be held actual. To this view, by the way, corresponds the usage of educated speech, insofar as one will for instance decline to acknowledge a poet or a statesman who can do nothing meritorious or rational as an actual poet or an actual statesman. (*S.* 8, 280–281; *E.L.* §142a, 201)

Must we then be scandalized by the totalitarianism of reason, which admits as actual only that which it has already caught in its net? Or, on the contrary, must we marvel at the fact that Hegel sets up the tribunal of a historical reason, at once theoretical and practical? Lacking at this point any ready answer to such questions, let us at least recap what we have elucidated. We have seen that Hegel takes his notion of "actuality" to descend from the Aristotelian notion of unity of form and matter in an individual entity. But at the same time, this unity is reformulated in light of the post-Kantian conception of the unity of the "I think" and the object determined by the "I think." We have seen that the Kantian inspiration for the notion of *Wirklichkeit* is in turn corrected by the absorption of all immediacy in the movement of reflection. Hegel's reference to Aristotle is necessary precisely in order to avoid any ambiguity on this point. Actuality is for Hegel the unity

without remainder of form (reflection) and matter (what is given). Finally, we have seen that the transition through modal categories is essential to clarifying the relation of reflection to the reality it has thus constituted for itself.

We must now proceed to the detailed examination of the modal categories as they are expounded in Section 3, Chapter 2 of the Doctrine of Essence, "Actuality" (*GW* 11, 380–392; *S.* 6, 200–217; *L.* 541–554).

It seems that with this chapter we are reaching the epitome of what Gilles Deleuze has described as the reduction of being and difference to the "reflected element of mere representation."[19] Hegel's exposition of modal categories is the moment where actuality, as existence that is thought, is itself submitted to reflection. It is the moment where, inside the movement of thought, what is under scrutiny is the relation between thought of existence and existence that is thought. Hegel's definition of modal categories depends closely, therefore, on the relation of thought to its (thought) object. This is why we find again in the chapter on modality the three characteristic moments we have already seen: a "formal" moment, a "real" moment, an "absolute" moment.[20] As we had done for the three moments of "determinate ground," we can, as a first approximation, characterize these three moments in the following manner: the "formal" moment is dominated by the illusion of mirroring between forms of reflection and determinations of being; the "real" moment sees the confrontation of reflection and the element of otherness and irreducible manifold that is the object; the "absolute" or "complete" moment is that of the mutual penetration of reflexive unity and otherness. I now propose to follow these different moments step by step.

Modal formalism, a renunciation of the activity of thinking (*GW* 11, 381–385; *S.* 6, 202–207; *L.* 542–546)

The first moment is that of formalism: "Contingency, or formal actuality, possibility and necessity." Here Hegel makes reference to the modal categories of metaphysics inherited, at least in their general configuration, from Aristotle. But, as is always the case in the *Science of Logic*, Hegel is not content with expounding the definitions he borrows from the history of philosophy. He reconstructs them in light of the meaning granted to them by their place in the movement of reflection. Whatever Aristotle, Descartes, Leibniz, or anyone else might have thought, their definitions of modal categories were, according to Hegel, determined

by the movement of reflection in which what is in question is the relation of actuality (reality insofar as it is thought) to itself, or the relation of thought to an object that is nothing other than itself. Hegel's exposition is therefore difficult to follow. He always implicitly refers to specific positions in the history of philosophy. But he reconstructs this history in order to lay out what, according to him, truly happens behind the back of its protagonists.

In the case of the "formal" categories of modality, Hegel's main idea is the following: formalism is a kind of thinking which proves itself incapable of accomplishing anything but merely receiving what is given. We have, therefore, a first scenario in the general conception I outlined above according to which modality inseparably characterizes the modality of the (thought) existence of the object, and a particular position of thought in relation to its object. "Contingency," the generic title of the first series of modal categories refers both to the contingency of the object and to the contingency of thought.

Another originality of Hegel's exposition is that he makes *actuality* the pivot of all modal reflection, whatever the figure of thought envisaged may be. This is because the reflection of modal categories takes root in the very presence of the object that is thought. It is wrong, according to Hegel, to start with the definition of the possible, for this is never where thought begins. Even Kant, although Hegel takes his inspiration from him in the exposition of "relative necessity," incurs the reproach of having fallen into "empty representation" and defined the possible before the actual. In the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel writes:

> Possibility should come second. But in abstract thinking, empty representing comes first. (*S.* 20, 345; *H.P.* 3, 439)

Contrary to what one might expect, the analysis of formalism does not begin, therefore, with the definition of the "logically possible," as if this definition could be produced in the pure realm of ideas or, in Hegelian terms, from the self-identity of thought. On the contrary, Hegel's exposition starts with actuality, the real as thought. It will be even easier, then, for Hegel to show that the modal categories formal thought claims to define, and first that of the possible, are nothing but the tautological repetition of actuality.

What is "formal actuality"? It is actuality that is not yet reflected as actuality. An object is "formally actual" insofar as it is received in reflection as an immediate presence. There is a paradox here: we have seen from what laborious transitions of thought the actual is the product.

How, then, could it be considered immediate? But this is indeed what Hegel maintains. He even goes so far as to assimilate formal actuality to "being or general existence." For, he says, it is in the "formal determination" of actuality, but is not yet actuality as "totality of form."

> Actuality is formal in so far as, being the initial actuality, it is only *immediate, unreflected* actuality, and hence is only in this form-determination, but not as totality of form. (*GW* 11, 381; *S.* 6, 202; *L.* 542)

Formal actuality occupies the place of actuality in the movement of reflection, it is reality fully thought, reality *as thought*; but it is not the unity of reflection with its own product, thought-reality *reflected* as such. This is why nothing distinguishes it, for reflection, from *being* or *existence*. Thus if "formal actuality" is the necessary starting point for modal reflection, the latter really begins only with *possibility*, for it is with the possible that the relation between thought-determinations and being is put in question.

Thus it is with the possible that the relation of thought to what is thought is reflected. The possible is the *thinkable*; and for formalism, what is thinkable is what is non-contradictory. Hegel's evaluation of such a definition is twofold. On the one hand, he thinks the definition is empty, as empty as the supposed "laws of thought" were. But on the other hand, defining the possible as the thinkable is a first step in questioning the unity of thought and what is being thought, and thus throwing an overly immediate representation of actuality into crisis. Let us consider each of these two points.

To define the possible as the non-contradictory is to fall back into the indetermination of the principle of identity. Any thing can be said identical to itself and distinct from its other. Defined in terms of these abstract identities, "the realm of possibility is boundless multiplicity" (*S.* 6, 203; *L.* 543). Anything is possible. This can lead to absurd statements, such as those Hegel ironically lists in the *Encyclopedia Logic*:

> It is possible that the moon may fall upon the Earth tonight; for the moon is a body separate from the Earth and may as well fall down upon it as a stone thrown into the air does. It is possible that the Sultan may become pope. For he is a man, can as such convert to Christianity, become a Catholic priest, and so on. (*S.* 8, 283; *E.L.* §143a, 203)

But everything is impossible just as well: for Hegel showed in Section 1, Chapter 2 (The Essentialities or Determinations of Reflection) that abstract identity gives way to diversity, opposition, and finally

contradiction as soon as its *content* is thought. The initial definition of the possible is therefore untenable. "To say this is to say *nothing* – just as in the formal law of identity" (*GW* 11, 382; *S.* 6, 203; *L.* 543).

However (and this is the second aspect), the definition of the possible does not merely repeat the principle of identity. As we saw in Chapter 2, according to Hegel what was to blame in the latter was the apparent claim to provide a model of object determination, although all it could be was the expression of a general demand of thought, short of any determination. In the same way, to define the possible as non-contradictory is to leave the object undetermined. Such a definition provides no clue to what makes possible the *actual existence* of the object. Nevertheless, the superiority of the reflection of the possible over the mere statement of the principle of identity is that it makes explicit its own incompleteness. What is possible is *only* possible (thinkable); it is not thereby actual. Even the formal reflection of the possible has at least the merit of distinguishing between the demand of the self-identity of thought and the determination of the object as actual, determinately existing.

> The possible, however, contains more than does the bare law of identity. The possible is *reflected reflectedness-into-self*, or the identical simply as *moment* of totality, and thus also determined as not being *in itself* [...]. (*GW* 11, 382; *S.* 6, 203–204; *L.* 543)

Consequently, if the principle of identity expresses the inability of thought to confront contradiction, the definition of the possible on the contrary *introduces* contradiction into the thought of the object. For if the possible is defined as that which does not contradict itself, it also designates non-contradiction as insufficient for defining the actual:

> [The possible] has therefore the second determination of being *only* a possible – the *ought-to-be* of the totality of form. Possibility without this ought-to-be is *essentiality* as such; but absolute form contains this, that essence itself is only a moment, and without being does not have its truth. (*GW* 11, 382; *S.* 6, 204; *L.* 543)

Thus possibility, far from excluding contradiction, is defined as contradiction:

> It is being-in-itself, determined as only *posited*, or, equally, *as not being in itself*. – Consequently possibility is in itself also contradiction, or it is *impossibility*. (*GW* 11, 382–383; *S.* 6, 204; *L.* 543–544)

We can see here what violence Hegel does to the classical definition of possibility in thus "translating" it into the terms of the Doctrine of Essence. Where the classical definition simply *distinguishes* the possible from the real (or the actual), Hegel concludes: "possibility is in itself also contradiction." This is because, for him, the possible and the actually real are not opposed externally. Rather, they are two moments of one and the same movement of reflection, as were positive and negative or ground and conditions. This is why the possible finds itself denied as "possible in itself," exactly like the positive found itself denied as "positive in itself" or ground denied as "ground in itself." Each of these terms exists only through its opposite, and is only as "positedness"; therefore each carries contradiction in itself, and disappears if its relation to the other disappears. The possible is impossible if there is no actual of which it is the possibility, indeed if there is no actual that confirms that it *was* possible.

Hegel thinks that at least an intuition of contradiction can be found in another traditional definition of the possible: what is possible is that whose opposite is not necessarily false. He interprets this definition in the following way. Defining something as possible is defining *its other* as equally possible. That A is non-contradictory, and therefore capable of being actual, does not preclude the fact that not-A is equally non-contradictory, and therefore capable of being actual. Possibility expresses this uncertainty: if A is *only* possible, it is because the same reflexive movement that makes it thinkable makes not-A equally possible.

> Possibility is the comparing relation of both; in its determination as a reflection of the totality it contains this, that the contrary too is possible. It is therefore the relating *ground*, that because A = A, *therefore* also −A = −A; in the possible A the possible not-A is also contained; and it is this very relation which determines both as possible. (*GW* 11, 383; *S.* 6, 204; *L.* 544)

Possibility is here the relation in reflection that bears a term A as well as its opposite. The choice between these possibilities stems from actuality itself in its determinate relations. Such a resolution foreshadows the transition to *real actuality*: it is in the determinate relations of objects that their possibility is defined. This is how Hegel concludes his critique of formal possibility, in the addition to §143 of the *Encyclopedia Logic*:

> Whether this is possible or impossible depends on the content, that is, on the totality of the moments of actuality, which in its unfolding discloses itself to be necessity. (*S.* 8, 284; *E.L.* §143a, 204)

But formal thought proves incapable of implementing this solution, which would force it to rethink its very notion of possibility. The solution to the contradiction of the possible is implemented only by enforcing an immediate unification of possible and actual. The contradiction of the notion of the possible is resolved by the authority of the facts. Consider again Hegel's examples in the *Encyclopedia Logic*: it is formally possible for the moon to fall onto the earth or for the sultan to become pope. But the fact of the matter shows that in each case it is the opposite that is true, and therefore actually possible. Or here is an example that is perhaps less of a caricature: motion X is possible, it is compatible (not in contradiction) with the general laws of motion. But what actually happens is not motion X, but motion Y. So only the latter turns out to be possible.[21] One thus invokes the authority of the real (of the actual, in Hegelian terms) in order to resolve the contradiction reflection is powerless to resolve.

> Everything possible has therefore in general a *being* or an *existence*. (*GW* 11, 383; *S.* 6, 205; *L.* 544)

But just as the formally possible was only the mirror image of the actual in its self-identity, so the actual to which one reverts is only the mirror image of the possible: it could just as well not be. Nothing in the movement of reflection has determined its existence more that it was at the start. Such an actual reflected as "merely possible" is *contingent*: "An actual which at the same time is determined as merely possible, whose other or opposite equally is" (*GW* 11, 383–384; *S.* 6, 205; *L.* 545). Thought is dependent on what is offered to it: what is contingent is that which is not rationally deduced, that which might as well not be, or to push the theological implications of this approach, that whose existence can be accounted for only by reference to divine free will. What is actual remains "contingent" because there is still a duality between existence and its reflection, between actuality and possibility, just as formal possibility is a reflection of actuality still too undetermined to account for what makes possible the *existence* of the actual. In contrast, the progression of the successive forms of modal reflection will tend towards a reflection of the actual which accounts for it completely, which is such that to think the object and to think its existence are one and the same thing, one and the same act; then the opposition of the possible and the actual will be resolved, contingency will be absorbed by necessity and the path to the concept will be opened.

But we are still a long way short of the target. Possibility and actuality face each other like two terms thrown back and forth into one

another without any real mediation. Actuality is reflected in possibility; conversely, possibility is only confirmed as possibility through actuality. In Hegel's terms, each is the positedness of the other, each finds its meaning only in the other. But this positedness is only the immediate presupposition of each by the other rather than the complex mediation of one by the other. In this mutual mirroring of possibility and actuality, the "contingent" turns out to be "necessary":

> This *absolute unrest* of the *becoming* of these two determinations [of actuality and possibility] is *contingency*. But, because each immediately turns into its opposite, it just as much *coincides with itself* in the latter; and this *identity* of both, of one in the other, is *necessity*. (*GW* 11, 384; *S.* 6, 206; *L.* 545)

This is surprising: what a moment before defined contingency (the absence of mediation between possibility and actuality) now defines necessity. How did this happen?

It happened because in the play of tautologies from the actual to the possible, from the possible to the "also" possible (if A is described as "merely possible" then −A is also possible), from the "merely possible" to the criterion of actual possibility provided by what actually is, it turns out that the possible and the actual are just the same, which means also that only what is, is possible, and anything else is impossible. The laziness that is satisfied with defining the contingent as that which could possibly not be, and thus the actual as "only possible," will be just as easily satisfied with admitting that if nevertheless it is, it is because it is necessary. Whence the biting statement:

> The contingent, then, has no ground because it is contingent; and, equally, it has a ground because it is contingent. (*GW* 11, 384; *S.* 6, 206; *L.* 545)

Compare this statement with Kant's analysis of the thesis of the fourth Antinomy and his criticism of the cosmological proof in the Transcendental Ideal, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant denounces the rationalist metaphysician's move from the assertion that a particular event is empirically contingent (would not have happened unless another event had previously happened) to the pure concept of contingency (what is contingent = what might not have existed = what does not have with itself the ground of its existence) to the pure concept of an absolutely necessary being (what does not have the ground of existence within itself must have the ground of its existence in something else; existence in general, in order to be sufficiently grounded, must

be grounded in something that does have the ground of its existence within itself, i.e. in something whose existence is absolutely necessary; see A459–460/B487–488; A603–620/B631–648). Hegel's statement: "The contingent, then, has no ground because it is contingent; and, equally, it has a ground because it is contingent" is an apt summary of this whole reasoning.

Nevertheless, Hegel's method here is different from Kant's. Here we can see again the difference between transcendental and speculative idealism. Kant shows into what error reason falls when it "forgets" that its determinations have meaning only in relation to an empirical given. Hegel expounds and disrupts the sequence of determinations in which reflection is caught when the relation to itself which is its relation to the object as other, is a purely formal relation, where otherness is absorbed into identity. *The empirical* is thus what Hegel calls upon in his battle against formalism, and what will give content to the following section. But against Kant, Hegel makes of this moment a moment internal to reflection. As we have seen, this is what allows him to make of the sequence of modal categories an immanent progression. The demand for unity between thought and reality inside the movement of reflection is what generates the transition from the actual to the possible, from the possible to the contingent, and from the contingent to the necessary.

To summarize the movement we have just recounted: for formal thought, the proof of the necessity of being is being itself. "The necessary *is*, and this that simply is [*dies Seiende*], is itself the necessary" (*GW* 11, 385; *S.* 6, 207; *L.* 546). In the closed circuit of tautologies,[22] from the real (actual) to the possible, from the possible to the contingent, from the contingent to the necessary, we have done nothing but oscillate between complete indetermination and the unwarranted elevation of everything contingent to the dignity of the necessary.

This judgment may seem excessively severe compared to the content of Hegel's text. In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel's tone is not as explicitly critical. But in the *Encyclopedia*, his tone is more polemical, although he does not analyze the formalist schema in the same detail. There it is clear that formalism is a lazy submission to the fact of the matter. This is what Hegel says about formal possibility:

> In practical life too it is not uncommon to see ill will and indolence slink behind the category of possibility, in order to escape definite obligations. [...] Rational, practical people refuse to be imposed upon

> by the possible simply because it is possible, but stick to the actual, *by which of course one should not understand merely whatever immediately exists.* (*S.* 8, 283; *E.L.* §143a, 204; my emphasis)

The indetermination of the formally possible is the rampart behind which the bad and the lazy take cover. To renounce the void of formal possibility is not to submit oneself purely and simply to the immediate given; it is to penetrate the determinations of the latter through a reflection that is necessarily active. We will say more about this point when we consider "real actuality" (*reale Wirklichkeit*). Quite different is the formalist approach, which finds in what is immediately given the sanction of the possible, and thus hypostasizes the contingent into something necessary. Hegel's irritation with such an approach sometimes takes a Voltairian tone:

> On the surface of nature, so to speak, contingency has free range, and this must simply be acknowledged, without the pretension (sometimes erroneously ascribed to philosophy), to want to find it in a could-only-be-so-and-not-otherwise. Nor is contingency less visible in the spiritual world, as has been remarked already with respect to the will, which includes contingency in the guise of free choice, but only as a superseded element. It is also with respect to spirit and its activity that we must guard against being misled by a well-meaning striving for rational knowledge to try to exhibit the necessity of appearances which are marked by a decided contingency, or, as one says, to construct them a priori. (*S.* 8, 286; *E.L.* §145a, 206)[23]

Attempting to prove all immediate given to be necessary belongs to the same misguided thought as elevating the immediate determinations of being to the dignity of (formal) ground.[24] Of course it is true that thought cannot be satisfied with the contingent, since the latter manifests the impossibility of completely taking up the given into the synthesis of the "I think." The goal of thinking is to reduce contingency. But this cannot be done by simply calling whatever is, necessary. It is through an abdication of thought that formalism comes to consider as necessary *that which is.* Hegel intends to argue that the obvious emptiness of such a conception already calls for other determinations.

"Real" modality: Kant and Beyond

The "formal" categories of modality correspond to the first moment of reflection (positing reflection) and to formal ground. We saw above that for Hegel, formalism is in the final analysis a reduction of thought

to the determinations of being, a "bad" empiricism, in contrast with the "good" empiricism which Hegel characterized in the moments of "external reflection" and "real ground," where the confrontation of thought with the otherness of the given leads to a transcendental position.[25] We just saw in what sense the formal categories of modality can be considered as expressing such a "bad" empiricism. One might expect that the second moment of modality, "Relative necessity, or real actuality, possibility, and necessity" (*GW* 11, 385; *S.* 6, 207; *L.* 546) would pursue the parallelism and offer us a structure that parallels that of external reflection and real ground. But the first surprise provided by this section is that the expected parallelism does not obtain. Rather, the structure of "real" modality is that of the unity of ground and conditions in "complete ground," which corresponds to the structure of determining reflection.[26] The second surprise is that the generic title of this second moment of modality, Relative Necessity, gives us to expect a characterization of necessity inspired by Kant's "merely conditioned" or hypothetical necessity. Indeed this is how this second moment is generally read.[27] However, closer scrutiny of Hegel's exposition makes the comparison with Kant less than obvious. True, "relative necessity" is defined in terms of a relation between the thing and its conditions. This brings to mind the regression from conditioned to conditions in terms of which Kant defines the category of necessity, in the Third Postulate of Empirical Thought as well as in the Fourth Antinomy of Pure Reason) (see A217–218/B265–266; A452/B480–A460/B488). But if, as I indicated earlier, the relation between Hegel's "thing itself" (*Sache selbst*) and its conditions is homologous to the relation between ground and conditions, then Hegel's "relative necessity" differs from Kant's necessity in the series of phenomenal conditions. For as we saw, Hegel's relation between ground and conditions is different from Kant's relation of conditioned to the series of its conditions.[28]

I would like to offer right now the beginning of an explanation for these two surprises, which I hope will be justified more fully when we consider the categories in detail. The originality of Hegel's conception of modality is that it explicitly supposes a holistic perspective on what is thereby determined. Modal reflection is a reflection on an entity considered (and thus constituted) as the totality of its own determinations. To better see this, we must remember at what point in the Logic the question of modality is introduced. It appears at the end of the journey through the figures of essence, where what is presented to reflection is not a scattered given in which thought must establish its order by

trial and error, constituting "real grounds" one by one, as a series of conditions. What is presented to thought is the *Sache* that is said to "come into existence" when all its conditions are given, at the end of the chapter on ground.[29] Modal reflection is the reflection of *thinking* unity on *thought* unity. It is totality's perspective on itself. Formalism has proved powerless to give content to such a perspective because, as always, it presupposes this content to be immediately given in the object. Actuality and possibility are thus reduced to being mere mirror images of each other, and the thing is said to be necessary without any confrontation between the unity of the activity of reflection and the unity of the determinations of the thing itself, *die Sache selbst*.

> The necessity which has been reached is *formal* because its moments are formal. i.e. they are simple determinations which are a totality only as an immediate unity or as an immediate conversion of the one into the other, and thus do not have the figure [*Gestalt*] of self-subsistence. (*GW* 11, 385; *S.* 6, 207; *L.* 546)

"Good" empiricism, in contrast, is the attitude in which the unity of the thing is reflected only in and over-against the manifold of its determinations, and modal categories arise from such reflection of unity. This is why although "real" modality corresponds to an external reflection, its structure is not that of "real ground," but of "complete ground." Note that this already indicates we are reaching the transition towards the concept: reflection confronted with its other, finds this other already unified by itself. Here I suggest that the ancestor to be kept in mind is not so much the system of modal categories of the *Critique of Pure Reason* as the structure of reflective judgment in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Or, to take our guidance from Kant's terminology while taking Hegel's additional step: the authority of the understanding definitively yields to that of reflective judgment, which (for Hegel) is nothing other than the reflection of reason upon itself.[30]

Let us now consider the details of the categories.

Unlike "formal" actuality, "real" actuality is reflected *as reflected*: in other words, it is defined as actual insofar as the unity of the internal and the external, of reflexive unity and given determinations, is acknowledged. Recall, in contrast, the way in which formal actuality was defined:

> Actuality is formal in so far as, being the initial actuality, it is only *immediate, unreflected* actuality, and hence is only in this form-determination, but not as totality of form. (*GW* 11, 381; *S.* 6, 202; *L.* 542)

Here, on the contrary, we have:

> Real Actuality *as such* is first the thing of many properties, the existing world; but it is not the existence which resolves itself into appearance, but, as actuality, it is also being-in-itself [*das Ansichsein*] and reflection-into-itself [*Reflection-in-sich*]. (*GW* 11, 385; *S.* 6, 208; *L.* 546)

Actuality is henceforth the unity of a content and a form, i.e. the unity of determinations that are shaped by reflection, and reflection itself. This definition is close to that of Kant: for Kant too, what is actual is defined as such by the relation of the "I think" to a content that it has not only received, but also formed.[31] And yet, Hegel's reference here seems to be first not to Kant, but to Leibniz. For he defines what he calls "real actuality" in terms that, in the Remark to Chapter 1 of Section 3 ("The Absolute"), defined Leibniz's monad. Now in the play of Leitmotifs that pervade the Logic, the "Leibniz theme," as we have seen several times, introduces the demand for the complete determination of a thing. It is in this respect that, in the Remark just cited, Leibniz is opposed to Spinoza. To the "passivity" of the Spinozist mode, a mere "emanation" of the substance, Hegel opposes the activity of the monad, which is the unifying principle of its own determinations, "negation relating to itself." This is why

> although it is finite, [the monad] has no passivity; rather the alterations and determinations within it are manifestations of itself within itself. (*GW* 11, 378; *S.* 6, 198; *L.* 539)

Compare with the way Hegel defines "real actuality":

> What is actual *can act* [*Was wirklich ist kann wirken*]; something manifests its actuality *through that which it produces.* Its attitude to something other is the manifestation *of itself.* (*GW* 11, 385–386; *S.* 6, 208; *L.* 546)

This return of the theme confirms what I was announcing when introducing "real" modality: here the thing, even in its exteriority, is thought from the point of view of the totality of its determinations. Leibniz's monad offers an example of such a characterization of actuality, for each monad reflects in itself its standpoint on to the totality of monads and generates in this way the totality of its own determinations; thus its relation to others is only a relation to itself. Similarly, for Hegel, what is really actual (*real wirklich*) is the unity of a totality of determinations or "conditions." For instance the world is "really actual" insofar as it is a manifold content unified by reflection; or again, living beings are

"really actual" insofar as reflection defines a unity in the manifold of their determinations.

Does this mean that something in which one cannot define such a unity is not "actual"? No it does not. But such a thing is then only "formally actual." To think the actuality of a thing is always to think the complete unity of its determinations. If a thing cannot be presented to thought as a self-sufficient totality of determinations, then its actuality, to a certain extent, escapes thought. It is "formally actual," that is, reflection designates it as actual, but without having thought it. The inferior nature of this mode of apprehension appears less in thinking the modality of actuality itself than when reflecting its possibility and necessity. Then it becomes clear that such an actuality is not fully thought through.

The reference to Leibniz can thus not be completely satisfying. In the same Remark to the chapter on the Absolute, Hegel reproaches Leibniz for presupposing outside the monads the totality that unifies them and unifies for each of them the totality of their determinations:

> The harmony of these *limitations* – that is, the relation of the monads to one another – falls outside them, and is pre-established by another being [*von einem anderen Wesen*] or *in itself* [*an sich*]. (*GW* 11, 379; *S.* 6, 199; *L.* 539)

Because of this exteriority of the unifying principle, Leibniz remains, according to Hegel, at the stage of formalism: the possible is non-contradictory self-identity, the necessary is the sanctification of the given in the name of divine will. In the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel cannot find harsh enough words for Leibniz's God:

> God has the privilege of being burdened with everything that cannot be conceived. The word "God" is thus the expedient that leads to a unity that is itself only a unity in words; the generation of the manifold from this unity is not explained. [...] One starts with something determinate: this and that is necessary, but we do not conceive [*begreifen*] the unity of these moments; the latter thus falls into God. God is thus the gutter into which all contradictions gather. (*S.* 20, 254–255; *H.P.* 3, 347–348)

So if Leibniz's monad appears fleetingly as an instance of "real actuality," this characterization is quickly corrected. The merit of the Leibnizian monad is to bear within itself the reflection of the totality. But this reflection, because it is *given* with it, leaves no room for the unpredictable character of the activity of determination and unification, for

the play of the manifold against the unifying effort of thought, which is the radically original contribution of Kant's philosophy.

This contribution is what Hegel wants to see reflected in "real" modality. I said above that he reproaches Kant for the formalism of his definition of the possible.[32] In defining the possible as "That which is connected with the formal conditions of experience," Kant partly escapes formalism, since he makes sensibility enter into these conditions (see A218/B266). But possibility as Kant understands it is still the possibility of an object in general. Hegel, for his part, wants to define the possibility of a thing in its *particular* determinations. This leads him to push the dialectic of the given and the activity of thinking much further than Kant did, and to consider the empirical given as a constitutive element in the determination of possibility. The real possibility of a thing is to be found in the manifold determinations in which its unity is constituted.

> Formal possibility is reflection-into-self [*Reflection-in-sich*] only as abstract identity, which merely means that something is not internally self-contradictory. But if one brings into account the determinations, circumstances, and conditions of something in order to ascertain its possibility, one is no longer at the stage of formal possibility, but is considering its real possibility. (*GW* 11, 386; *S.* 6, 208; *L.* 547)

This possibility is "Being-in-itself which is *full of content*" (das *inhaltsvolle* Ansichsein) (*GW* 11, 386; *S.* 6, 208; *L.* 547). "Being-in-itself," that is to say, the reflection of the actual in itself; "full of content," that is to say, not abstract self-identity, but identity reflected out of external determinations.

The exposition of real possibility is thus the exact parallel of the third moment of Ground: "Condition" (*GW* 11, 314; *S.* 6, 113; *L.* 469).[33] There Hegel has shown how, on the one hand, conditions have an independent existence with respect to ground; and how, on the other hand, they have their determination as conditions only in relation to ground. We find these characteristics again in real possibility.

On the one hand, the real possibility of a thing, as the totality of its conditions, is an immediate existence that can itself be considered, independently of its relation to the unity of a thing, as a formal actuality having itself its formal possibility.

> Now this possibility is the posited *whole* of form, but of form in its determinateness, namely of actuality as formal or immediate, and also of possibility as abstract in-itself [*Ansichseins*]. (*GW* 11, 386; *S.* 6, 209; *L.* 547)

As such, it is only a scattered actuality, without unity ("*eine zerstreute Wirklichkeit*," *ibid.*).

Here are two examples that might help us follow the rest of Hegel's reasoning. The real possibility of a living being is the totality of elements connected by chemical and mechanical relations, whose conjunction constitutes the unity of the biological organism. Considered outside their unity in the organism, these elements have a "scattered actuality," with respect to which we can define another kind of possibility, "formal possibility": the regularities one can determine in their relations to other elements in virtue of the laws of interaction of material things.[34] Similarly, the "real possibility" of a determinate "spiritual" actuality (a state, or a historical event) is the totality of economic, social, but also geographic and climatic conditions, which find a particular unity in the state or in the historical event under consideration. Outside this unity, they have their own scattered actuality in relation to which one can define a "formal possibility": the various relations in which the economic agents might stand, the system of social habits, the laws of erosion of soils, and so on.

On the other hand, real possibility cannot be defined outside its relation to the thing whose possibility it is. Just as "conditions" were defined as such only in relation to ground, so "real possibility" is defined as such only in relation to the actuality with respect to which it is defined, the *Sache selbst*.

> Thus real possibility constitutes the *totality of conditions*, a dispersed actuality which is not reflected into itself, but which is determined so as to be the in-itself [*das Ansichsein*], but the in itself of something other, and to return into itself. (*GW* 11, 386; *S.* 6, 209; *L.* 547)

It is because it is thought in relation to the unity of the thing whose possibility it is, that "dispersed actuality" is thought as real possibility. It is because the thing is actual that one can think its real possibility. In other words, the reflection of "real" modality can only be retrospective. This very important aspect of modal reflection will be affirmed even more clearly when we consider real necessity. In fact, this feature of modal reflection could have been expected, since we have seen that for Hegel, modal reflection always begins with actuality. As we saw, the illusion of formalism is precisely to believe, at least initially, that the realm of the possible exceeds the realm of what is. This illusion, far from indicating a richness of thought, is a sign of its indetermination.[35] In contrast, the fact that modal reflection should begin with a thing *accomplished as*

(thought) unity also means that although the structure of "real possibility" is defined on the model of the relation of conditions and ground, it nevertheless corresponds to a more determinate moment of thought.

> In the sphere of conditioned ground, the conditions have *outside them* the form, that is, the ground or the reflection which is for itself; and this ground or reflection relates them into moments of the thing, and produces existence *in them*. Here, in contrast, immediate actuality is not determined by a presupposing reflection to being a condition. Rather, it is posited that this actuality itself is possibility. (*GW* 11, 387; *S.* 6, 210; *L.* 548)

The unity of ground and conditions defined a figure of thought that structures all cognitive process. It is the tension of reflexive unity and the manifold this reflexive unity gives itself to unify. The unity can exist only through the manifold and conversely the manifold is the manifold it is only by virtue of this reflexive unity, just as in Kant the unity of apperception is conditioned by the manifold of intuition and the manifold of intuition is constituted as an object of perception only through the unity of apperception. But here, unity is *in the object itself*; the unity of thought does not exist outside the object constituted and the object is constituted *as* unity of thought.

But then, what distinguishes actuality from possibility, if the possibility of the thing is completely defined by the totality of its conditions, and the conditions have no existence as conditions outside the thing? Well, what distinguishes them is only reflection itself, which returns from the thing to its conditions to recapitulate the totality of relations that connect the latter. Possibility and actuality are therefore identical, while being distinct only insofar as they constitute two separate moments of modal reflection. Hegel makes this clear as soon as he introduces the category of real possibility:

> Real actuality likewise has *possibility* immediately present *in it*. It contains the moment of the in-itself; but, insofar as it is at first only *immediate* unity, it is in *one* of the determinations of the form, and is thus distinguished, as what is [*als das Seiende*], from the in itself or possibility. (*GW* 11, 386; *S.* 6, 208; *L.* 547)

If real possibility and real actuality were not distinct, that would mean thinking the thing (*die Sache*) and thinking the conditions that constitute it would be identical. Then the absolute necessity of the thing would be thought just by virtue of thinking the thing itself. We are not there

yet. A specific operation of reflection is needed to relate the thing to its own conditions of constitution.

Nevertheless, possibility and actuality are in themselves identical. The same reflection that dissociates the thing in order to think its conditions brings the latter back to the unity of the thing. In other words, to think real possibility is necessarily to think real actuality, i.e. to supersede the immediate, scattered existence of the conditions in order to unify them in the thing that, as a totality, they constitute. Possibility is thus once again defined as contradiction. If possibility is "only" possibility, it ceases to be possibility. It is real possibility only insofar as it is superseded towards actuality.

> But this is not a contradiction arising from comparison; rather, manifold existence is *in itself* [*an sich selbst*] this, to supersede itself and to go to its demise [*zugrunde gehen*], and for this reason it has essentially in itself [*an sich selbst*] the determination of being *merely* possible. (*GW* 11, 387; *S.* 6, 209–210; *L.* 210)

We saw earlier how the contradiction in formal possibility was tied to the inscription of possibility and actuality in a unique movement of reflection. The same is true here. But here, unlike in formal possibility, contradiction has attained the structured, determinate form of the unity of ground and conditions. This is why the relation of possibility and actuality escapes the tautology that characterized formal reflection. In the back-and-forth movement between actuality and possibility, what we have is not the mere flip-flop between determinate existence and formal ground, but a dissection and reconstitution of the object. Possibility is nothing other than actuality itself, dissociated into its elements, the "manifold of determinate being," and actuality is nothing other than possibility returned to determinate unity. What one gets as the result of the movement of reflection is nothing else but what one already had. But the process of constituting content into a totality of determinations is made explicit.

> Thus this movement of the self-superseding real possibility produces *the same moments which are already there*, but now each grows out of the other; consequently in this negation it is also not a *going away* [*ein Übergehen*] but a *coinciding with itself* [*sondern ein Zusammengehen mit sich selb*st]. (*GW* 11, 387; *S.* 6, 210; *L.* 548)

The relation of the possible to the actual analyzed here is nothing like a temporal becoming. I have already warned against any temporal

interpretation of the statement closing the *condition*: "When all the conditions of something [*der Sache*] are present, it enters into existence" (*GW* 11, 321; *S.* 6, 122; *L.* 477). The same caution is all the more in order with the sentence that concludes real possibility: "When all the conditions of a thing [*einer Sache*] are completely present, it enters into actuality" (*GW* 11, 387; *S.* 6, 210; *L.* 548). Hegel's Logic expounds the unity of the thing and its conditions as the fundamental structure in which all things are thought. The temporal becoming of this structure does not belong to the Logic. If it belongs anywhere, it belongs in the system, the *Encyclopedia* (Philosophy of Nature and Philosophy of Spirit). Similarly, the possibility defined here is not the possibility of existence in time, but the possibility of existence as an existence that is thought. This also means that we must not confuse the category "real possibility," which belongs to the Logic, with some notion of probability which concerns the knowledge of things in time.

This distinction seems to me to clarify the "paradox of probability" that G. J. Mure articulates in his explanation of real possibility.[36] This paradox has two aspects. According to the first, I can state as possible in view of present conditions an event that the course of history will show *not* to have been "really possible" since it did not take place. However, recognizing it as not *really* possible, I will continue to affirm that it *was* possible. According to the second aspect of the paradox, that which I can declare really possible is for this reason not only possible, but necessary.

To the first aspect, Hegel's Logic seems to me to allow this response: the paradox comes from the fact that, identifying the *possible* with the *probable*, one satisfies oneself with an indeterminate category of the possible, which refers us to the formally possible. In effect, as Mure notes, it is impossible, before an event, to exhaust the multitude of conditions that might be in play in its actually coming about. In order to affirm that an event is possible, therefore, we are constrained to refer to the infinity of the universe and its laws, which justifies only the thought of the event as "formally possible." The most rigorous determination of *probability*, which belongs to a determinate knowledge, can be defined philosophically only as a *formal* possibility. By contrast – and this is the key to the second aspect of the paradox – having *occurred*, the event itself provides the principle of a totalization of its conditions, and therefore, of the definition of its *real possibility*. We will return shortly to the articulation of the latter with *real necessity*.

But first, let us sum up the main features of real possibility.

We have seen that real possibility is the totality of the conditions unified by the thing whose possibility they are. Real actuality is distinguished from real possibility only by the reflection that dissociates the unity of the thing in order to reconstitute it from its own components. Finally, we have seen that the determination, in the Logic, of the relation between real possibility and real actuality is not the determination of a temporal becoming. It fulfills, in a new and original way, the traditional function of the metaphysical notion of the possible: to clarify the rational ground for the existence of a thing (by distinguishing between its "mere possibility" and its actuality). This clarification leads to the determination of "real necessity," which Hegel identifies with "relative necessity."

To think real possibility is to relate it to real actuality. But to think the transition from real possibility to real actuality, from conditions to the Thing, is to think *real necessity*. The reflection of real possibility, which inescapably relates it to real actuality, is therefore the reflection of real necessity. That which is thought as *really possible* is, through the very same movement, thought as *really necessary*.

> Because in being superseded, [real possibility] is in itself the shock in return [*der Gegenstoß*] of this superseding, it is *real necessity*. (*GW* 11, 388; *S*. 6, 211; *L*. 549)

Here what I called earlier the retrospective character of "real" modal reflection is clearly expressed. Since the thing is already there as an object of thought when its possibility is thought, the possibility is not only determined after the fact, but thinking the possibility of the thing is thereby also thinking its real necessity, since the totality of the conditions was present with the thing from the start.

> Therefore what is really possible can no longer be otherwise; under these conditions and circumstances something else cannot follow. Real possibility and necessity are therefore only *seemingly* different; this is an *identity* which does not only now *become* but is already *presupposed* and is the foundation [*zugrunde liegt*]. (*GW* 11, 388; *S*. 6, 211; *L*. 549)

Why describe this approach as "retrospective," since I denied the modal categories any temporal character? I am defining as retrospective the determination of the "always already there" which is revealed by presupposing reflection. The thing (*Sache*) is *always already* there for

its conditions to be thought, and conversely the conditions are *always already* there for the thing to be thought. Or, more generally, the approach consists in beginning with a thing that is thought to exist in order to reflect the possibility of this existence, which in turn can be determined only by reference to the presupposed existence of the thing itself. But this is not particular to "real" modality. "Formal" modality also started with actuality to return to actuality. However, in that former case we saw in this approach a series of mere tautologies. Here, in contrast, although Hegel maintains that the identity of possibility and actuality and thus the necessity of the thing is presupposed in the thing itself, he does not see in the modal reflection a mere exposition of tautologies. We must explain why.

Modal reflection is always predetermined. The reflection of "real" modality was expounded from the point of view of the Thing as the constituted unity of its own conditions. The reflection of "formal" modality was expounded from the point of view of something immediately given. Thought has a point of view on what is presented to it, from *within* what is presented to it, and this point of view determines in advance the moments of modality. The succession of modal categories is in each case inevitable given the point of view adopted. It does nothing but reflect the structure of thought within the actuality that is thought. This does not necessarily mean that modal categories bring nothing new to the process of reflection. To say that the Thing is "really necessary" is only another way of saying that it is "really possible." But this does not mean one can, like Spinoza, consider possibility and contingency to be mere expressions of our ignorance, to be discarded by a more enlightened mind. For in reflection, *everything* is a mere way of saying (i.e. thinking), there is nothing further at stake in the movement of essence than reflection's capacity to push the explanation of its own determinations to its utmost limits, and thus to constitute all contents as *its own*. It is with respect to this process that the superiority of "real" modality over "formal" modality is manifest. Formal reflection starts from the immediate and returns to the immediate. It remains dominated by contingency, and the determinations through which it passes remain, even at their most unified, external to each other. In contrast, the reflection of "real" modality starts from existence thought as completely determined and returns to completely determined existence. The Thing is thought in its necessity not just by virtue of the fact that it *is* (formal necessity), but by virtue of its constitution as a unity of conditions. It is in the decomposition and recomposition of the Thing by reflection that its necessity is thought.

However, real necessity does not quite escape the contingency that formalism could not overcome. Like that of "formal" modality, the reflection of "real" modality starts from a given (albeit one that is reflected as determined by thought) and returns to this same given. This is why the necessity is only relative.

> But this necessity is at the same time *relative*. For it has a *presupposition* from which it begins, it has its *starting point* in the *contingent*. For the real actual as such is the *determinate* actual, and has first of all its *determinateness* as *immediate being* in the fact that it is a manifold of existing circumstances. (*GW* 11, 388; *S.* 6, 211; *L.* 549)

Because reflection has a presupposition or is conditioned by an exteriority, its moments also retain an exteriority with respect to one another. Necessity is the unique movement through which the thing is brought back to its conditions and the conditions are identified with the thing itself. But this movement is not given with the thing. We have seen that if actuality and possibility are identical in their content, they are distinct as moments of reflection. Thought has to dwell in the thing in order to reveal its possibility and finally make explicit the reflection that constitutes its necessity.

> This *presupposing* [of the Thing] and the *self-returning movement* [from actuality to possibility and from possibility to actuality and real necessity] are still separate, – or *necessity has* not yet *determined itself out of itself to contingency*. (*GW* 11, 388–389; *S.* 6, 212; *L.* 550)

Not only are the conditions contingent, but so is their unity in the Thing. The Thing must be presupposed as constituted in order to be thought necessity. Or more precisely, in the terms of the Logic: reflection of the Thing moves into reflection of its possibility which moves into the reflection of its necessity. But this necessity remains dependent on a given.

> The really necessary is consequently some limited actuality, which because of this limitation is also in another respect *contingent*. (*GW* 11, 389; *S.* 6, 212; *L.* 550)

To reflect in the thing a unity that is reflected as necessary and that nevertheless is simply given: here the proximity between "relative necessity" and Kant's reflective judgment, in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is evident. Now is the time to clarify the import and limits of a comparison I have so far only gestured to.[37]

Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is supposed to be the link between the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*; between the realm of nature and the realm of freedom; between the empirical concepts of the understanding and the legislation of reason. It is supposed to allow us to find in the empirically determined objects some sign of their having their ultimate ground in the intelligible kingdom of ends. This miracle is made possible by reflective judgment, which brings the manifold of empirical determinations in an object back to the unity of concepts. In reflective judgment, the idea of a systematic unity of nature under empirical concepts and empirical laws, a unity according to which nature is as if it had been produced by an intelligent cause, is a concept of reason that functions not merely – as in the *Critique of Pure Reason* – as a regulative principle for the complete unity of concepts of the understanding, but as a condition for the acquisition of any empirical concept or the representation of any empirical law, as well as a condition for thinking of some particular objects in nature as "natural ends," i.e. organisms.

However, reflective judgment cannot make any objective cognitive use of that idea of systematic unity. For, even though we can acquire empirical concepts and the representation of empirical laws only under the supposition of such a unity, nevertheless we have or can have no determinate knowledge of it, or even less of any intelligent cause that might have generated such systematic unity in nature. When an instance of such unity actually presents itself, we can only attribute it to a "happy accident":

> [H]ence we are also delighted (as if relieved of a need) when we encounter such a systematic unity among merely empirical laws, just as if it were a happy accident which happened to favor our aim, even though we necessarily had to assume that there is such a unity, yet without having been able to gain insight into it and to prove it. (5:184)

Richard Kroner, commenting on this passage, notes that in attributing the systematic unity of empirical laws to a "happy accident" (*glücklicher Zufall*), Kant reduces the necessity of reason itself to a mere contingency. For, he says, this supposed "happy accident" is in fact nothing other than "the transcendental necessity, empirically apprehended, of the processes of the understanding."[38] By speaking of a "happy accident," Kroner maintains, Kant veers away from the demonstration he had himself made in the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories. The most profound meaning of the latter was to ground the unity of the

empirical manifold and the universal categories of the understanding in the activity of the understanding. Unity in the empirical object was grounded nowhere else than in the spontaneity of thought. If sensible intuition provided the matter of experience in its a priori forms, it is the understanding and the understanding alone that provided the connections in which the object of experience can be constituted. Although it remained that empirical laws could not be derived from the a priori principles of the understanding, their agreement or their systematic unity must certainly not be attributed to a "happy accident," but to the absolute necessity of the activity of transcendental apperception. Consequently there is no need to attribute it to a purposiveness in nature, if we remember that all unity in nature is the product of transcendental apperception. There is no more purposiveness in the unity of empirical laws than in a priori universal laws. The only purposiveness at work in both cases is the purposiveness of reason as an end for itself. There is no need to hypostasize in a particular object the function that is at work in any thought.[39]

Of course this criticism comes from someone who has not only read Hegel, but who wants to show in Hegel's philosophy the solution to the difficulties of Kant's. When Kroner writes that the agreement of unity and multiplicity is contingent as far as the empirical manifold is concerned, but necessary as far as the unity of the "I think" is concerned, he prepares us for Hegel's transition from "real necessity" to "absolute necessity." "Real necessity" is inseparable from contingency because in it, the thing is considered insofar as it is given and is present to thought *as given*. But taking one step further into reflection shows in this necessity mixed with contingency the absolute necessity of the activity of reflection that posits the object as being nothing other than itself. For his part, Kant does not take the step that would lead him from the contingency of the object to the necessity that lies on the side of the transcendental subject. This is why, instead of being related to the unity of the "I think," the unity outlined in the object by reflective judgment is referred, albeit only for use in "merely reflective" judgment, to a purposive causality.[40] For if unity is considered as *given* in nature, it is in nature or in some independent entity related to nature, outside the intervention of the cognizing subject, that its principle must be found.

The same could already be said of Kant's solution to the Fourth Antinomy of Pure Reason and of Kant's criticism of the Transcendental Ideal (both in the Transcendental Dialectic of the *Critique of Pure Reason*). In the Fourth Antinomy, Kant expounds the insoluble conflict

into which reason falls when, for the existence of the empirical series of things and events in nature, it looks for a condition that is not itself conditioned: an absolutely unconditioned existence. In the Ideal of pure reason, he expounds the illusion into which reason falls when, relating the concept of any existing thing in general to the concept of a totality of possibilities (the totality of its possible determinations), it forms the representation of an absolutely perfect being as the ground of that totality of possible determinations. In both cases, Kant's critical solution is not to reject purely and simply the idea of an unconditioned (unconditioned existence in the first case, or unconditioned ground for the totality of possible determinations in the second case). Rather, it is to deny such an idea any objective validity, i.e. to deny that any actually existing object falls under such representations. The Fourth Antinomy finds its solution in a compromise: the thesis and the antithesis of the antinomy are both dismissed as equally false if they are dogmatic assertions (*There exists* an absolutely necessary being as the ground of the existence of the complete series of conditions / *There exists no* absolutely necessary being as the ground of the existence of the empirical series, there is only the contingent existence of the series itself). Nevertheless, they are endorsed as equally true if, rather than dogmatic assertions about existence, they are taken to express methodological principles of reason (We must not reject the possibility, outside the empirical series of phenomena, of an absolutely necessary being / We must not terminate the series arbitrarily, but continue ever further in the search for the conditions of a given conditioned existence: see A561/B589). For its part, the transcendental Ideal is granted a legitimate use not as the dogmatic supposition of the existence of a transcendent being, but as a regulative idea of what grounds the systematic unity of empirical reality (see A675/B703). In both cases, the representation of the unconditioned (unconditioned existence, unconditioned ground of the unity of empirical reality) expresses nothing other than the demand of the unity of reason that is the highest form of the unity of the "I think."

But a question arises: why not stop here? Why wasn't it enough for the *Critique* to have revealed the true nature of these ideas and denounced the illegitimate hypostasis that occurs when they are supposed to represent an actually existing object? Why reintroduce as legitimate at least the *possibility* of asserting the existence of God, albeit not its dogmatic *assertion*?[41] It is with practical reason, and not speculative reason, that

we might find an answer to such a question. The highest end of practical reason is ultimately the reconciliation of nature and freedom, that is to say, of the empirical given and reason. And here we find once again the situation we encountered in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*: if one supposes the empirical given to be independent of the unity of the "I think," then the only way to unify them again is to suppose *in the empirical*, or in connection with it, a unity homologous to that of the "I think" and yet independent of it. This is what Kant does when he calls upon the existence of God to ground the reconciliation of nature and freedom, of the empirical given and reason.

Here, then, is the outcome of our detour through Kant's critical philosophy. This detour was suggested to us by the analogy between the unity found in the thing, in Hegel's "real modality"; and the unity found in nature, in Kant's explanation of the reflective use of judgment. Just as Hegel says that the unity of conditions in the thing, albeit contingent, is also reflected as "real necessity," so does Kant say that the unity of empirical determinations in an object is contingent, although it is a unity in which reflective judgment recognizes the satisfaction of its own presupposition of a systematic unity of nature under empirical laws. Making use of Richard Kroner's commentary, I anticipated what a Hegelian critique of Kant might be: in looking *in nature* for a principle for the unity of empirical determinations, Kant "forgets" that this unity is none other than that of the "I think." We have found the same "forgetfulness" in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, where it appears even more clearly that it is actually no forgetfulness at all, since Kant explicitly affirms the possibility of hypostasizing what is first reduced to a merely regulative representation of reason. This situation finds its explanation in the central problem of Kantian philosophy, which has been like a leading thread throughout this study: despite the transcendental deduction of the categories which affirms the constitutive role of the unity of the "I think," Kant leaves room for the independence of the sensible object in relation to the forms of thought. One might go so far as to say that there is in Kant a dogmatism with respect to the empirical object. The latter has for Kant an existence independent of thought, although it is only that of a representation. This is why the point of view of God must be reintroduced in order to ensure the agreement of the object and the unity of the "I think."

Here, then, is the most paradoxical result of this situation: Kant's anti-metaphysical cautiousness, which leads him to maintain the

independence of sensibility with respect to the understanding, also leads him to admit at least as possible a hypostasis that Hegel, as we will see, adamantly rejects. For Hegel attributes solely to reflection a unity that Kant attributes to divine intelligence. More precisely, Hegel defines as *absolutely necessary* a unity which is that of reflection in the object (the thing, *die Sache*), or of the thing as a moment in reflection. Kant, in contrast, defines as contingent a unity that is in the object and for which a sufficient ground must be found *in the object*, as opposed to the cognizing subject.

One may object I am going too far in cultivating paradox here. Is it not Hegel who never tires of talking of divine Providence and who writes, precisely on the topic of absolute necessity:

> There is nothing therefore more mistaken than the charge of blind fatalism made against the philosophy of history for the reason that it makes it its task to understand the necessity of what has happened. The philosophy of history thus acquires the meaning of a theodicy; and those who fancy they honor divine providence by excluding necessity from it are really degrading it, by this exclusiveness, to a blind and irrational caprice. (*S.* 8, 290; *E.L.* §147a, 209)

Who, here, hypostasizes the unity of empirical causal series into a transcendent principle? Kant at least only made his hypostasis a *possibility* that remained, from the theoretical standpoint, a regulative principle. Hegel, for his part, does not hesitate to attribute the absolute necessity of "what has happened" to providence.

We certainly need to clarify what Hegel means by "absolute necessity."[42]

Absolute necessity: Hegel with and against Spinoza

To introduce Hegel's "absolute necessity," it will be useful to clarify once again the progression of modal reflection from one moment to the next. We have encountered two sorts of transitions. One is the transition from one category to another inside each figure of reflection: from the actual to the possible, from the possible to the contingent and to the necessary. The other is the transition from one figure of reflection to another: from formal reflection to external reflection, from external reflection to determining reflection.

Let us consider the first progression. It rests on the mutual illumination that is characteristic of determinations of reflection in general. The moment of what is presented to thought, here the *actual*, leads

to the moment of the thought of what is presented, here the *possible*, but the unity of the two is still to be constituted; this unity is what is reflected in the categories of *contingency* and *necessity*. The "is" that joins these determinations expresses the incompletion of each of them when not thought, or reflected, through the other: the actual *is* possible, the possible is only such if it *is* actual, the unity of the possible and the actual is in turn thought to be contingent, then necessary. The complete statement of modal determinations according to Hegel would thus be: to be thought actual is to be thought possible; to be thought possible is to be thought only possible, therefore impossible unless actual, but this means that only the actual is possible, and so the actual, once reflected as such, turns out to be necessary (its contrary is impossible).

For each of the first two stages of modal determination (formal and real), "possible" is the category in which contradiction appears. In "formal" modality, "possibility is . . . in itself [*an sich selbst*] contradiction, or it is *impossibility*" (*S.* 6, 204; *L.* 544). In "real" modality,

> If a possibility is under discussion and its contradiction is to be demonstrated, one need only hold on to the manifold which it contains as its content [*als Inhalt . . . enthält*] or as its conditioned existence, and from this its contradiction is easily discovered. (*GW* 11, 387; *S.* 6, 209; *L.* 548)

"Possible" is the defective category *par excellence*. For it corresponds to the moment of dissociation between being, i.e. the actual, and thought (of being), i.e. the possible. Nothing can fully express the possibility of an actuality except the thought of this actuality itself. The role of the category of "possible" is only to make explicit the thought within actuality. Thus the formal possibility is non-contradiction, for it is the thinkable of a formal reflection. And the real possibility is the manifold of conditions, for it is the thinkable of an external reflection.

This is where the second kind of transition comes into the picture: the transition from one mode of thought to the other. Here the transition is not determined by an incompleteness in the determinations, but by an inadequacy of the method of thought with respect to its immanent goal, which is to characterize the object as completely thought. To reach the appropriate method we are presented, from one figure to the next, with a progress in the "attitudes of thought with respect to objectivity," to take up the expression Hegel uses in the Preliminary Concept of the *Encyclopedia Logic* (*GW* 20, pp. 69, 75, 100; *S.* 8, pp. 93, 106, 148; *E.L.* §§26, 37, 61, pp. 47, 60, 95). Consider for instance the transition from formal necessity to real actuality. Hegel writes:

> This [formal] necessity is *actuality*; but one which [. . .] now has a content. This content, as indifferent identity, contains form too as indifferent, that is to say, as merely *diverse* determinations, and is *manifold* content in general.
>
> This actuality is *real actuality*. (*GW* 11, 385; *S*. 6, 207–208; *L*. 546; Hegel's emphases)

Note the "is" of identity joining formal necessity and real actuality. It expresses the fact that despite the conversion in the mode of thinking, from positing reflection to external reflection, one and the same entity is being thought. To think formal necessity is to be referred back to the object, now presented as a "manifold content." All the modal determinations must then be thought all over again, one after the other: actuality, possibility, contingency, necessity.

The same conversion occurs with the transition to "absolute necessity." This time we must proceed from the consideration of external determinations (the conditions) to the consideration of their unity. This progress is not continuous. Only a genuine conversion in the mode of thinking makes possible the transition from "real necessity" to "absolute actuality" and "absolute necessity." We will now examine this conversion more closely.

Unlike the other two moments, that of "absolute necessity" barely leaves any independent meaning to the determinations of actuality and possibility. For in the concept of absolute necessity, what is reflected is the thing itself (what was described, in the previous modal reflection, as "the really actual"), *and at the same time* the unity of its own conditions (what was earlier "the real possibility"); conversely, what is reflected is the unity of the conditions *at the same time as* it is the thing constituted by this unity of conditions. Nevertheless, reflection does tarry for a while in "absolute actuality" and "absolute possibility." This lingering in the earlier modal categories (albeit now qualified as "absolute") does not merely respond to a desire for symmetry on Hegel's part. Rather, it helps to emphasize the way in which absolute necessity absorbs in itself not only those previous categories, but also the two previous modes of reflection in which each of them were thought.

We have left modal reflection in the determination of "real necessity." The latter is the reflection of the unity of the thing and its conditions. We have seen that this necessity is affected with contingency as long as it has a contingent presupposition: the presupposition of immediate existence, the manifold of conditions. The conversion into the mode

of thinking which allows the transition to absolute actuality consists in no longer considering on the one hand the thing, on the other hand the dispersed manifold of its conditions, and finally the unity of the two sides, but rather considering *the unity itself* as the actuality to be reflected. In other words, what is clarified is the approach that was only implicit in "real necessity": considering *the thing itself* as the ground of the unity of its conditions: "This actuality [...] is posited as absolute, that is, as being *itself the unity of itself and possibility*" (*GW* 11, 389; *S.* 6, 213; *L.* 550–551).

But this unity is as formal as actuality was in the first moment of modal reflection: it is simply reflected as determinate, or "posited." With respect to it, the moments of positing reflection can be rehearsed all over again. Its possibility is a merely formal possibility, which is sanctioned by a contingent actuality: why *this* unity of conditions rather than another? No deduction of it was given; it only happens to be there. Thus, concludes Hegel, "real necessity not only *in itself* [*an sich*] contains contingency; contingency also *becomes* in it [...]." (*GW* 11, 390; *S.* 6, 213; *L.* 551; Hegel's emphases). The contingency that real necessity contains "in itself" is that of immediate existence, of conditions. That which becomes in it is that of the unity of conditions, or absolute actuality. These two contingencies are really one: they reflect the dependence of reflection with respect to a *presupposition* or an *exteriority*.

> This *becoming*, as exteriority, is itself only the *in-itself* [*das Ansichsein*] of such necessity, because it is only an *immediate determinateness*. (*GW* 11, 390; *S.* 6, 213; *L.* 551)

So far we have a situation that, translated into the Hegelian terms of modal reflection, is analogous to that which Kant expounded in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*: there is a necessity of the thing, which is no other than the necessity of the unity of its empirical conditions. But *both* the conditions *and* their unity are themselves contingent, in that they are not rationally deduced, but ultimately just found as given.

However, this is where Hegel's conception of reflection comes into play. When analyzing "positing reflection," I showed how the unity of "positing" and "presupposing" results in a radical critique of the presupposed as a merely "given" (e.g. Kant's sensible given). This does not mean that the idea of a given that *in some respect* is not yet thought does not have any reality in the figures of thought, or that it has no truth. Nevertheless, there is no "mere" given. There is a *Vorhandensein*, determinations that reflection finds in itself, whose origin it would be

at pains to account for and explain, or whose determinations it would be at pains to unify. But what is found is, on the one hand, *always already* thought; on the other hand, *re*thought and consequently transformed into thought just as soon as it is "found." This is what happens with the relation of real necessity and its conditions.

> The *presupposition* which necessity had is its own positing. For, as real necessity, it is the superseding of actuality in possibility, and conversely; it is the *simple conversion* of one of these moments into the other [...]. But thus it is *actuality*; of such a kind, however, that it is only as this simple coincidence of form with itself. Hence its negative positing of these moments is itself the *presupposing* or the positing *of itself as superseded*, or of *immediacy*. (*GW* 11, 390; *S.* 6, 214; *L.* 551)

The thing and its conditions are thought as actuality and possibility in the very same movement of thought in which real necessity is thought. It is not the thing and its conditions that posit real necessity, but the latter that posits the former. It is therefore necessity itself that posits itself in the thing and the conditions: that posits itself as immediacy – and therefore as contingency.

Consider again Hegel's definition of real necessity. Real necessity is nothing but the mutual reflection of the multiplicity of conditions and the unity of the thing. Insofar as it is this reflection, it presupposes the conditions, and even the thing itself in which the conditions are thought. But it also posits what it presupposes. The activity of reflection preexists the terms between which it establishes the unity of real necessity. In other words, it is the unifying aim of thought that establishes *as* thing and conditions the thing and its conditions, and establishes the mutual reflection of each side into the other as real necessity. This is because, as was established already at the beginning of the Doctrine of Essence, any thought-determination is constituted by a unifying aim of thought. What is new here is that the unifying aim is finally realized in its other, the unity of particular determinations. Not only in the sense that this unity is accomplished – we had reached that point already with the chapter on Essential Relation that concludes Section 2 of the Doctrine of Essence (*GW* 11, 353; *S.* 6, 164; *L.* 512) – but because what is now reflected is the very fact that this unity *is* accomplished by virtue of reflection alone.

> Thus *form* in its realization has penetrated all its differences; it has made itself transparent and is, as *absolute necessity*, only this *simple self-identity of being in its negation*, or in *essence*. (*GW* 11, 390; *S.* 6, 214; *L.* 551)

It is not the thing that is absolutely necessary or absolute necessity. "The thing" is an overly substantial determination of thought, one that is massively there. What is absolutely necessary is the movement of reflection that makes possible thinking the thing in the unity of its conditions, as really necessary.

However, absolute necessity is not foreign to the thing. It is not a movement of reflection that somehow moves around in the pores of the thing while leaving it untouched. Absolute necessity is the modality of the thing insofar as it has revealed itself to be nothing other than reflection, or the modality of reflection insofar as it is fully realized in the thing. Here perhaps a comparison with Kant will once again be instructive. In the Discipline of Pure Reason, Kant reproaches Hume for having confused the modality of empirical, contingent objects with the modality of the causal relation between objects, which is a priori necessary. Why this confusion? Because Hume thought that the idea of causality was itself the result of the constant conjunction between empirical objects. But, Kant says, the causal concept is a priori; it makes possible the representation of objects and their order in time, rather than its representation resulting from the representation of regular correlations between objects and their states. That any empirical instantiation of the causal law is contingent (depends on correlations contingently given, not a priori deduced) does not prevent the law itself from being absolutely necessary: the fact that the instantiation is empirical does not preclude the law itself from being a priori (A765/B793). Of course, as I showed already, the distinction between a priori and a posteriori can hardly have a clear-cut meaning for Hegel.[43] Nevertheless, Hegel's explanation of "absolute necessity" can be compared to Kant's defense of the a priori necessity of the law of causality. For Kant, causal connection is nothing other than one of the forms of a priori synthesis of the understanding. For Hegel, the unity of the thing and its conditions is nothing other than the activity of form, or rather, form as the activity of reflection and ultimately (as will be shown in Book 2 of the *Science of Logic*), activity of the concept.

The notion of *activity* (*Tätigkeit*) does not appear explicitly in Hegel's explanation of absolute necessity in the *Science of Logic*, but it plays an important role in the exposition of the modal categories in the *Encyclopedia Logic*. Here, necessity is characterized by three "moments": the thing, conditions, and activity. Necessity is said to be *external* insofar as these three terms are external to one another. Clearly, this "external necessity" corresponds to what in the *Science of Logic* is called *relative*

necessity. "External necessity" turns into "absolute necessity" when *activity* or *form* cancels its own presupposition and the thing becomes a self-positing unity (*GW* 20, 168–169; *S.* 8, 292–294; *E.L.* §§148–149, 211–212). The notion of "activity" is defined in terms that clearly make it the anticipation of the concept. On the one hand, activity is "a man, a character"; on the other hand it is "the movement which translates the conditions into the thing [*in die Sache*] and the latter into the former" (*GW* 20, 168; *S.* 8, 293, *E.L.* §148, 212). Similarly, we have seen the concept defined on the one hand as an "individual personality," and on the other hand as a universal movement of thought, "pure self-relating unity."[44] "Activity" thus describes the same function of unity in thought that we will find again in "the concept." At the stage of "absolute necessity," it has almost accomplished the absorption within itself of the external determinations (the thing [*die Sache*] and its conditions) which will be complete at the stage of "the concept." The absorption is only almost complete, however, for a name remains to be given to the unity, or rather the unity needs to be determinately thought *as such*, so that it absorbs all other determinations. "Absolute necessity" is the reflection of any unity as a unity that is thought, and which consequently has the same necessity as thought itself. But the concept is the *determination* of the unity that is thought, a determination that assigns all other determinations their place and meaning. Such a determination of unity is, for example: the State, life, the I, spirit.[45]

In the Addition to §156 of the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel gives an example of the transition to such a point of view of determinate unity. The transition is from "reciprocal relation," which still belongs to "absolute necessity," where the unity is only implicit, to "concept." The example is that of the history of the Spartan nation.

> To make, for example, the ethical life [*die Sittlichkeit*] of the Spartan nation [*des spartanischen Volkes*] the effect [*die Wirkung*] of its Constitution, and its Constitution conversely the effect of its ethical life, may no doubt be in a way correct; nevertheless such an approach yields no ultimate satisfaction, for in this way in fact neither the ethical life nor the Constitution of the nation are comprehended [*begriffen werden*]. This can happen only by acknowledging both the ethical life and the Constitution, and also all the other particular aspects which manifest the life and history of the Spartan nation, as grounded in this concept. (*S.* 8, 302; *E.L.* §156a, 219)

The concept of a nation is the thought of the higher unity that binds the Constitution and the ethical life. That unity, which was always already the ground of their mutual determination, is now itself, through the concept "nation," an object of thought. The *activity* that thinks and realizes the reciprocal determination of Constitution and ethical life is the very *activity* that thinks and realizes the concept "nation."

Here again a comparison with Kant is in order, to help us better understand how absolute necessity in Hegel is at once subjective and objective. It is subjective in that it is the necessity of the activity of reflection. It is objective in that it is the sole source of necessity in the object. At the same time, we see how large the distance is that separates Kant from Hegel. For Kant, the necessity of the causal relation between two objects that are themselves contingent, or the necessity of reciprocal action, does not erase the radical contingency of the empirical determinations of the object. The necessity of the law is a priori necessity, as opposed to the a posteriori, and thus contingent, character of the object. Even if I had attained a principle of unity as fundamental as that of the *nation*, I would still need to explain by what miraculous conjunction of events such a unity is constituted outside thought, since – and we always come back to this point – *what is thought* exists outside thought. For Hegel, on the contrary, the absolute necessity of the activity of reflection is sufficient to define the necessity of the thing itself, which has no existence or meaning outside the activity of reflection. If what is presented to thought is actively thought in its totality, then it is thought as absolutely necessary, or it has the absolute necessity of its own thought of itself. Hegel writes: "Absolute Necessity is thus the *reflection or form of the absolute*" (*GW* 11, 391; *S.* 6, 215; *L.* 552; Hegel's emphasis).

This statement takes us back to Spinoza, to whom Chapter 1 of Section 3 ("The Absolute") was devoted (see *GW* 11, 370–379; *S.* 6, 187–200; *L.* 530–541). This new reference to Spinoza makes it clear that it is far from Hegel's intention to underestimate absolute necessity as a modality of the thing itself, of actuality itself. The Spinoza-theme is here the counterpoint to the Kant-theme. But Hegel also takes his revenge on what he has called the "external reflection" that characterizes Spinoza's standpoint on substance (cf. *GW* 11, 376; *S.* 6, 195; *L.* 537). Hegel reconstructs the relation of substance to its modes in Spinoza's philosophy in terms of his own view of absolute necessity as the modal determination of the activity of reflection. It would be fastidious to

expound in detail this reconstruction, which is extremely detailed and systematic: the final paragraphs of "absolute necessity" can be read as the translation into Hegelian idiom of a few citations from Spinoza's Ethics. Although the reference to Spinoza is not explicit, it is indispensable to understanding Hegel's text.[46] Hegel seems to argue that his definition of absolute necessity respects the character of Spinoza's substance but reveals its true nature, and prepares the transition to the category of substance which will be expounded at the beginning of the next chapter (see *GW* 11, 394; *S.* 6, 219; *L.* 555, Chapter 3 of Section 3, "Absolute relation." The first relation, expounded in the first division of this chapter, is "the relation of substantiality").

Here I shall consider the two main moments of this reconstruction.

(1) Hegel first argues that the point of view of absolute necessity is a break from the point of view of real necessity, i.e. from the relation between real actuality and real possibility. There is no commensurability between the two points of view, and a conversion in the mode of thinking is needed to go from one to the other. In Spinoza, this is the conversion from "knowledge of the second kind" to "knowledge of the third kind," i.e. from discursive knowledge of the modes to intuitive knowledge of the infinite substance.[47] In Hegel, it is the conversion from "external reflection" to "determining reflection," from "relative necessity" to "absolute necessity." This is why absolute necessity is said to be "blind": nothing in the "free actualities" that are the modes reveals the universal intelligible connection one has access to by converting to the higher mode of reflection. Thus their relations have the appearance of contingency.

> Necessity as *essence* is concealed in this *being*; contact between these actualities appears therefore as an empty exteriority; the actuality of *one in the other* is *only* possibility, *contingency*. (*GW* 11, 391; *S.* 6, 216; *L.* 552)

(2) However, once the conversion into the higher mode of thinking has been achieved, absolute necessity appears for what it is: the true essence of these "free actualities."

> But this *contingency* is rather absolute necessity; it is the *essence* of those free, inherently necessary [*an sich notwendigen*] actualities. [...] Their *essence* ... will break forth in them, and reveal what *it* is and what *they* are. (*GW* 11, 391–392; *S.* 6, 216; *L.* 553)

As is often the case, the more exoteric exposition of the Additions to the *Encyclopedia Logic* makes explicit the reference to Spinoza in the

"revelation" of absolute necessity, and even more importantly, makes explicit the connection between the revelation of absolute necessity and freedom.

> The process of necessity is such that it overcomes the rigid externality which it first had and reveals its internal nature. It then appears that the members, linked to one another, are not really foreign to each other, but only elements of *one* whole, each of them, in its connection with the other, being, as it were, at home, and united with itself [*mit sich selbst zusammengeht*]. In this way, necessity is transfigured into freedom–not the freedom that consists in abstract negation, but freedom concrete and positive. [. . .] Of course necessity, *qua* necessity, is not yet freedom: but freedom has necessity as its presupposition, and contains it as superseded [*aufgehoben*] within itself [*in sich*]. [. . .] In short man has the highest degree of self-standing [*Selbständigkeit*] when he knows himself to be completely determined by the absolute Idea, a conscience and conduct Spinoza called *Amor intellectualis Dei.* (*S.* 8, 303–304; *E.L.* §158a, 220)

From absolute necessity to freedom, we have gone straight to the result: the revelation of absolute necessity is at the same time the "transfiguration" or "superseding" of necessity and the advent of freedom. If it weren't for this obviously Hegelian term of "superseding" this would be the most Spinozist tone that Hegel ever adopted.

It is time to retrace our steps and reconstruct the steps that led Hegel to this point. Otherwise the reference to Spinoza, instead of helping us understand Hegel's argument, would only cloud the issue.

Earlier I proposed to formulate the parallel between Hegel and Spinoza in the following terms: for Spinoza, absolute necessity is the modality of *natura naturata* (the infinite sequence of modes) insofar as it is identical to *natura naturans* (the absolutely infinite substance). For Hegel, absolute necessity is the modality of thought thought (real actuality) as identical to thinking thought (form, reflection). This parallel can now be explained more precisely. When Hegel writes, in the text I cited earlier, that "the essence (of these free actualities) will break forth in them," *essence* does not mean a more profound ontological determination which a conversion of thought would finally allow us to apprehend adequately. Essence is not a "*natura naturans*" existing in itself and by itself in the infinity of its attributes, among which the attribute of thought. Essence is the reflexive movement which constitutes itself as identical to what it reflects, as well as constitutes what it reflects as identical to itself. When this identity is made conscious of itself, the category of substance receives its true meaning, "the

identity of being with itself in its negation" (*GW* 11, 392; *S.* 6, 217; *L.* 553) or "the ultimate unity of essence and being" (*GW* 11, 394; *S.* 6, 219; *L.* 555). Finally,

> Substance as this identity of seeming [*des Scheinens*] is the totality of the whole and comprehends accidentality; and accidentality is the whole of Substance. (*GW* 11, 395; *S.* 6, 220; *L.* 556)

Substance, for Hegel, is reflection as substance, or substance as reflection. This point of view of totality on itself is "the principle of Spinoza's philosophy" (*S.* 8, 295; *E.L.* §151a, 213). But it is also the first of the Kantian categories of relation. There is no other unity of nature than that of reflection, as in Kant there is no other unity than that of transcendental apperception. For Hegel, this unity is thought in its generality in the relation of substantiality, specified in the relation of causality, realized in the relation of reciprocal action, which finally leads us to think unity for itself and to constitute the thought objects in self-sufficient, self-explanatory totalities. As we saw, Hegel gave "the Spartan nation" as an example of such a self-explanatory, self-reflecting totality. It is only at the end of his exposition of those three relations[48] that Hegel speaks of freedom. The three relations are the form of the absolute, in which totality is not only recognized as a unity that is thought, but determined as a specific structure of the whole thus thought. Jean Hyppolite gives a masterful expression of this digestion of Spinoza's substance in Hegel's *Science of Logic*:

> The Absolute is not thought anywhere else than in the phenomenal world. Absolute thought thinks itself in our thought. In our thought, being presents itself as thought and as sense. And Hegel's dialectical logic, as the logic of philosophy, is the expression of this doctrine of complete immanence which Spinoza had not been able to realize.[49]

Freedom is the result of the movement of self-reflection of the phenomenal world. We must be attentive to the way in which Hegel defines it. We have seen, successively: "Necessity is transfigured into freedom" (*S.* 8, 303–304; *E.L.* §158a, 220; cf. above). "Freedom presupposes necessity, and contains it as a superseded element in itself" (*ibid.*). Hegel also says: "The concept is the truth of necessity, which it contains in suspension in itself; just as, conversely, necessity is the concept implicit. Necessity is blind only so long as it is not understood" (*S.* 8, 290; *E.L.* §147a, 209).

This last statement is echoed in Engels, in a sense that is probably more Spinozist than Hegelian: "Freedom is the intellection of necessity."[50] This simplified version of Hegel's thought is interesting for the misreadings to which it lends. It will allow us to clarify *a contrario* how to understand the statements I just cited. In the version popularized by Engels, Hegel's conception risks being understood in the following way: necessity exists outside of thought. And the thought of necessity, the comprehension of necessity, is freedom. On the one hand there is necessity, "objective" necessity for good measure; on the other, thought. But this is not Hegel's view. Hegel's view demands that absolute necessity itself be defined in the non-Spinozist way that I tried to describe. Absolute necessity is the absolute necessity of *thought that designs necessity in things*. As soon as this necessity is recognized as such, it becomes freedom. What freedom? The freedom of this same inexorable thought that is the source of all necessity. Freedom of the concept, freedom as concept. Let us try this other formulation. There is no necessity before it is thought. For necessity is nothing other than the reflection of itself. But necessity reflected as such is no longer necessity. It is the freedom of the self-developing concept.

Here again, the reference to Spinoza is to be considered in its full dimension. The freedom of the concept is a self-determination as ineluctable, as inexorable as the freedom of Spinoza's God.[51] In this regard, nothing is further from Hegel's view than a philosophy of the historical subject. The freedom of the concept is not the freedom of the historical agent who "chooses" to interpret the event in such and such a way. And yet, it is the freedom of a thought, realized in historical agents, that creates its object in the very process of thinking it. No one ever carried further nor with more ferocious systematicity than Hegel the conviction that what truly is, the thing itself (*die Sache selbst*) is only insofar as it is thought (where "thought" is the past participle: the thing is thought = one thinks the thing; and it is also the substantive: it is the essence of the thing that it is, itself, thought). Where the *Sache*, as thought, actively carries, and carries with inexorable necessity, the activity of thinking beyond what was previously thought, and thus actual.

Hegel's treatment of "actuality" thus leads us to the threshold of the Doctrine of the Concept. What has it shown? It has shown that when thought reflects being in the unity of its determinations, what it reflects is no other than itself. The unity of essence and being is the unity of thought with what is seemingly other than itself, but is gradually revealed as being what it is by virtue of the unifying function

of reflection and its essential determinations. When that unity is fully reflected, and thus realized, then the Subjective Logic or Doctrine of Concept expounds how the unity of thought orders all (thought) reality.

The project of philosophy cannot be that of traditional metaphysics, whose twists and turns the Objective Logic espoused in order better to transform it into a Logic of Being-that-is-thought. Rather, the project of philosophy should now be a Logic of the Concept, showing how the unifying function of thought produces the True and the Good, that is, the conformity of everything that is, to thought.[52] This project could be ironic. It is not, no more than is ironic Hegel's statement that "to conceive of the necessity of what has happened" is to grant history "the meaning of a theodicy" (*S.* 8, 290; *E.L.* §147a, 209; cf. above). We now see what meaning Hegel's Logic confers to this statement. Necessity can be defined only from the point of view of the thought that provides the principle of unity of existing events and states of affairs or "actuality." To look for such a principle of unity is the opposite of a "blind fatalism," for it is to introduce the order of thought into a thing (*Sache*) which, without thought, has no order of any sort, but which, existing only through thought, "necessarily" has an order, which is that of thought itself.

Let us then take up the different moments of modality again, following the progressive-regressive order of Hegel's Logic. The *concept*, that is reason thinking itself in things, is, in the order of explanation that we have seen at work, the last figure of thought to reveal itself. But, at the very moment when it reveals itself and thinks itself for itself, it is also revealed that *it was through it* that the preceding figures were thought. The absolute necessity of *activity* is no other than the concept that seeks itself in things. Now, it is through the absolute necessity of *activity* that both relative necessity and even this mere contingency that is formal necessity are thought. This is why Hegel writes that "absolute necessity is [...] the truth into which actuality and possibility as such return, as do formal and real necessity" (*GW* 11, 391; *S.* 6, 215; *L.* 552). The kind of necessity ("formal," or "real," or "absolute") that is revealed in things depends on the degree to which the concept is present and active in those things. Hegel does not deny contingency.[53] On the contrary, as we have seen, he takes such denial to belong to a merely *formal* reflection. However, whatever the degree of unity of thought realized in things, and therefore whatever the type of necessity one can reflect in them (and, as long as things preserve a resistance with respect to thought, necessity is at most *relative*), *all* necessity is thought only in and

through the concept, that is, through a unified activity of thinking that determines what is thought through it.

This is why, finally, to come back to our starting point, "What is rational is actual and what is actual is rational." There is no actuality that is not, in one way or another, pervaded by the activity of the concept. And that alone is fully, truly, "absolutely" actual, which is thoroughly constituted by that activity: spiritual substance.[54]

CONCLUSION

At the outcome of Hegel's chapter on Actuality, we found in the foreground the notion of activity, *Tätigkeit*.

This notion alone would merit a study taking into account all the aspects and moments of Hegel's system. Within the limits of the present study, I compared it to the activity of synthesis of the "I think" as it finds a place in Kant's critical philosophy. I showed that the activity that, in the last chapter of the Doctrine of Essence, reveals itself in absolute necessity, is the very activity of the concept, that is to say that of the "I think" as it is redefined by Hegel. Hegel's exposition of modal categories thus opens the way to the Doctrine of the Concept.

"The Concept" is certainly not the end point of the Logic. On the contrary it is only the starting point of the "positively dialectical" part of the Logic, the Subjective Logic.[1] My study stops therefore at the point where, for Hegel, the Logic will finally find its true content, speculative rather than merely critical. In the Subjective Logic, the task will be to show how the world in all its guises bears the mark of the unity of the *I think*. The transition from Subjectivity (Section 1 of the Subjective Logic) to Objectivity (Section 2) will show how the concept confers its unity on the world. After having thus projected the concept towards the world, the Logic will then bring it back to the pre-objective dynamic in virtue of which the concept generates the unity of the world: Section 3 of the Subjective Logic will show that the concept, the unity of an "I think" that is at work in any thought of objects in the world, is itself rooted in the original unity of thought and the world that is the Idea.[2] Thus we will have come full circle, from the immediate determinations of the world as it is "given" (being) to the reflection of this given as structured by thought (The Doctrine of Essence), to the rooting of the unity of thought within what it thinks (the Doctrine of the Concept).

The *Science of Logic* will have revealed in the structure of the world what the *Phenomenology* revealed in the experience of consciousness: the world appears and is thought as it appears and is thought by virtue of an activity of thought that takes root in a vital process that is both natural and historical. If there is an absolute necessity of the structure of things, it is therefore in virtue of the activity that constitutes them as things. This conclusion of the exposition of modal categories in the doctrine of essence represents to my mind the epitome of Hegel's critical position with respect to metaphysics.

Let us compare one more time Hegel's position to Kant's. With Kant, modality was defined no longer from the point of view of God, but from the point of view of the cognizing subject. If modality, for Kant, is a determination of objects, it is merely insofar as objectivity exists only through constitutive subjectivity. To say that a thing, a state of things or an event is necessary is to say that in the objective sequences determined by our cognitions (in the unity of our experience), it is determined as necessary. This necessity is only *relative* however, for it is the necessity of an existence that is always conditioned by another existence, without any possibility of supposing an end to the series of conditions. We have seen how this "relative" or "hypothetical" necessity is redefined in Hegel's "real" or "external" necessity. What is "really necessary" for Hegel is the unity and singularity of the thing, for which we necessarily suppose ("posit" and "presuppose") a totality of conditions although we cannot determine that totality through an a priori process of thought. But Hegel takes an extra step. He maintains that however dependent on the contingency of the given "conditions," the structure of the world and of the unities that are determined in it are absolutely necessary.

To affirm jointly that the world is what it is only by virtue of an *activity* and that this activity grounds the absolute necessity of the structure of the world seems to me the most strongly original aspect of Hegel's "ontology." Why these scare quotes around "ontology"? Because we must not lose sight of the fact that Hegel's "ontology" is one only in a very peculiar sense. The *Science of Logic* is not a doctrine of being qua being, it is a doctrine of being as being thought. Moreover, in its critical part, the Logic proposes not *one* ontology, but *ontologies*, in the plural, determined each time by the different "attitudes of thought relative to objectivity." The three moments of reflection of the Doctrine of Essence delimit the field of possible positions in which any ontology unfurls: rational metaphysics, empiricism and critical philosophy, dialectic of reflection that will find its completion in a speculative dialectic. According to

Hegel, there is no other choice but these three, and none of them, even the "dialectical" choice, is true in itself. Each takes on its meaning and truth only when being assigned its proper place in the whole logic, that is, in the sequence of the possible determinations of being (as being thought).

But, one might object, does not the Doctrine of the Concept represent, for its part, a return to a non-critical metaphysics? Are we not returning with it to a triumphant rationalism, deploying the self-exposition of the concept in being? It seems to me that such a reading is possible only if one first isolates the Doctrine of the Concept from what precedes it. Only if we forget the Objective Logic and the radical critique of dogmatic ontology that it produced, can we make of the Subjective Logic the self-deployment of a rational essence immanent to a dogmatically presupposed real. Does Hegel himself escape such forgetfulness? In particular, does he escape it when the concept is deployed in the whole system? Perhaps not, and this is why I make no claim to "saving" Hegel at all cost from the charge of dogmatic rationalism. But conversely, one may wonder if a rereading of Hegel's system in light of the whole movement of the Logic rather than merely the structure provided by the concept, wouldn't produce critical effects on the scale of the radicalization of the transcendental enterprise expounded in the Logic. Answering this question would require a study of far greater magnitude than that proposed in this essay. It is not impossible that it would bring into new light the position occupied by Hegel in modern philosophy.

PART II

POINT OF VIEW OF MAN OR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

5

POINT OF VIEW OF MAN OR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. KANT AND HEGEL ON CONCEPT, JUDGMENT AND REASON

There is something quite paradoxical in Hegel's presentation of Kant's critical system in the first part of his 1802 article *Faith and Knowledge*. On the one hand, Hegel praises Kant for having expressed the "true idea of reason" in his *Critique of Pure Reason* and his *Critique of Judgment*. On the other hand, he describes the so-called "pure practical reason" expounded in the *Critique of Practical Reason* as resulting from a "complete trampling down of reason."[1] More surprising still, it seems that in effect, Hegel sees an anticipation of his own notion of reason in those explanations of *judgment*, in Kant's first and third *Critiques*, where our discursive abilities are presented as inseparable from sensibility (synthetic a priori judgments in the first *Critique*, aesthetic and teleological judgments in the third *Critique*). By contrast, he considers as a destruction of reason what Kant took to be its purest and highest use: its practical use in the autonomous determination of the will, as described in the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* and in the second *Critique*.

What is the motivation for this peculiar appropriation of Kant's critical system? The beginning of an answer to this question can be found already in Hegel's early theological writings, most notably, *The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate*. There Hegel proclaimed the superiority of the moral teaching of Jesus (whose principle was love as the expression of life) over Kantian morality which teaches the bondage of inclinations and sensibility by reason and the moral law.[2] Hegel's subsequent effort, in the Jena period to which *Faith and Knowledge* belongs, was to sustain his opposition to Kantian moral and metaphysical dualism. But now he would do this, not by appealing to feeling or religious belief, but by developing a philosophical system that reaped the benefits of the Kantian Copernican Revolution while unifying what Kant divides: reason and sensibility, thought and being, freedom and necessity.

It is important to keep in mind this initial motivation in order to understand the apparent reversal in the conception of reason which I have just described. When Hegel finds "the true idea of reason" announced in Kant's explanation of synthetic a priori judgments or in Kant's analysis of teleological and aesthetic judgments, it is because he sees in these elements of the critical system the beginning of what is needed to correct Kant's false conception of reason, a false conception which is most apparent in Kant's characterization of *practical* reason. This means, in turn, that the demands Hegel makes on practical philosophy, and the fundamental mistake he wants to overcome in Kant's practical philosophy, govern his reading of Kant's theory of judgment in both the first and third *Critiques*. If this is correct, then even though Hegel devotes very little time to Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* in his exposition of the critical system in *Faith and Knowledge* (his criticism of Kant's practical philosophy is in fact developed more fully in the part of this paper devoted to Fichte), coming to terms with it is at the heart of every one of his moves with respect to the other two *Critiques*.

My first goal in this chapter is to show just this: one can understand Hegel's appropriation and transformation of Kant's philosophy only if one considers Hegel's relation to all three *Critiques* taken together. One should not consider on the one hand Hegel's reading of Kant's theoretical philosophy, on the other hand Hegel's reading of Kant's practical philosophy, and finally his reading of Kant's theory of reflective judgment. Hegel's reading is a reorganization of the critical system as a whole. It starts with a demand for a new type of moral philosophy. It goes on with a search for the relevant metaphysics, for which Hegel finds the key concepts in Kant's third *Critique*. And it is crowned by a reinterpretation of Kant's *magnum opus*: the *Critique of Pure Reason*. This is admittedly not the order in which the critical system is presented in *Faith and Knowledge*: with only a few exceptions, Hegel's exposition mainly follows the chronological sequence of the three *Critiques*. Nevertheless, I hope to show that following the systematic order I have indicated is the best way to understand what exactly Hegel does with Kant's system.

As it happens, following this order also helps clarify Hegel's appropriation of three key terms in Kant's general logic and in his transcendental logic, which become key terms in Hegel's speculative logic: concept, judgment, and reason. In *Faith and Knowledge* Hegel calls *concept* what Kant called *pure reason* and most notably, pure *practical* reason. He calls *reason*, on the other hand, Kant's *intuitive understanding* as expounded in

the *Critique of Judgment*. And he calls *judgment*, or "absolute judgment," what Kant called, in the first *Critique*, synthetic a priori judgment, meanwhile giving a very idiosyncratic interpretation of Kant's question: "How are synthetic a priori judgments possible?"[3]

Of course, it would be a mistake to think that *Faith and Knowledge* gives us a definitive view of Hegel's appropriation of the Kantian vocabulary. What it does give us, however, is an indispensable indication of the shifts in context and meaning which Hegel imposes upon Kant's logical terms. Keeping these shifts in mind is of primary importance for understanding Hegel's mature philosophy, and most of all, for assessing the change of scenery when one moves from Kantian (transcendental) to Hegelian (speculative) logic. I shall argue that we should take Hegel at his word when he claims to have used Kant against Kant, and to have built upon those aspects in Kant's philosophy which pointed the way towards restoring "knowledge of God" over the mere "point of view of man." But I shall also argue that Kant's philosophy provided grounds to make the reverse move: to use Kant against Kant and make it the goal of philosophy to come to terms with the "point of view of man" rather than with "knowledge of God." These grounds can be found in those very aspects of Kant's thought on which Hegel built his own case: Kant's theory of judgment, and the unity of sensibility and intellect in the first and third *Critiques*.

So, in this chapter I will offer an elucidation of the three terms: concept, reason, and judgment, in Hegel's confrontation with Kant in *Faith and Knowledge*. I then propose some tentative conclusions about the overall import of this confrontation.

Hegel's concept, and Kant's pure reason

Kant, Jacobi, and Fichte, the three leading characters in *Faith and Knowledge*, have in common, according to Hegel's presentation of their philosophies, that they hold thought and reality to be insuperably divided. They are, however, dissatisfied with this division, and each of their philosophical systems is a particular expression of the need to overcome it. For each of them, this need should be answered by reaching beyond the empirical given to a higher reality where thought and being are one. But for all of them, such a task is in the end impossible, or at least reserved for feeling and belief rather than knowledge and reason. Reality remains a given which is ultimately opaque to knowledge and resistant to self-determining, free agency.

Kant was the first to have expressed this opposition in its purest form. He defined as *pure reason* thought insofar as it is completely independent from the empirical given (it does not owe either its form or its content to it) and is even opposed to it (in its practical use, it determines ends for action which demand the overcoming of empirical desires and motivations). But his "pure reason" should really be called *concept*, according to Hegel's terminology:

> The concept has presented itself in its highest abstraction as so-called pure reason. (*GW* 4, 318; *S.* 2, 292; *Faith*, 59)
>
> [In Kantian philosophy], the absolute concept, which is simply for itself as practical reason, is the highest objectivity in the realm of what is finite [*im Endlichen*], postulated absolutely as ideality in and for itself. (*GW* 4, 231; *S.* 2, 96; *Faith*, 62)
>
> [Kantian philosophy] gives the name *reason* to the *concept*. (*GW* 4, 325; *S.* 2, 301; *Faith*, 67)
>
> [Kantian philosophy] makes of this empty concept absolute reason, theoretical as well as practical. (*GW* 4, 326; *S.* 2, 303; *Faith*, 68)

It is clear from these texts that Hegel gives a very unusual meaning to the term "concept." First, he seems to be calling *concept*, indifferently, the so-called "faculty" of reason, its activity, and the intentional correlate of this activity: for instance, concept is (1) practical reason *as* (2) the activity of moral reasoning *which is manifested as* (3) the moral law. Or again, concept is (1) theoretical reason *as* (2) the activity of system-building *which is manifested* in (3) a system of objective knowledge.[4]

Second, if *concept* is to be identified with Kant's "pure reason," it is a holistic mode of thinking. This was apparent in Kant's own presentation of practical reason: thinking the moral law is all at once thinking (willing) the law, thinking (willing) each individual human being as "not only a means, but also an end in itself," and thinking (willing) the world as a kingdom of ends.[5] Similarly, the specific function of reason in the theoretical domain is to produce for the "distributive use" of the understanding in cognition the form of a system: of a complete whole of interrelated cognitions (cf. A582/B610; A647/B675). Hegel's concept, then, takes up this holistic function of Kant's pure reason. In this sense, it should be distinguished both from what was called *concept* in Kant's general logic ("general and reflected representation")[6] and from Kant's categories. These are defined in relation to the logical functions

of judgment (cf. A70/B95). Hegel's concept, as it appears in *Faith and Knowledge*, is related to what Kant would have called *the form of a system*.

Now, according to Hegel, Kant only introduced confusion by naming the concept so considered "reason." It does not deserve the name. Why is that, and what does deserve the name of reason?

Kant provides three main definitions of reason: it is a logical or discursive capacity to form mediate inferences. It is a faculty of principles. It is a faculty of the unconditioned (see A298/B356–A309/B366). This last characterization concerns more specifically "pure" reason, reason as not merely ordering empirical or mathematical concepts and propositions, whose meaning is provided by sensibility, but as generating its own concepts and principles.

Reason in its practical use is most properly the "faculty of the unconditioned." First, it is the source of the highest principle under the norm of which all rules of determination of the will should be evaluated: the moral law.[7] Second, it is the source of our positive concept of freedom as autonomy, therefore the source of the only positive concept we have of a cause which is unconditioned by an antecedent cause: the autonomous will. Third, this practical use of reason is what drives reason in its theoretical use to attempt to reach the unconditioned (unconditioned knowledge, which means also knowledge of the unconditioned).[8]

But practical reason is also the faculty of the unconditioned in another, more fundamental sense: it is *itself*, in formulating its principle and postulating its objects, *unconditioned*. There is no further ground for formulating the moral law than reason itself as determining the will. This is how, from being described as the faculty of *thinking* the unconditioned, reason comes to be described as being *itself unconditioned*: it is not determined by anything but itself.

Now, Hegel recognizes this character of Kantian practical reason. This is why he calls the concept "infinite":

> In Kantian philosophy the infinite concept is posited in and for itself, and is that alone which is acknowledged by philosophy. (*GW* 4, 321; *S.* 2, 296; *Faith*, 62)

The concept is "infinite" in the sense in which Spinoza defined what is "infinite in its own kind": it is not limited by anything else belonging to the same kind as itself.[9] By contrast, empirical reality is always finite: any empirical reality is limited, or conditioned, by another empirical reality. However, Hegel complains, if the concept (Kant's pure reason, as primarily practical reason) is opposed to empirical reality, if it has a

causal relation to it, as it does in the moral determination of the will, and empirical reality (instincts and empirical motivations) resists its causal action, then it is finite rather than infinite. It is limited, albeit not by something "of the same kind," but by something "of another kind":

> Infinite concept is simply opposed to what is empirical, and the sphere of this opposition, consisting of what is empirical and what is infinite, is absolute (but when infinite and finite are so opposed, the one is just as finite as the other) – and beyond the concept and the empirical, lies what is eternal. (*GW* 4, 322; *S.* 2, 297; *Faith*, 63)

If we express Hegel's complaint in Kantian terms, we can say that Kant's reason, far from being "unconditioned," is irrevocably conditioned. Being a "mere concept" in the sense explained above, it in fact depends for its actualization on conditions external to itself (the empirical existence of living beings, with their empirical abilities and impulses to act). Worse yet, these conditions are not only external, but also, on Kant's own account of them, foreign and opposed to it. This being so, Kantian practical reason is bound to become "tyranny and the tearing apart of ethical life and beauty" (*GW* 4, 380; *S.* 2, 383; *Faith*, 143).[10]

Now, Kant himself acknowledged that pure reason, and even pure practical reason, is in a sense *conditioned*. For instance, he wrote:

> It depends . . . upon the subjective constitution of our practical capacity, that the moral laws must be represented as commands (and the actions conforming to them as duties), and reason expresses this necessity not through a *being* (happening) [*ein Sein (Geschehen)*], but through an *ought to be* [*ein Sein-sollen*]: which would not be the case if reason without sensibility (as the subjective *condition* [my emphasis] of its application to objects of nature) were considered, with respect to its causality, as a cause in an intelligible world in complete agreement with the moral law, where there would be no difference between what one ought to do and what one does [*zwischen Sollen und Tun*], between a practical law of what is possible through us, and a theoretical law of what is actual through us.[11]

This text is from §76 of the third *Critique*, where Kant then goes on (in the rest of §76, and in §77) to contrast our "conditioned" reason with what an intuitive understanding would be: it alone would be unconditioned in the sense of spontaneously generating its own objects. According to Hegel, Kant had there "the true notion of reason."

So, to sum up: Hegel despises Kant's practical reason because of its opposition to sensibility. He finds in Kant himself the germs of a higher notion of reason, in fact the only true notion of reason (understood

as "faculty of the unconditioned"). This true notion of reason is what Kant defines, in the *Critique of Judgment*, as "intuitive understanding" or "intellectual intuition" or "complete spontaneity of intuition" (see 5:402–410).[12] This is what we now need to consider.

Hegel's reason, and intuitive understanding in Kant's third *Critique*

The idea of an intuitive understanding, in §§76–77 of the *Critique of* the Power of *Judgment*, is part of Kant's effort to clarify what he meant when he said earlier (§75) that the concept of a natural purpose provides only a principle for the reflective use of our power of judgment. In this context, Kant assigns the idea of intuitive understanding a mainly negative role: it is contrasted with our own discursive understanding in order to make clear in what sense both mechanism and teleology, as heuristic principles for the study of organisms, should be considered as subjective principles, holding only for our limited capacity of knowledge. But this negative role of the idea of an intuitive understanding is inseparable from a positive one. Its supposition serves to guarantee that nature is so constituted that our subjective principles can successfully regulate our cognitive efforts: that we shall find nature conforming to the expectations generated by our discursive mode of thinking. We need briefly to consider these two roles in order to understand what Hegel does with Kant's idea.

(1) Our understanding is discursive or, to recall a disconcerting phrase from the first *Critique*, it "can only think" (B135). This means that it can only form *general* concepts (general and reflected representations), and has to depend, for their reference to particular objects, on sensible intuitions. This means also that merely thinking a concept does not give any indication as to the existence of any object corresponding to it. Even less does *thinking* a concept generate its *object*. Objects are given, their actuality is attested only by empirical intuition, i.e. perception (see the Postulates of Empirical Thought in General, A219/B266).

There is, however, one way in which our concepts actually function as the cause of the existence of particular objects. This is when they do not have a merely cognitive function (as rules for recognizing given objects), but function as determinations of the will (as rules for producing objects, in technical activity). Such concepts are called purposes (*Zwecke*). Objects produced according to such concepts can themselves be called "purposes."

> Reason . . . is the capacity to act in accordance with purposes (a will); and the object which is represented as possible only from such an action would be represented as possible only as a purpose. (AA5, 370)

All man-made objects are of course purposes in this sense. Technical activity is a particular type of natural causality: causality according to concepts, or purposeful causality. But some empirical objects given in nature present such characteristics as also to be considered as purposes, "by a remote analogy with our own causality according to purposes" (AA5, 375). They are then called "natural purposes" (*Naturzwecke*). Organisms are such "natural purposes." What characterizes them as such is that in them

> we have to judge [*beurteilen*] a relation of cause and effect which we find ourselves able to consider as law-governed only by making the representation of the effect the underlying condition of the causal efficiency of the cause. (AA5, 366–367)

In other words: in investigating the causal laws governing the formation, growth, and reproduction of an organism, we need to suppose that the organism, as an end to be achieved, is the cause of the combination of material elements which has as its effect the production of the organism. The organism is thus the cause and effect of itself. The constitution of the organism as a whole is what has causally determined the specific combination of its parts. This does not mean, however, that we should give up the possibility of explaining organisms according to strictly mechanical principles: principles of the science of motion of material substances, which proceeds by composition of parts into wholes (composition of masses, of directions, of moving forces, etc.) and excludes all consideration of intentionality and purposiveness from the science of nature.[13] But we know from the first *Critique* that we have and can have no access either to ultimate causes or to the complete determination of individual things. We therefore have no option but to preserve both mechanism and teleology: both the maxim that all objects in nature (including organisms) are to be investigated according to strictly mechanistic laws, and the maxim that some objects (organisms) should be investigated by appealing to final causes. The conjunction of these maxims is no contradiction if one remembers that they are mere regulative principles for the reflective use of our faculty of judgment. As such, they are not objective, but merely subjective principles.

The question is: in what sense are they subjective? This is where the notion of an intuitive understanding comes into the picture. But

it should first be said – although this is not quite clear in Kant's explanation – that there is a sense in which our two maxims should be deemed subjective quite independently of any contrast with another type of understanding. They are subjective as opposed to our own *determinative* judgments, which are objective. Mechanism and teleology would be objective if they could be asserted as principles accounting for the complete determination of organisms, for the existence of organisms as fully determinate individual objects. On the contrary, a merely regulative principle for the reflective use of the faculty of judgment makes both mechanism and teleology mere heautonomous rules, rules which the power of judgment sets for itself in its empirical use.

Now, the very fact that determinative and reflective uses have to be distinguished in this way is a characteristic of our own finite, discursive understanding. In this sense (which is then a second sense of "subjective"), *both* determinative and reflective uses of our power of judgment are "subjective." Their principles (for instance, the second Analogy of experience for the determinative use, mechanism and teleology for the reflective use) hold for us, not for all possible intellects we may think of. If we suppose an intellect for which concept and intuition are not distinct, an intellect which unlike ours does not depend on receptivity for the reference of its concepts to objects, then neither determinative judgment (which has to find the particular objects for a given general concept) nor reflective (which has to find universal concepts for given particular objects) have any use at all. "Subjective," in this second sense, does not distinguish rules for reflective judgment from principles for determinative judgment, but characterizes both as *ours*, holding "from the point of view of man." And the idea of an intuitive understanding is meant to stress just this: it is characterized in a strictly negative sense, as that understanding which, not being dependent upon a receptivity for the provision of its objects, would not be discursive, and therefore would be in need of no power of judgment, whether determinative or reflective.

Although he introduces the intuitive understanding as a merely negative notion, Kant nevertheless gives a vivid account of what the world might be like, as known by such an understanding. There would be no distinction between the possible and the actual: every object of thought would, by the mere fact of being thought, also be actual. There would therefore be no *contingent* existence: no object which, while recognized as existing, could also conceivably not exist. Therefore, there would be no distinction between contingent and necessary existence. In fact, the

whole set of modal categories would disappear.[14] And this would hold for the practical standpoint as well as the theoretical. For an intuitive understanding, what we think of as an imperative imposed upon our sensible desires just is the law according to which we act as intelligences. Indeed, it is not even a law, in the sense of *law* we know, because it is not a universal principle distinct from its particular instantiations. It just is, as universal, identical to its complete instantiation, as one whole. We see, then, why for an intuitive understanding the distinction between mechanism and teleology would have no more *raison d'être*. The rule of mechanism is imposed upon our reflective power of judgment by the understanding in its distributive use, which proceeds from parts to whole. The rule of teleology is imposed upon our power of judgment by consideration of particular empirical objects, which have to be understood from whole to parts. Both depend upon the discursive nature of our understanding. Both would be useless for an intuitive understanding, which would reveal their common ground (cf. AA5, 410–415).[15]

Finally, not only is the notion of an intuitive understanding "merely negative." It is also, itself, merely "relative to us." This is because we can think it, and think the features of the world as thought by such an understanding, only by contrast with our own understanding. The supposition of an intuitive understanding which escapes the distinctions of our own understanding (most notably, the distinction between possible and actual) is itself a supposition proper to an understanding such as ours.[16]

(2) But given these limitations in its status, the idea of an intuitive understanding also has a positive role. It is not merely an idea which our reason forms in contrast to our own understanding, in order to think its limitations. It is also a supposition which allows us to assume the ability of our understanding, with its discursive character, to produce adequate knowledge of the world. This is because it provides the ground for the affinity of appearances, so that our discursive effort at their complete determination by concepts can meet with ever improved success. It thus grounds what Kant calls the "subjective purposiveness" of nature, the fact that we can suppose nature to be so constituted that our efforts at forming empirical laws and empirical concepts will succeed. And this holds not merely for our investigation of organisms according to the concept of a natural purpose, but for all of our efforts at exhaustively determining nature under a unified system of empirical laws.[17]

So considered, the intuitive understanding plays the same role as the Transcendental Ideal in the first *Critique*. And indeed, it is described in very much the same terms. In the first *Critique* the Transcendental Ideal or the idea of a whole of reality, which ultimately becomes identified with the idea of an *ens realissimum* as the ground of all reality, is described as a concept that has not merely "under it" but "in it" the totality of positive determinations or realities by limitation of which all empirical things could be completely determined.[18] In the third *Critique* the intuitive understanding is contrasted with our own, discursive understanding insofar as it thinks the whole of reality as a "synthetic universal." Such a "synthetic universal" has the features of an intuition: it is described as "the intuition of a whole as such" (AA5, 407). But it also has the features of a concept: it is a universal, and universality is, according to Kant's *Logic*, the form of a concept (AA9, 91). Two points need to be particularly stressed here. First, both the idea of a whole of reality (in the *Critique of Pure Reason*) and the "synthetic universal" (in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*) thus combine features of representations that had been carefully distinguished in the Transcendental Aesthetic of the first *Critique*: there Kant had distinguished concepts *under which* particular representations are contained, from intuitions (in this case, space and time as pure intuitions) *in which* particular representations are contained (A25/B39). The relation between universal and particular, characteristic of concepts, was in this way distinguished from the relation between whole and parts, characteristic of intuitions. But the *totum realitatis* of the first *Critique* and the *synthetic universal* of the third *Critique* relate to particulars both as a *universal* and as a *whole*. Second, in the *Critique of Pure Reason* the *totum realitatis* is grounded in an *ens realissimum* (that itself becomes *ens originarium*, *ens summum*, *ens entium*, before being even *personified* on moral grounds: cf. A578–579/B606–607, A583/B611n., A696–701/B724–729). Similarly the "synthetic universal" is the thought of an intuitive intellect that generates the whole of reality while thinking it. This is what "knowledge of God" is: the genitive is both subjective and objective, knowledge is God's knowledge and knowledge for which the object is inseparably God as the ground of all reality, and the whole of finite realities so grounded.

We now have what we need to understand and evaluate Hegel's reception of Kant's intuitive understanding.

Hegel inherits from Kant the idea of an intuitive understanding as unconditioned, as thought thinking itself while generating everything

it thinks. He inherits from Kant the representation of such an understanding as the supersensible ground of the world. He inherits from Kant the idea that such an unconditioned ground is a necessary supposition of reason. He *differs* from Kant in that for Kant, reason forms the idea of an intuitive understanding as it were "from outside," or from the point of view of man. As a result, the idea remains, in its cognitive use, a merely regulative concept for both determinant and reflective judgments; and in its practical use, it is a postulate or belief. For Hegel on the other hand, the reason that forms the idea of an intuitive understanding is the intuitive understanding itself: God's knowledge. This means that God's knowledge is accessible to finite consciousness. Hegel's anti-Kantian claim is that Kant knew this, explicitly acknowledged that he knew it, but did not have the courage to follow up on his discovery. It is this last, anti-Kantian claim, or perhaps, Kantian-against-Kant claim that we need to examine.

Kant, protests Hegel, has nothing more than empirical psychology to support his claim that the human faculty of knowledge consists in what it appears to be: the ability to proceed discursively from general to particular and from particular to general. In reality, not only has he reached the idea of another type of knowledge, but he has given a very vivid description of it. In spite of this, Kant chose empirical psychology against reason.

> Kant has here both in front of him, the idea of a reason in which possibility and actuality are absolutely identical, and the appearance of this reason as faculty of knowledge where they are separate; he finds in the experience of his thinking both thoughts; in the choice between them, however, his nature has despised the necessity, the rational, which is thinking an intuitive spontaneity; and he has decided in favor of the appearance. (*GW* 4, 341; *S.* 2, 326; *Faith*, 89–90)

> The idea [of an intuitive understanding] is something absolutely necessary but nevertheless problematic; for our faculty of knowledge nothing is to be acknowledged except the form of its own appearance in its exercise [*Ausübung*, as Kant calls it], in which possibility and actuality are separate. This appearance is an absolute essence, the intrinsic nature [*das Ansich*] of knowledge, as if it were not also an exercise [*eine Ausübung*] of the faculty of knowledge, when it thinks and knows as a necessary idea an understanding for which possibility and actuality are not separate, in which universal and particular are one, whose spontaneity is intuitive. (*GW* 4, 341; *S.* 2, 325; *Faith*, 89)

The argument seems quite lame. To form the idea of a kind of knowledge that escaped the limitations of our own is not to achieve such knowledge, or to determine any object by means of it. What does give some ground to Hegel's complaint, however, is that Kant goes further than to merely form the problematic concept of an intuitive understanding. When Hegel says that Kant "found in the experience of his thought" the idea of such an understanding, we need to keep in mind not only Kant's detailed characterization, in §§76 and 77 of the Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment, of what an intuitive understanding might think, but also Kant's explanation, in the solution to the Dialectic of the Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment, of the relation of aesthetic judgments to a supersensible ground.

Indeed, Kant's analysis of aesthetic judgments is perhaps the place where the choice between remaining strictly within the "point of view of man" or somehow finding within this point of view a way to reach "knowledge of God" is most directly offered. We therefore need briefly to consider this analysis before proceeding with the evaluation of Hegel's position.

In the Analytic of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment, Kant describes the peculiarities of judgments in which the predicate is "beautiful." The paradoxical feature of such judgments, according to him, is that they make a claim on the agreement of all subjects, like cognitive judgments, although this claim cannot be justified by concepts and proof. On the contrary, the only justification ultimately available to support our claim that everyone ought to agree with our aesthetic judgment is the feeling of pleasure which accompanies our apprehension of the object of our judgment. If I say: "This liquid freezes at o degree centigrade" and expect everybody to agree, it is because I know that this particular judgment can be derived from a universal rule: "Water freezes at o degree centigrade; this liquid is water; therefore, this liquid freezes at o degree centigrade." In this case, the "subjective universality" of my judgment (my claim that it ought to be accepted as true by all judging subjects) depends on its "objective universality": the recognition of the logical subject in the judgment ("this liquid") as falling under a concept ("water") which provides the justification for attributing the predicate to all objects falling under this concept.[19] In an aesthetic judgment, on the other hand, subjective universality (I expect all others to agree with me, I am indignant if they do not, I endeavor to convince them and I condemn them as inept if they do not) does not rely on proof, but on

a feeling of which everybody is capable, and which I try to awaken in others and to confirm in myself by an indefinitely pursuable process of description and interpretation.

Kant's explanation of this peculiar feature of aesthetic judgments is the following: the reason we claim the same degree of universal assent for them as we do for our cognitive judgments is that the very faculties, with the very a priori features which are put into play for the latter, are also put into play for the former. Cognitive judgments are made possible by an agreement between imagination and understanding which finds expression in an empirical concept. In aesthetic judgments, we recognize an agreement between imagination and understanding which no conceptual characterization can exhaustively analyze. The pleasure we feel, and which is expressed in the predicate "beautiful" applied to the object occasioning it, is a pleasure in feeling this agreement *and* the impossibility of fully analyzing it into concepts, as well as the pleasure we take in the a priori certainty that every human being is capable of taking part in this pleasure, by virtue of the same a priori capacities which provoke it in us (cf. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §§38–40, AA5, 290–296).

Now, given this explanation, it comes as somewhat of a surprise that in the Dialectic of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment, Kant should take up the matter all over again, in the form of an antinomy. The paradoxical character of the judgment of taste, as expounded in the Analytic, can be expressed, he says, in the form of two contradictory propositions:

(1) Thesis. The judgment of taste is not grounded upon concepts, for otherwise one could dispute about it (determine by proof).
(2) Antithesis. The judgment of taste is grounded on concepts, for otherwise, despite its variety, one could not even quarrel about it (one could not claim for this judgment the necessary agreement of others). (AA5, 338–339)

Kant's solution is then to defuse the contradiction by showing that thesis and antithesis are not using "concept" in the same sense: the thesis is really saying: "the judgment of taste is not grounded upon *determinate* concepts" (such as would be a concept of the understanding which would ground a cognitive judgment). The antithesis is saying: "the judgment of taste is grounded on a concept, but an *indeterminate* one" (the concept of the supersensible ground common to the object of our sensible intuition and to ourselves as intuiting it) (AA5, 340–341).

From the Analytic of the Beautiful, it appeared that the ground for the aesthetic judgment was the harmonious activity of imagination and understanding in the apprehension of a sensible object, an activity which strove towards a completely determined concept without ever reaching it (hence, the qualification of the aesthetic judgment as "merely reflective"). Now, it seems that the Antinomy could have been solved by holding on to that doctrine. The thesis would then have been interpreted as saying that the aesthetic judgment is not grounded on a determinate concept, i.e. on a discursively specified concept, of which the object judged "beautiful" could be recognized as the instantiation. The antithesis would have been interpreted as saying that the aesthetic judgment is nevertheless grounded on the agreement of the intuition (produced by imagination) with an activity of conceptualization which it encourages without allowing it to exhaust what the sensible intuition is teaching us.[20] This would make Kant's interpretation of aesthetic judgment the epitome of his Copernican Revolution: the source of the aesthetic pleasure is the activity of the mind which produces the unity of sensible intuition and with it, the inexhaustible terrain for all concepts.

But instead of building on this, Kant makes sensible intuition the mere appearance of a supersensible ground. The solution to the Antinomy does not consist in referring us back to the Analytic of the Beautiful. The "indeterminate" concept mentioned in the antithesis of the Antinomy of the critique of taste turns is not the free play of imagination and intellect in its concept-producing activity. Rather, it is the concept of the supersensible, which is indeterminate because it is indeterminable in the forms of our discursive activity.

Not surprisingly, this is the aspect of Kant's doctrine of aesthetic judgment which Hegel finds most promising. According to Hegel, the intuition of the beautiful was one of the "experiences" of intuitive understanding, or intellectual intuition, which Kant had hit upon.

> When Kant reflects upon reason as conscious intuition, upon beauty, and upon reason as intuition deprived of consciousness, upon organisms, what is expressed is the idea of reason, in a more or less formal fashion. (*GW*4, 339; *S.* 2, 322; *Faith*, 86)

> Kant recognizes in beauty another intuition than sensible intuition, and describes the substrate of nature as an intelligible substrate, as rational and identical with all reason.[21] (*GW*4, 343; *S.* 2, 328; *Faith*, 91)

It should be kept in mind that "reason" here is intuitive understanding as described in the Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment.

If one takes seriously the idea that in aesthetic judgment the feeling of pleasure expressed in the predicate "beautiful" is universally grounded in the concept of the supersensible as the common ground of the object and of ourselves, it then makes some sense to say that intuiting beauty is consciously intuiting intuitive understanding, as inseparably manifested in the form of the object and in our activity of producing (apprehending) this form.

Of course, Hegel is well aware that this is certainly not a formulation Kant himself would have accepted. Even here Kant is careful to maintain an insuperable breach between the concept of the supersensible (which the critique of teleological judgment identifies as the problematic concept of an intuitive understanding) and our sensible intuition of the beautiful. The first is an idea of reason, and as such incapable of adequate sensible presentation; the second is an aesthetic idea, as such incapable of being "exponiated" (*exponiert*) namely reflected under an adequate concept (cf. AA5, 343). As if, Hegel objects, it did not result from what Kant has said that the idea of reason was the exponiation of the aesthetic idea, and the aesthetic idea the presentation (*Darstellung*) of the idea of reason. Kant refuses to see this because he can think of the presentation of the idea of the supersensible only as a sensible synthesis on the model that he expounded for what he calls concepts of the understanding, and he can think of the "exponiation" of the intuition in the idea only on the model of discursive reflection. In other words, he is guilty of exactly what he denounces in the mathematical Antinomies of the first *Critique*. As Hegel puts it,

> Kant demands precisely what grounds the mathematical antinomy, namely an intuition for the idea of reason in which the idea would be expanded as finite and sensible and at the same time as supersensible, as a beyond for experience, not the sensible and supersensible intuited in absolute identity; and an exponiation and knowledge of the aesthetic [namely, the sensible, B.L.] in which the aesthetic would be exhaustively reflected by the understanding. (*GW* 4, 339–340; *S.* 2, 323; *Faith*, 87)

This is an interesting objection. It shows that Hegel accepts Kant's point in the mathematical Antinomies, according to which no successive synthesis in intuition can generate an object to match Kant's idea of the unconditioned, or Hegel's "infinite concept"; and no discursive concept can match space and time as "infinite given magnitudes."[22] What we can and do have, however, according to Hegel, is another kind of

match, a pre-discursive match, in fact an immediate identity between sensible intuition, as intuition of the beautiful, and intellectual intuition: "the sensible and supersensible intuited in absolute identity."

If this is so, the *concept*, or Kant's pure practical (and theoretical) reason, should be understood against the background of this pre-discursive identity: against the background of Hegel's *reason*. This is how Hegel's reorganization of Kant's critical system finds its culmination in a reinterpretation of Kant's first *Critique* and of the question which for Kant initiated the critical system: "How are synthetic a priori judgments possible?"

Before turning to this last point, let me recapitulate again what we have so far. Hegel criticizes Kant's reason (especially Kant's practical reason) for being irretrievably divided from sensibility, and thus divided from the sensible world. He thinks he can find in Kant's explanation of aesthetic judgment the solution to this division. In aesthetic judgment, we experience the identity of the sensible and supersensible in ourselves and in the world. However, in interpreting Kant's conception of aesthetic judgment in this way, Hegel focuses on Kant's solution to his Dialectic of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment rather than on Kant's Analytic of the Beautiful. My own question has been: why does Kant seem to ignore the solution to the Dialectic that his own Analytic might have provided? I shall leave this question aside for now, and turn to Hegel's reception of Kant's question: "How are synthetic a priori judgments possible?"

Kant's synthetic a priori judgments, and Hegel's "absolute judgment"

The nature of Hegel's opposition to Kant should now be clear: Hegel chastises Kant for not holding on to the point of view which Kant himself has defined as the only true one. The consistent line of Kant's philosophy, according to Hegel, is to forbid us access to this higher point of view whenever he encounters it, as he does in the Dialectic of his critique of teleological and of aesthetic judgment. It is significant, in this regard, that Hegel should begin his presentation of Kant's critical philosophy by denouncing Kant's treatment of the idea of God: Kant, says Hegel, criticizes this idea as empty in his first *Critique*, posits it in the end as a necessary postulate of practical reason and an object of faith, but nowhere gives it its true status: that of the beginning and only content of all philosophy.

> The highest idea which [Kantian philosophy] happened upon in its critical occupation, and which it treated as an empty lucubration and an unnatural scholastic trick which consists in extracting reality from concepts, it then posits, but at the end of philosophy, as a postulate which is supposed to have subjective necessity, but not the absolute objectivity which would lead us to begin philosophy with it and acknowledge it as the only content of philosophy, instead of ending with it, in faith.[23] (*GW* 4, 325; *S.* 2, 302; *Faith*, 67)

Acknowledging this idea as "the beginning and only content" of philosophy would have meant acknowledging that the task of philosophy is not to elaborate the opposition between "spirit and world, soul and body, I and nature," but to expound the absolute identity which is their common ground. This is what true idealism is: the recognition of the merely phenomenal character of *both* sides of the opposition. *Both* concept and sensible reality, I and nature, Kantian reason (and more particularly, Kant's most pure, i.e. practical reason) and sensibility, are merely phenomenal, which means that they are nothing in themselves, and have as their common ground the absolute identity which is Kant's suprasensible or intuitive understanding, i.e. Hegel's absolute.

Hegel's interpretation of Kant's question: "How are synthetic a priori judgments possible?" consists in reformulating it – and reformulating the answer to be given to it – in terms of the "true standpoint": the point of view of identity which he has gathered from the third *Critique*. This standpoint, Hegel argues, was already present in the first *Critique*, although there as elsewhere it was blurred by Kant's critical, i.e. Lockean-psychological, preferred standpoint.

> The true idea of reason finds itself expressed in the formula: "how are synthetic a priori judgments possible?"
> [. . .]
> This problem does not express anything else but the idea that in the synthetic judgment subject and predicate, that the particular, this the universal, that in the form of being, this in the form of thought – this heterogeneous is at the same time a priori, i.e. absolutely identical. The possibility of this positing alone is reason, which is nothing but this identity of the heterogeneous. (*GW* 4, 326–327; *S.* 2, 304; *Faith*, 69)

This text has justifiably been the object of many commentaries.[24] What has been insufficiently noted, I think, is that Hegel's reading of Kant's question is a retrospective reading, a reading from the point of view of the completed Kantian system: the holistic point of view of the

Transcendental Ideal in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, of the Postulates of Practical Reason in the *Critique of Practical Reason* and of the solution to the antinomies of reflective (aesthetic and teleological) judgment in the third *Critique*. So, the effort we have to make in assessing Hegel's interpretation is twofold: we have to consider Kant's notion of synthetic a priori judgments in the light of the critical system as a whole; and we have to see how Hegel reinterprets that notion in the terms of a philosophy whose "beginning and sole content" is the concept of God, or the absolute identity of thought and being in intuitive understanding. Such a reading helps better to understand some of the most difficult and important points in Hegel's treatment of judgment. I shall briefly consider three of these points: (1) subject and predicate in synthetic a priori judgments, (2) identity, (3) the nature and role of transcendental imagination.

(1) Subject and predicate. Hegel characterizes subject and predicate in synthetic a priori judgments as "the particular [and] the universal, that in the form of being, this in the form of thought." This is puzzling. In Kant's analysis of the logical form of categorical judgments, both subject and predicate are *concepts* (and of course, "particular" and "universal" do not qualify subject or predicate, but the judgment itself. A judgment can be, as to its quantity, universal, particular, or singular. Concepts, as "general and reflected representations," are always universal: see *Jäsche Logic*, §1, AA9, 91). However, when Kant analyzes the difference between analytic and synthetic judgments, he introduces into the form of judgment the objects of intuition, subsumed under the concepts which are themselves subordinated to one another in the judgment: "x, which I think under concept A, I also think under concept B." Or: "to x, to which pertains A, also pertains B." When the form of judgment is so considered, its subject is always ultimately x, the object of intuition, and the concepts related to one another in judgment are predicates of this x.[25] This holds for all objective judgments, and therefore also for the Principles of Pure Understanding, as synthetic a priori judgments. They have the form: "Every A is B." For instance: "Every A [thing that happens] is B [such that it presupposes something upon which it follows according to a rule]" (Second Analogy of Experience). Or "All A's are B": "All A's [appearances] are B [extensive magnitudes]" (Principle of the Axioms of Intuition). In both cases (as in all other Principles of Pure Understanding), the subordination of concept A to concept B is made possible by the subsumption under concept B of all the x subsumed under concept A. The x so subsumed

are pure manifolds of space and time, synthesized by productive imagination; and therefore, any empirical manifold given in forms of space and time which has been so synthesized (cf. A162/B202; A189/B232).

Hegel's claim, I think, is that in each of Kant's "principles of pure understanding" (synthetic a priori judgments) and subsequently, in each and every one of our empirical judgments, what is really subsumed is the whole of what is given in intuition, under "the concept," namely the act of thinking, i.e. the whole of interrelated discursive concepts, whether these concepts are already determined or to be determined in relation to intuition.[26] This is certainly a point Kant could endorse. Indeed, he makes a similar claim in the Transcendental Ideal of the first *Critique*, when he argues that knowledge of any empirical object is achieved under the regulative idea of a totality of positive determinations, within the framework of the whole of space and time as formal intuitions.[27]

The whole of what is given in intuition is what Hegel here calls "the particular." It could perhaps be better described as "the realm of the particular": the given manifold within which any particular object is delimited. The "universal," on the other hand, is the unitary act of thought which generates the representation of a totality of fully determined, interrelated concepts. The particular is "in the form of being" and the universal is "in the form of thought." Being and thought are just this: intuitive and discursive forms for one and the same pre-sensible and pre-discursive "absolute."

This last point, however, is not Kant's any more, but Hegel's. It is for Hegel that both intuition and concept, particular and universal, being and thought are mere appearances of an original identity which is that of the *intellectus archetypus*, or the *ens realissimum*. For Kant, this could certainly not be asserted from a theoretical standpoint, but only postulated from a practical standpoint. Because he did not give its full due to this view, says Hegel, Kant fell victim to the very same fate he attributed to Hume: he remained within the limits of too narrow a conception of his problem.[28] I suggest one possible way of understanding this charge might be the following. According to Kant, Hume's narrowly psychological method prevented him from seeing that the perception of any objective temporal succession depends upon the implicit assumption that "everything that happens presupposes something else upon which it follows according to a rule"; it also prevented him from discovering that other concepts, besides that of cause, are a priori conditions of our experience of objective temporal relations. According to Hegel,

Kant's own subservience to the standpoint of empirical consciousness prevented him from seeing that his own a priori principles presupposed the judgment: the particular is the universal, the whole of intuition is the whole of thought.

The task of philosophy is to develop this last judgment. But this means that contrary to what Kant thought, there was a third kind of judgment whose analysis might have provided an answer to the question: "How are synthetic a priori judgments possible?" The first kind of legitimate synthetic a priori judgment according to Kant was exemplified by mathematical judgments, the second kind was exemplified by the principles of pure understanding as foundations of a metaphysics of nature.[29] In fact, says Hegel, these are poor subjective substitutes for what alone is the truly synthetic a priori judgment: the proposition in which "subject and predicate, that the particular, this the universal, that in the form of being, this in the form of thought – this heterogeneous is at the same time a priori, i.e. absolutely identical." This proposition alone is sufficient to restore the metaphysics which Kant dismissed in the Transcendental Dialectic of the first *Critique*. It is what the Preface to the *Phenomenology* will call "der spekulative Satz," and what the chapter on Judgment in the *Subjective Logic* will expound as the self-developing, self-correcting "judgment" present as the presupposition of any empirical judgment (cf. *GW* 9, 44–45; *S.*3, 59, 61; *Phen.* 38, 40–41. *GW* 12, 53–89; *S.* 6, 301–351; *L.* 622–663).

(2) Identity. It would be implausible to suppose that when Hegel says: "In synthetic a priori judgments subject and predicate are a priori, i.e. absolutely identical," he is confusing synthetic judgments with analytic judgments. Rather, Hegel's point is that Kant's question about the possibility of synthetic a priori judgments, and his answer to that question, find their full development only in the assertion of identity which Hegel, after Schelling, thinks he inherits from the third *Critique*: the particular (intuition), and the universal (concept, i.e. the pure systematic form of Kant's reason), are "identical" in that they are the two sides of our discursive mode of apprehending what is originally one: what an intuitive understanding would apprehend as thought and being all at once. This is why Hegel also says: "The possibility of this positing is alone reason, which is nothing but this identity of the heterogeneous." What he calls here "positing" is the form of predication which relates "the particular" and "the universal." The ground of such a "positing" is Hegel's reason, or Kant's intuitive understanding "which is nothing but this identity of the heterogeneous."

But this does not answer the main question: how can Hegel pretend that the *assertion* of such an identity was even hinted at – that Kant "confusedly recognized [this] idea" (301–302) in his explanation of synthetic a priori judgments? Hegel's answer is that this idea was present in Kant's conception of transcendental imagination. This is an interesting point: indeed, Kant's solution to his question ("How are synthetic a priori judgments possible?") lies in his theory of imagination.[30] In order further to understand Hegel's "identity," and its relation to Kant's own solution to his question, we need to consider their respective conceptions of imagination.

(3) Imagination. Hegel praises Kant for having introduced the idea of identity in his Transcendental Deduction of the Categories: first as transcendental unity of apperception, then as the figurative synthesis of imagination which is, according to §26 of the Transcendental Deduction in the B edition, the source of the unity of space and time.

This again is a point, in Hegel's reading of Kant, which has been the object of much debate. My thesis is that Hegel's account of the role of transcendental imagination and of its relation to the transcendental unity of apperception on the one hand, to the unity of intuition on the other hand, is accurate. The only issue between him and Kant is: how should we interpret *the unity of apperception* itself? I shall consider each of these two points in turn: (a) imagination, (b) the unity of apperception.

What we find in the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories, according to Hegel, is the idea that the transcendental unity of apperception is the source of both the unity of intuition and the unity of concept. In the former capacity, it is transcendental imagination. In the latter capacity, it is that unity of consciousness which accompanies all general concepts: what Kant called the "analytic unity of apperception." That the synthetic unity of imagination is the source of the unity of intuition means that space and time, which according to the Transcendental Aesthetic were merely forms of receptivity, are in fact also products of spontaneity.[31]

It has been charged that this interpretation of the relation between imagination and intuition gives too much to spontaneity, and collapses the distinction between intuition and concept. Hegel's reading of Kant's theory of imagination, so the charge goes on, is therefore not immanent, but introduces presuppositions which are foreign to Kant.[32] In fact, I do not think that the charge is justified as far as this particular point is concerned. Hegel's reading of the relation between unity of apperception, transcendental imagination and forms of intuition is

supported not only by the second part of the Transcendental Deduction in the B edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (the explanation of figurative synthesis in §§24 and 26), but also, among other texts, by the metaphysical deduction of the categories itself, where Kant already states that "the same function, which gives unity to various representations in a judgment, also gives to the mere synthesis of various representations in one intuition a unity which, expressed universally, is called pure concept of the understanding" (A79/B105). This "same function" is the transcendental unity of apperception. As "giving unity to various representations in a judgment," it is the analytic unity of apperception, or discursive understanding; as "giving unity to the mere synthesis of various representations in one intuition," it is transcendental imagination. It is therefore accurate to say that for Kant, one and the same transcendental unity of apperception is at work on the one hand as transcendental imagination (which is the source of space and time as formal intuitions), on the other hand as discursive understanding.

However, Kant and Hegel disagree in their answer to the question: what *is* the unity of apperception? For Kant, it is the unity of a finite consciousness: a consciousness which is not the source of its own empirical objects, but merely generates the forms according to which these objects are perceived and conceptualized. These forms themselves, whether they are forms of figurative synthesis (space and time) or forms of intellectual synthesis (judgment, discursive thought) are forms of a finite, because receptive, consciousness: space and time are forms in which multiplicities are *given*, forms of judgment are forms in which these multiplicities are *reflected upon*, in order to form concepts or "general and reflected representations."

For Hegel, the unity of apperception is much more than this. It is the same "reason," or intuitive understanding, which Hegel found in Kant's solution to the dialectics of aesthetic and of teleological judgment. Now, to interpret the transcendental unity of apperception in these terms is to say that it is the source not only of the form but also of the matter of appearances. It is to say that it is that unity of an understanding for which there is no distinction between form and matter, between possible and actual, between concept and intuition, the very understanding which in the third *Critique* Kant characterized as intuitive understanding. But Kant would obviously not have accepted to equate "unity of apperception" and "intuitive understanding." And Hegel knows this: unfortunately, he says, even less than in the *Critique of Judgment* did Kant, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, recognize the force of

his own discovery. In both cases, Hegel concludes, Kant ultimately lost the benefit of his great achievement, and his idealism remained mere subjective or formal idealism.

Concluding remarks: Kant *Contra* Kant

Hegel's main effort, in subsequent years, is to show how the development and self-criticism of the point of view of finite consciousness and discursive thought supersedes itself into the recognition of the superior standpoint, that of the absolute identity between thought and being, or reason, or the Idea. This is what leads to logic taking on the position, not of a mere preparation to metaphysics, but of metaphysics itself; to the emergence of dialectic as an essential aspect of this logic; to the invention of a "science of the experience of consciousness" as the introduction to philosophy; and to the statement, in the mature Subjective Logic, that unity of apperception and concept are one and the same. Now this is quite a remarkable statement if one remembers that in *Faith and Knowledge*, *concept*, identified with Kant's pure (theoretical and practical) reason, and *unity of apperception*, identified with Kant's intuitive understanding, were sharply distinguished.[33] So certainly, the mere consideration of *Faith and Knowledge* is not enough to come to an assessment of Hegel's argument against Kant. Why did I nevertheless announce earlier that I would conclude my presentation of Hegel's criticism of Kant in *Faith and Knowledge* by arguing in favor of using Kant against Kant *not*, like Hegel, to advocate the ascent to "knowledge of God," but rather to further elucidate "the point of view of man"?

According to Hegel's argument in *Faith and Knowledge*, on several occasions Kant "met in the experience of his thought" the idea of an intuitive understanding. It is this "experience" Hegel intends to develop to its full extent; and it is the immanent relation of finite, discursive consciousness to this experience that the mature system will intend to demonstrate and develop – meanwhile giving up the expressions "intuitive understanding" and "intellectual intuition" in favor of "absolute knowing" (in the *Phenomenology*) or "absolute Idea" (in the *Science of Logic*). But this "experience" is in fact highly questionable in its very starting point, in Kant's philosophy. For the benefit of practical reason, in Kant's first *Critique* not only is the idea of God admitted as a problematic concept of pure reason, but its indispensable role as a regulative idea for the theoretical use of reason is asserted (in the

Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic) even though in the Appendix to the Transcendental Analytic Kant had seemed to relegate the concept of the *totum realitatis* to the amphibolies of rationalist metaphysics, and instead asserted that our forms of sensibility and discursivity alone are the transcendental principles for the individuation and universal affinity of appearances. In the third *Critique*, the idea of the supersensible is presented as the solution to the antinomy of the critique of taste even though the Analytic of the Beautiful had seemed already to provide such a solution with the "free play" of our sensibility and intellect. And finally, in the Dialectic of Teleological Judgment, a supersensible ground of nature is presented as the common ground for both natural teleology and mechanism, for the ultimate benefit of ethico-theology (see AA5, 435–465). Practical reason is thus the ultimate ground, in Kant, for the assertion of the supersensible and the corresponding intuitive understanding. But Hegel argues (and this is, I think, one of the most remarkable statements of *Faith and Knowledge*) that Kant's practical reason is just as phenomenal as his theoretical reason ("phenomenal" in the sense Hegel gives to this word: it belongs to the standpoint of finite consciousness, where intuition and concept, being and thought, are divided). Indeed, in the third *Critique* Kant himself recognized that practical reason belongs just as much as theoretical reason to the discursive, conditioned use of our intellect, albeit our intellect as will, and not simply as cognitive power. This being so, I would then suggest that instead of pushing the results of Kant's dialectic, in all three *Critiques*, towards a reconciliation of the "point of view of man" and the "knowledge of God," another, more defensible option is to retreat once and for all into the Analytic of all three *Critiques* and to further elucidate the "point of view of man": the nature of the ever more complex ways in which sensibility and discursivity, passivity and activity are entwined in making possible our cognitive and practical access to the world.

This does not mean that nothing is to be gained from Hegel's endeavor. Even listing only those of its promising aspects which are already present in *Faith and Knowledge*, one would have to mention the holistic approach to Kant's theory of concept and judgment, the recognition of the centrality of judgment for the elucidation of the nature of discursive thought, the inseparability of Kant's theoretical and practical reason, and the retrospective reading of the critical system from the standpoint of its completed results. But it is helpful to keep in mind the nature of the difficulty we face when trying to reap the benefit of Hegel's

insights: they are expounded within the context of a supposedly achieved or achievable standpoint to which Kantian philosophy itself, even while severely restricting access to it, gave more weight, or so I have tried to show, than its own critical findings were able to warrant.

One may still object that it is misleading to extend to the mature Hegel the defense of intellectual intuition or intuitive understanding which is characteristic of his early Jena period and his collaboration with Schelling. After all, Hegel opens the *Phenomenology of Spirit* with a resounding attack against Schelling's identity philosophy and Jacobi's intuition of God, and as I pointed out, the expressions "intellectual intuition" and "intuitive intellect" are not much used in Hegel's mature texts. Is it not misguided, then, to think that the discussion of Kant in *Faith and Knowledge* brings any light at all on Hegel's mature philosophy?[34]

In answer to this objection, it should first be noted that indeed the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* shows that Hegel adamantly opposed any confusion between his own philosophical standpoint and Jacobi's or even Schelling's "Absolute." I think this is a major reason why he mostly gave up "intellectual intuition" and "intuitive understanding" in favor of "absolute knowledge" (in the *Phenomenology*) or "absolute Idea" (in the *Science of Logic*). Another reason is his denunciation of the illusions of "immediate" knowledge: the whole purpose of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is to show that reaching the standpoint of "absolute knowledge" is a result, not an immediate given. Nevertheless, in the Introduction to the Subjective Logic, in the *Science of Logic*, Hegel takes up again his discussion with Kant in terms very similar to those of *Faith and Knowledge*, and he again chastises Kant for having ignored the standpoint he had himself defined as the only true one: that of intuitive understanding.[35] I suggest that this reference to intuitive understanding helps clarify what Hegel means when he claims that his logic is "the presentation of God, as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and of a finite spirit" (*GW* 11, 21; *S.* 5, 44; *L.* 50), or his ever-renewed insistence that he means to reinstate metaphysics as knowledge of God. What I have not discussed at all is whether and how Hegel actually proves, in the *Phenomenology* and after, that finite consciousness and (practical and theoretical) discursive thought can supersede themselves into such a standpoint. Such a discussion would call for an altogether different and much more developed study. Here I have only tried to show how the relation between Hegel's project and its Kantian ancestor might help clarify its import and plausibility.

Second, one striking aspect of the discussion of intuitive understanding in *Faith and Knowledge* is that despite the dichotomy stressed by Hegel between "concept" (Kant's practical and theoretical, discursive reason) and "reason" (Kant's intuitive understanding), already what interests Hegel is the *mediation* between discursive and non-discursive understanding by means of judgment (his "absolute judgment") and syllogism. Judgment is said to be the "appearance of reason," and Hegel calls for the mediation, by syllogism, between judgment and reason (i.e. intuitive understanding, with the conceptual articulations which Kant has already begun to expound for it). So, even in *Faith and Knowledge* Hegel's intuitive understanding is already quite different from either Schelling's "point of indifference" or Fichte's intellectual intuition. The logical/conceptual aspect, the distinctive type of universal (Kant's "synthetic universal") and therefore the new laws of thought it entails, the unity of possibility and actuality and the collapsing of the concept of necessity into that of unconditioned freedom, are already at the center of Hegel's interest in Kant's intuitive understanding. They will be further developed in his mature Logic.

This interest in the mediation between discursive and non-discursive understanding is even more apparent if one considers, as I have done, not just Hegel's reinterpretation of "reason," but also the overall shift from Kant's *categories* to Hegel's *concept* and from Kant's *synthetic* a priori *judgment* to Hegel's *absolute judgment*. Here too *Faith and Knowledge* helps us understand the use of these terms in the mature *Logic*, as a detailed examination of the latter would, I think, confirm.[36]

Finally, my more general concern in this chapter was the relation between Kant's and Hegel's endeavors. My view is that Hegel is right in seeing a tension within Kant's philosophy between "point of view of man" and striving towards "knowledge of God." Hegel is also right in claiming that the resolution of this tension depends on an interpretation and development of Kant's theory of judgment. But I have tried to defend the view that Kant's critical philosophy offered the tools for a resolution symmetrically opposed to the one Hegel is attempting: a systematic development of the "point of view of man" which is quite different from the Lockean "empirical psychology" Hegel is accusing Kant's transcendental philosophy of collapsing into. Elements for such a development can certainly be found in Hegel's philosophy itself – in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, but also in his mature *Science of Logic* and *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*.

6

HEGEL ON KANT ON JUDGMENT

Hegel opens his 1802 article, *Faith and Knowledge*, with a virulent attack on the German *Aufklärung* and its descendants, the philosophies of Kant, Jacobi, and Fichte. According to Hegel, the *Aufklärung* resulted in the ironical situation that reason, which had at one time been the servant of a faith external to it, is now the servant of a faith internal to itself. Kant, says Hegel, endorses the impotence of reason when he allows it access only to knowledge of the finite, of what is given empirically. Kant pushes what is eternal or absolute into a beyond supposedly accessible only by faith. In so doing, he maintains the empirical domain unchanged, alongside that beyond, instead of thinking the unity of the empirical and the beyond, of the finite and the infinite, by negating the negation that is the finite:

> In the Idea, however, finite and infinite are one, and hence finitude as such has vanished insofar as it was supposed to have truth and reality in and for itself. Yet what has been negated was only what is negative in it; and thus the true affirmation was posited. (*GW* 4, 324; *S.* 2, 301; *Faith*, 66)

According to Hegel, Kant's doctrine of the highest good (the unity of happiness and morality) is the clearest example of the powerlessness of *Aufklärung* to reconcile the finite and the infinite. Because his conception of happiness (a totality of the satisfaction of the desires of sensibility) is too narrow, Kant cannot think the union of sensibility and reason, of happiness and morality, which he relegates to a transcendent beyond (*GW* 4, 320–321; *S.* 2, 294–295; *Faith*, 61–62).[1]

This opening of *Faith and Knowledge* thus repeats well-known themes from the Frankfurt period, during which Hegel's opposition to Kant's

practical reason and its dualist presuppositions was at its sharpest.[2] But in the 1802 text, Hegel no longer stops at denouncing dualism in Kant's moral philosophy and philosophy of religion. In Section 1 of *Faith and Knowledge*, entitled "Kantian Philosophy," he brings under scrutiny each of the three *Critiques*, particularly the first and third and then, strikingly, upholds the "truly speculative" inspiration of the *Critique of Pure Reason* against the point of view of the understanding presented by the *Critique of Practical Reason*. The true notion of reason, Hegel maintains, is found in embryo in Kant's first and third *Critiques*. The second *Critique*, in contrast, is a relapse into the most radically dualist point of view, that of the understanding. This valorization of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Judgment* against the *Critique of Practical Reason* deserves attention and throws significant light on what Hegel understands by "reason." In certain ways, Hegel seems to turn the tables with respect to Kant's position: what for Kant was reason in its most rigorously pure sense (practical reason), is for Hegel the extreme manifestation of the limited standpoint of the understanding. On the other hand, what for Kant was the exercise of the understanding, is for Hegel "the true concept of reason," that is, at least the *embryo* of reason in its true definition. This reversal is confirmed and amplified by the development of his mature thought, as shown by Chapter 5 of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, "Certainty and Truth of Reason" (*GW* 9, 132; *S.* 3, 178; *Phen.* 139) and even more, by Section 1 of the *Doctrine of Concept*, in the *Science of Logic* (*GW* 12, 33; *S.* 6, 274; *L.* 601). I would like to suggest that the correct appreciation of this reversal brings invaluable, and perhaps unexpected, light into the way we should understand Hegel's peculiar brand of rationalism. To show this I will begin by analyzing Hegel's argument in *Faith and Knowledge*, which I will then compare with corresponding analyses in the "Subjective Logic or Doctrine of the Concept" of the *Science of Logic*. I propose to show, more specifically, that in Hegel's transformation of Kant's conception of judgment, the move from Kant's dualism to what we might call, with some precaution, Hegel's "monism" stands out with particular clarity.

Kant's view of judgment according to Hegel's *Faith and Knowledge*

> Kantian philosophy expresses the true Idea of reason in the formula, "How are synthetic a priori judgments possible?" (*GW* 4, 326; *S.* 2, 304; *Faith*, 69)

This "formula" is that of the question Kant, in the Introduction to the *Critique of Pure Reason* and in the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, presented as the cardinal problem of pure reason, a problem whose solution was to decide the possibility of metaphysics itself (B19, *Prol.*, §5, AA5, 276). To understand the use Hegel makes of this "formula," it is helpful to recall briefly the meaning Kant granted it.

A *synthetic* judgment is a judgment in which the predicate B "lies entirely outside the concept A, though to be sure it stands in connection with it" (A6/B10). This judgment is, moreover, a priori if the connection between concepts A and B does not depend on their common relation to an *empirically given* object. Then the problem arises of knowing how such judgments are possible, since the connection between the concepts in them rests neither on the concepts themselves (as when the predicate-concept of the judgment is analytically contained in the subject-concept), nor on their common relation to an *empirical* object. Kant's response to this problem, in the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories in the first *Critique* is to say that those judgments are possible because "the conditions of the possibility of experience in general are at the same time conditions of the possibility of the objects of experience" (A158/B197). Categories are the conditions of possibility of experience because they determine the connections between our perceptions in one experience. But they are thereby the conditions of possibility of the *object* of experience because without such connections, our perceptions would not be related to any objects at all. There would be no unity of sensible perceptions, just a "flux of appearances," *ein Gewühle der Erscheinungen* (for example, there would be a contingent assemblage of colored spots but not the perception of a tower or a house; there would be a contingent succession of sensations but not the perception of water freezing, and so on). The synthetic a priori judgments that are justified by the fact that "the conditions of the possibility of experience in general are at the same time conditions of the possibility of the objects of experience" are those judgments which universally attribute to appearances, inasmuch as they are objects of experience, the characters conferred upon them by their subsumption under categories. For example, the second analogy of experience (the causal principle) universally predicates of appearances the concept of causal connection as one of the conditions of the constitution of experience and consequently, of the objects of experience: "All alterations occur in accordance with the law of the connection of cause and effect" (B232). Or again, the principle of the axioms of intuition universally

attributes to appearances the category of magnitude insofar as it too is one of the conditions for the constitution of an experience, and consequently of the objects of experience: "All appearances are, as regards their intuition, extensive magnitudes" (A161). Such judgments are a priori: the very fact that we assert them as universally true (true of all objects of a possible experience) indicates that within them the connection of concepts (the concept of "alteration" and that of "occurring in accordance with the law of the connection of cause and effect"; the concept of "appearance" and that of "extensive magnitude") does not depend on their common relation to an empirically given object. And they are *synthetic*: the concept of "occurring in accordance with the law of the connection of cause and effect" is not contained in the concept of "alteration"; the concept of "extensive magnitude" is not contained in the concept of "appearance."

Now Hegel maintains, in the passage cited above, that "the true idea of reason" is contained in this simple question: "How are synthetic a priori judgments possible?" This is because in the very formulation of this question, he continues, we are told that the *particular* (appearances) is *universal* (subsumed or subsumable under categories), i.e. that *being* is identical to *thought*.

> How are synthetic judgments a priori possible? This problem expresses nothing else but the Idea that in a synthetic a priori judgment subject and predicate, that the particular, this the universal, that in the form of being, this in the form of thought, these heterogeneous elements are at the same time absolutely identical. The possibility of this positing is alone reason, for reason is nothing else but the identity of such heterogeneous elements. (*GW* 4, 327; *S.* 2, 304; *Faith*, 69)

Reason is the identity of the heterogeneous elements that are the subject and predicate of synthetic a priori judgments, understood as the particular and the universal, being and thought.

Here it is clear that Hegel not only gives the term "reason" a different meaning than the one Kant gave it (more on this below), but also that he changes the meaning Kant gave to the notion of synthetic a priori judgments. He supposes that in these judgments, the subject is what is immediately given in sensibility (the subject "in the form of being," the particular), while the predicate is *the category* (which is "in the form of thought"). The question at hand thus becomes completely different from Kant's. For Kant, judgment, whether synthetic a priori or of any other kind, belongs to discursive thinking. The question Kant asks in

the case of synthetic a priori judgment just like in the case of any other judgment, is the following: "how can concepts be connected in this judgment?" And by "concepts," we should understand what Kant calls, in his *Logic*, "general or reflected representations" (AA9, 91) and what Hegel calls with some contempt, in the *Science of Logic*, "concept-less concepts" ("*unbegriffliche* Begriffe": *GW* 12, 40; *S.* 6, 284; 609). To explain how a discursive connection between concepts so understood can be both a priori and *synthetic*, Kant shows that an a priori connection is presupposed *in sensible intuition*, which makes possible the a priori and synthetic connection *in discursive thinking*. But the sensible and the discursive, even when they are both a priori, remain as it were two parallel lines, which remain rigorously distinct even if their "correspondence" to one another can be proved. Hegel, for his part, cuts across these two parallel lines. For him, a synthetic a priori judgment is *not* a discursive connection of concepts as "general and reflected representations," that can be thought only in relation to an a priori connection in sensible intuition. Rather, it is a connection between *being*, the domain of sensible particulars (what becomes, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* "the 'This' and 'meaning'") (*GW* 9, 63; *S.* 3, 82; *Phen.* 58) and the category obtained by reflection. This is why he can write that the question "How are synthetic a priori judgments possible?" expresses nothing other than "the identity of heterogeneous elements," the subject and the predicate, the former "the particular, in the form of being," and the latter "the universal, in the form of thought."

"The possibility of this positing," he continues, "is alone reason [. . .], for reason is nothing else but the identity of heterogeneous elements of this kind." What Hegel means by "reason" here is clearly quite different from Kantian reason. The latter, just like judgment, is defined by Kant in a strictly discursive mode, as a power of *principles*: a power which pushes all discursive knowledge to go from the conditioned to its condition (reason, justification), until it reaches the unconditioned (A307/B364).[3] But the *unconditioned*, retorts Hegel, is precisely what is not limited by something else, and is therefore *the unity of the opposite terms that are the sensible and the intellectual*, the intuition and the understanding, manifoldness and unity, difference and identity.

> This original synthetic unity must be conceived, not as produced out of opposites, but as a truly necessary, absolute, original identity of opposites. As such, it is the principle both of productive imagination, which is the unity that is blind, i.e., immersed in the difference and not detaching

> itself from it; and of the understanding, which is the unity that posits the difference as identical but distinguishes itself from the different. [...] One and the same synthetic unity – we have just now determined what this means here – is the principle of intuition and of the understanding. (*GW* 4, 327; *S.* 2, 305; *Faith*, 70)

Reason as defined here is that "one and the same synthetic unity" found at the foundation of the *imagination*, on the one hand, and of the *understanding*, on the other; that is, at the foundation of identity lost in difference on the one hand, and identity positing difference and differentiating itself from it on the other. So far neither of the two faculties, imagination and understanding, has any privilege over the other: both are equally grounded in the original identity that is reason.

But Hegel goes on to withdraw this equal treatment of imagination and understanding, and identifies reason *with imagination itself*: the latter, he says, is nothing but the original, immediate identity of subject and object, whose self-differentiation produces on the one hand the sensible "this" (the Kantian "object"), and on the other its reflection in the category (the Kantian "subject").

> This power of imagination is the original two-sided identity. The identity becomes subject in general on one side, and object on the other; but originally it is both. And the imagination *is nothing but reason itself* [my emphasis], the Idea of which was determined above. But it is only reason as it appears in the sphere of empirical consciousness. There are those who, when they hear talk of the power of imagination, do not even think of the understanding, even less of reason, but only of unlawfulness, whim and fiction; they cannot free themselves from the idea of a qualitative manifold of faculties and capacities of the spirit. It is they above all who must grasp that the in-itself of the empirical consciousness is reason itself; that productive imagination as intuition, and productive imagination as experience are not particular faculties quite sundered from reason. They must grasp that this productive imagination is only called understanding because the categories, as the determinate forms of the experiential imagination, are posited under the form of the infinite, and fixed as concepts which, also, form a complete system within their [or its] own sphere. (*GW* 4, 329; *S.* 2, 308; *Faith*, 72)

Reason is thus this original unity of the subject and the object, the categories and the sensible, that synthetic a priori judgments divide in positing the "blind" unity of the imagination as the (logical) subject, and that unity reflected in the category as the predicate. From this moment of self-separation of the original unity, the movement of

thought will return to the identity of identity and non-identity, to the unity at the foundation of the difference formulated in judgment. This is what happens, according to Hegel, when the mediating role of the copula in judgment is developed as the middle term in a syllogism.

> This is how Kant truly solved his problem, "How are synthetic a priori judgments possible?" They are possible through the original, absolute identity of the heterogeneous. This identity, as the unconditioned, sunders itself, and appears as separated into the form of a judgment, as subject and predicate, or particular and universal. Still, the rational or, as Kant calls it, the a priori nature of this judgment, the absolute identity as the mediating concept [*Mittelbegriff*] manifests itself, not in the judgment, but in the [syllogistic] inference. In the judgment the absolute identity is merely the copula "is," without consciousness. It is the difference whose appearance prevails in the judgment itself. Here, the rational is, for cognition, just as much immersed in the antithesis as the identity is immersed in intuition for consciousness in general. (*ibid.*)

Once again we clearly see that neither synthetic judgment a priori, nor synthesis, retains the meaning that Kant granted them. For Kant, synthetic a priori judgment was an a priori connection between concepts, "general and reflected representations." Synthesis was either the synthesis of concepts (judgment) or the synthesis of sensible intuitions (synthesis of imagination), the one supposedly "corresponding" to the other – which could only happen, Kant maintained, if the latter was guided a priori by the norm of the former, the understanding "affecting" sensibility in the transcendental synthesis of imagination (see B150–151). But Hegel defines the original synthesis as a synthesis of the intellectual and the sensible, a unity first "immersed" or "blind" in productive imagination, then "reflected" in judgment, where the original unity is split before being restored, as the identity of identity and non-identity, in the form of a syllogism. Here Hegel plays on the word *Urteil*: in *Urteil*, German for "judgment," he finds the terms *Ur*, origin, and *Teil*, *part or division*. Judgment is *Ur-teil*, original division, *ursprüngliche Teilung* of what is originally one: this explanation will be found both in the *Science of Logic* and in the Logic of the *Encyclopedia*.[4]

Hegel is of course aware of the twist he thus imposes on Kant's doctrine of judgment. Yet for his part he presents this twist as follows: it is Kant who was unfaithful to the principle he had discovered. While he had discovered, with the transcendental synthesis of imagination, the original unity that is prior to the division of judgment, and while synthetic a priori judgment, understood as the original division of what

was originally one, was the true phenomenon of reason, Kant returned to the inspiration of Locke, to empirical psychology instead of philosophy, and thus to the standpoint of a finite understanding separated from the sensible, that of mere subjective reflection. Instead of developing the identity he had discovered into a system, Kant, according to Hegel, did an about-turn and stated that sensations (the "matter" of appearances) are affections by things in themselves and that we have no knowledge of the latter. Thus we have, firmly staked out in their separate positions, on one side the subject, armed with its "forms," and on the other side the object initially present as the "matter" of appearances coming from the thing in itself. But in truth, says Hegel, the thing in-itself about which knowledge ought to have been developed is the very same thing in itself whose appearance is judgment (i.e. the act of judging, as self-separating, *urteilen*): the unity of the sensible and the intellectual, the original ground from which occurred the separation of judgment (judging). If this is ignored, then we find ourselves in the unfortunate situation (as in Kant), that

> philosophy does not go on from judgment to a priori inference, from the acknowledgement that the judgment is the appearing of the in-itself to the cognition of the in-itself. (*GW* 4, 330; *S.* 2, 309; *Faith*, 74)

This restoration of dualism triumphs with the *Critique of Practical Reason*, which Hegel puts down with one lethal sentence, and then considers again when examining Fichte's philosophy in the third section of his article:

> Thus Reason is crushed completely. Understanding and finitude are quite properly exultant over the decreeing of their own absolute status. Thereafter, finitude as the very highest abstraction of subjectivity or of conscious finitude, establishes itself also in its positive form, in which it is called *practical reason*.[5] (*GW* 4, 338; *S.* 2, 321; *Faith*, 85)

In practical reason, the understanding is not even reason "in itself" (namely in an undeveloped, preliminary form) as is the attribution of the category to the sensible given in synthetic a priori judgments. Rather, it is an understanding that shuts off access to reason, fixing the dualism of the sensible and the intellectual, of being and thought.

In contrast, Hegel continues, the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* brings us back to the fundamental discovery of the *Critique of Pure Reason*: reason as the identity of the sensible and the intellectual, of being and thought.

In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Hegel maintains, Kant discovers the true idea of reason on the one hand as "conscious intuition" (intuition of beauty, the object of aesthetic judgment), and on the other as "unconscious intuition" (organism, the object of teleological judgment) (*GW* 4, 339; *S.* 2, 322; *Faith*, 85). According to Hegel, it is in exploring the nature of what he calls "teleological judgments," judgments about organisms, that Kant returned most closely to what he had discovered with a priori synthesis in the first *Critique*. For knowledge of organisms in effect leads him to present the supposition of an intuitive understanding as the ground of nature: an understanding for which there is no distinction between intuition and concept, between actual (which for us is given only through empirical intuition) and possible (which, for us, is what is only thought, without being empirically intuited). Yet, Hegel adds, here again (as in the case of synthetic a priori judgments) Kant did not pursue his discovery to its end, since he made the notion of an intuitive understanding a mere regulative idea, and thus a subjective principle: he did not recognize in it the reason immanent to the object itself (*GW* 4, 340–341; *S.* 2, 324–325; *Faith*, 88–89; cf. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §77, AA5, 407–408).

Here we must note once more that when he reproaches Kant for having backed away from his own discovery, Hegel at the same time profoundly transforms the meaning of that discovery. The intuitive understanding whose notion Kant presents in §77 of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is quite different from the transcendental imagination of the first *Critique*. It is not an "identity of the heterogeneous," to use Hegel's terms, but an understanding whose concept is at the same time an intuition, or an intellectual intuition. For such an understanding, universal and particular would in no way be distinct, and even less "heterogeneous," as sensible and intellectual are: intuitive understanding is, precisely, *purely intellectual*. In contrast, Hegel just identifies the intuitive understanding of the *Critique of Teleological Judgment* with the transcendental imagination of the *Critique of Pure Reason*:

> The *idea* of this archetypal *intuitive understanding* is at bottom nothing else but *the same idea* of the transcendental imagination that we considered above. For it is intuitive activity, and yet its inner unity is no other than the unity of the understanding itself, the category [still] immersed in extension, and becoming understanding and category only as it separates itself out of extension. Thus transcendental imagination is itself intuitive understanding. (*GW* 4, 341; *S.* 2, 325; *Faith*, 89)

My purpose here is not to put Hegel on trial for Kantian heresy. Rather, my purpose is to underline the novelty of Hegel's understanding of the word "reason," and consequently the novelty of his appropriation of Kant's legacy. Of course, the idea that the category is "immersed in extension" and destined to be reflected by the understanding, expressed in the passage just quoted, is not so much novel as very Schellingian in inspiration: a reminder that this text belongs to those resulting from the close collaboration between Hegel and Schelling in putting together the *Critical Journal of Philosophy*.[6] But Hegel's insistence on the necessity of going through judgment as a "phenomenon of reason," his insistence on the necessity of the moment of difference for the full development of reason as the "identity of identity and non-identity" is already properly Hegelian, and foreshadows the later development of Hegel's mature system.

With the discovery, affirmed with growing insistence during the Jena years and touted in the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, that "the Absolute is spirit" or "Substance is spirit," or finally, "Substance is subject," the moment of original separation that is *judgment* as explained by Hegel in *Faith and Knowledge* (*Ur-teilung*, original division) acquires new import and meaning. If we bring together the idea of an *Urteilung* of the absolute as set out, as we have seen, in *Faith and Knowledge*, and the itinerary of consciousness set out in the 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and if we recall that this itinerary of consciousness is itself only, for finite consciousness itself, the phenomenal manifestation of the division and return to itself of the absolute, we then understand that there must now be a developmental progression of judgment just as there is an experience of consciousness. There is a dialectical transformation of the relation between subject and predicate in judgment, *Ur-teil*, just as there is a dialectical transformation of the relation between consciousness and its object. And indeed it is on this point that we can see an important difference between Hegel's treatment of judgment in the *Science of Logic* of 1812–1816 (1816 for the third part, the Doctrine of the Concept), and his treatment of judgment in *Faith and Knowledge*. The one-track progress from identity "lost in difference" that was intuition as a product of "blind" imagination, to identity in the form of difference (in judgment), and finally to the restoration of the identity of identity and difference (in syllogism), now cedes the floor to a dialectical transformation of judgment: a transformation in the course of which, long before the transition to "syllogism," the strive towards the restoration of identity, or the norm of identity carried by the copula of

judgment, calls for the reciprocal modification of the subject and predicate in the judgment. However, despite this important shift in Hegel's treatment of judgment from *Faith and Knowledge* to the *Science of Logic*, the explanations given in *Faith and Knowledge* are still helpful to understand the status Hegel assigns to judgment in the *Science of Logic*: for him, judgment is a mode of being itself rather than a mere psychological process, or rather the latter is the manifestation of the former for a finite consciousness. Judgment is the self-division of being, which is first present to itself in the immediate and undifferentiated form that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* calls "the this," and that psychology calls sensible intuition. Never losing sight of the ontological, rather than merely psychological dimension Hegel confers to judgment in *Faith and Knowledge* helps us better understand the exposition of judgment in the *Science of Logic* and even more, the essential role Hegel grants the moment of "judgment" in his entire system.

Judgment in the Subjective Logic, or Doctrine of the Concept

The third book of the *Science of Logic* is entitled "Subjective Logic or the Doctrine of the Concept" (*GW* 12, 1 ff.; *S.* 6, 241 ff.; *L.* 573 ff.). Its first section, "Subjectivity," has three chapters: 1. "Concept," 2. "Judgment," and 3. "Syllogism" (*GW* 12, 32, 53, 90; *S.* 6, 273, 301, 351; *L.* 600, 623, 664). This division is classic in logic text-books of the time. However, Hegel makes an idiosyncratic use of this division. This is already apparent in the fact that if "the Concept" is the title of Chapter 1 of "Subjectivity," Book 3 as a whole is also entitled "the Doctrine of the Concept." Thus not only does Section 1, "Subjectivity," with its three moments, "Concept," "Judgment," "Syllogism," belong to the Doctrine of the Concept, but so do "Objectivity" and "the Idea," respectively the second and third sections of the "Subjective Logic or Doctrine of the Concept." In fact, the Introduction to Book 3, entitled "On Concept in General," is meant to introduce all three sections of the book, not merely Section 1, let alone merely Chapter 1 of Section 1. So what is "concept" supposed to refer to in each case: in the title of Book 3, in the Introduction to Book 3, and in Chapter 1 of Section 1? Hegel explains, in the course of the Introduction, that the Concept "constitutes a stage of nature as well as of spirit" (*GW* 12, 20; *S.* 6, 257; *L.* 586). It seems, then, that the concept is nothing other than that original unity which, in *Faith and Knowledge*, we saw differentiate itself, in judgment, into what is immediately given (in sensibility) and what is reflected (in a concept,

or category). In the *Science of Logic*, "the concept" is the unity into which being and essence return, the original unity which, coming out of the "disappearing" of the determinations of *being* and the "shedding its light in another" of the determinations of *essence* or "Determinations of Reflection," is revealed to be the immanent activity that always already determined the generation of one (the immediate) as well as the other (the category, predicated of the appearance in judgment).[7] But this revelation of the original unity that is the concept is now presented as a result rather than as a starting point or presupposition. The exposition of the concept, its self-differentiation (in judgment) and its return to itself (in the syllogism) is made possible by the determinations of being and essence which preceded it, and which in it, have returned to their original identity. Interestingly, Hegel opens the Introduction to the Doctrine of the Concept with praise of Kant, and, more specifically, of the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories. This praise is very close in inspiration to the text of *Faith and Knowledge* that we just analyzed.

> Among the profoundest and most correct discoveries of the critique of reason is this, that the unity which constitutes the essence of the concept is recognized to be the original and synthetic unity of apperception, as unity of the "I think" or of self-consciousness. – This proposition constitutes the so-called transcendental deduction of the category; but it has always been counted for one of the hardest parts of Kant's philosophy – probably for no other reason than because it demands that the mere representation of the relation in which the I and the understanding (or the concepts) stand to a thing with its properties and accidents, be superseded by thought proper. (*GW* 12, 17–18; *S.* 6, 254; *L.* 584)

If we recall Hegel's argument in *Faith and Knowledge*, the reason Kant "has passed beyond this external relation of the understanding (taken as the capacity of concepts, and as itself the concept) to the I," is that he showed that the *difference* that is judgment is established only against the background of the *original identity* of thought and being. In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel continues and confirms his argument of 1802. He cites Kant's well-known definition of "object," in the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories: "An object [. . .] is that in whose concept the manifold of a given intuition is united," and comments:

> [T]he object has this objectivity in the concept, and the concept is the *unity of self-consciousness* into which the object has been taken up [*in die er aufgenommen worden*]; consequently, its objectivity (or the concept) is

> nothing else than the nature of self-consciousness, and has no other moments or determinations than the *I* itself [*das Ich selbst*]. (*GW* 12, 18–19; *S.* 6, 255; *L.* 585; cf. *Critique of Pure Reason*, B137)

Thus according to Hegel, the major discovery of Kantian philosophy is that on the one hand, there is no objectivity except through the concept, and on the other hand, to understand what the concept is, we must understand the nature of the *I*. Yet conversely, Hegel adds, in order to understand what the *I* is, we must understand the concept of *I*. We must understand that the I is not a mere empty, subjective unity, but the unity that (even if it is lost or "blind") is at work in the immediate determinations of sensible being as well as in the reflective determinations of knowing. Or, following the process of the *Science of Logic*, the *I* or concept was always already at work in the "disappearance in an other" which was the mode of the immediate determinations of *being*, as well as in the "shedding light [*scheinen*] in an other" which was the mode of the determinations of *essence*. When we reach the Doctrine of the Concept, the task is from then on to lay out the single and unified movement of thought that was at work in the disappearing immediacy of the determinations of being as well as in the reflection of essence.

Yet, Hegel continues, it is indeed the original unity of being (the immediately given) and essence (reflected determinations of being), *in the concept*, that Kant had discovered. He had discovered the idea of a concept which would not be empty, abstract determination, but would contain in itself the principle of its own division and differentiation. It is this idea which is contained in the "highly important" thought of synthetic a priori judgment.

> Kant led up to this idea [of the self-differentiation of the concept] by the extremely important reflection that there are synthetic a priori judgments. This original synthesis of apperception is one of the profoundest principles for speculative development; it contains the beginning of a correct understanding of the nature of the concept, and is absolutely opposed to that empty identity or abstract universality which is no synthesis in itself. (*GW* 12, 22; *S.* 6, 260–261; *L.* 589)

But, Hegel continues, Kant did not remain faithful to his original insight. Already the idea of "synthesis" indicates that Kant had in mind a relation (connection) between terms that had remained separate from one another. Moreover, Kant did not hold on to the idea of the concept as original unity, but returned to the idea of a concept as a mere

"psychological reflection," externally conditioned by a sensible given (*GW* 12, 22; *S.* 6, 261; *L.* 589).

As we see, both Hegel's praise and his criticism of Kant remain similar to what they were in *Faith and Knowledge*. And here too, Hegel changes Kant's notions of synthetic a priori judgment and a priori synthesis. We see why, in this context, the term "synthesis" itself cannot completely satisfy Hegel. For Hegel, what Kant discovered with the idea of synthetic a priori judgment, identified with the original synthesis of apperception, is the original unity of being and essence. This unity is the concept itself, an original undifferentiated unity rather than an original synthesis, a unity destined to self-differentiate. This differentiation occurs when the thing is posited as the subject of judgment (judgment being here the content of the act of judging as self-differentiating of being), and the predicates of the judgment are first the determinations of being, then the determinations of reflection (essence), and finally the determinations of reflection recognized for what they are: the result of the self-development of the concept.

Since he misjudged the import of his discovery, Kant also missed the fact that here he held the key to the understanding of "truth." With the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories, he had laid out the identity of the *concept* and the *object*. From this argument he should have concluded that one has access to the *true* when one raises oneself from the immediate representation of determinations given in sensibility, or even from the reflection of the appearance, to thought, that is, to the concept of the object. And yet Kant maintained on the contrary that we have cognition only of *appearances*. He denies us any knowledge of things in themselves.

> It will always remain a matter for astonishment how Kantian philosophy knew that relation of thought to sensuous existence, where it halted, for a merely relative relation of bare appearance, and fully acknowledged and asserted a higher unity of the two in the Idea in general, and, particularly, in the idea of an intuitive understanding; but yet stopped dead at this relative relation and at the assertion that the concept is and remains utterly separated from reality; so that it affirmed as true what it pronounced to be finite knowledge, and declared to be superfluous and improper figments of thought that which it recognized as truth, and of which it established the definite concept. (*GW* 12, 25; *S.* 6, 264; *L.* 592)

Hegel's description of Kant's view is correct: it is true that Kant denies us any cognition of objects beyond appearances. Hegel is also correct in saying that consequently, according to Kant the only *truth* to which

we have access (at least from a theoretical standpoint) is the agreement between our cognitions and sensible objects, an empirical truth whose possibility is guaranteed, according to the chapter "On the Schematism of Pure Concepts of the Understanding," by the transcendental truth constituted by the agreement of the categories with the schemata of the transcendental imagination, that is, with the universal forms of connection between sensible intuitions.[8] But for Hegel, such a "truth" is intrinsically *untrue*. To maintain what is given in sensibility as a realm distinct from that of concepts, and to presume that truth would consist in establishing the "correspondence" between concepts and this sensible given, is to maintain that no agreement between a cognition and its object is possible. Such a cognition could perhaps be "correct," but strictly speaking not *true*.[9]

Kant, who expressly accepts the "nominal definition of truth" as the *agreement* between cognition and its object, should have acknowledged this point, says Hegel (see *GW* 12, 26; *S.* 6, 266; *L.* 593). From the definition of truth just cited, Kant concludes that general or formal logic can give no criterion of truth, since it makes abstraction of all objects. Yet Kant promptly forgets his own definition, and argues on as if truth depended on the object, and not on the *agreement* between cognition and object. If one holds on to this definition, however, it is false that logic cannot offer any criterion of truth. On the contrary, it offers the only possible criterion: the agreement of subject and predicate in judgment. What is a *true* cognition? A cognition laid out in a judgment in which subject and predicate are identical. Such an identity is not immediately given: on the contrary, from the self-differentiation of the concept what first results is extreme *difference*, or even the *opposition* and *contradiction* between the subject of the judgment and the determinations in which it is reflected.

To understand what Hegel means, we must again recall that the *judgment* in question here is not a connection of concepts as "general and reflected representations," as Kant understood judgment and concepts. It is *Ur-teil*, or *Ur-teilung*, the original division of this original unity that is the concept, the "I" immanent to being itself, or "just as much a degree of being as of thought."

> The judgment is the division by itself of the concept [*die Diremption des Begriffs durch sich selbst*]: consequently *this unity* is the ground from which it is considered in its true objectivity. This being so, the judgment is the original division [*ursprüngliche Teilung*] of what is the originally one [*des ursprüglich Einen*]. (*GW* 12, 55; *S.* 6, 304; *L.* 625)

This original division of the concept between, on the one hand, itself as an immediate given, and on the other, itself as a reflection of the immediate, gives rise to the common representation according to which one must distinguish between the *object*, which is the logical subject of the judgment (the "this," or some object to which a name might be assigned), an object which is supposed to be "outside" – and the concept ("general and reflected representation"), the predicate, which is supposed to be "*in the mind*." Thus, Hegel writes:

> judging is associated with the reflection whether this or that predicate, which is in the mind, can and ought to be attached to the subject, which exists externally by itself; and judging itself consists in this, that only by this process a predicate is connected with the subject in such a manner that, if this connection did not take place, each for itself would still remain what it is – the one an existing subject and the other an image in the mind. – But the predicate which is attached to the subject ought also to be proper to it, that is, to be identical with it in and for itself. (*GW* 12, 55; *S.* 6, 304–305; *L.* 625–626)

The "common representation" of an object outside consciousness (the "mind") to which the concept "in the mind" should correspond, is the way finite consciousness represents *judgment*, namely what from the ontological standpoint of the *Science of Logic* is the *Urteilung* of the concept, which is itself understood as "a stage of being as well as of thought." In this way Hegel brings together two classic definitions of truth: truth as correspondence, according to which truth is the agreement of cognition with its object, and truth as coherence, the agreement of the predicate with the subject of a judgment. Hegel can identify these two definitions because he identifies the logical subject of judgment with what is, for a finite consciousness, immediately given in sensibility; and he identifies the predicate of judgment with what is, for a finite consciousness, a reflected determination, or concept. The correspondence of the concept to the object, which is the same as the agreement of the predicate with the subject in the judgment, is thus the manifestation, for finite consciousness, of what truth "truly is": the identity of subject and predicate, of being insofar as it is not yet divided from itself and the thought-determinations in which its self-division is expressed and, eventually, resolved.

All judgments, thus considered as an act of judging (*ur-teilen*) immanent to being itself, are at once a self-division of the concept and an effort to restore the unity thus divided. Thus a dialectic is set into motion, a dialectic of identity and difference that corresponds, in the

order of logical determinations, to the experience of consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (where any modification of consciousness was the modification of the object it intentionally related to, and any modification of the object was a modification of consciousness).[10] In the same way, here refining the predicate is modifying the subject of which it is predicated, as much as characterizing the subject is what leads to refining the predicate. This mutual modification of subject and predicate determines the progression, in Hegel's exposition of judgment in the *Science of Logic*, from one form of judgment to the next.

> It is the aim of the movement of the judgment to reconstitute this identity of the concept, or, rather, to posit it. What is already given in the judgment is partly the independence but also the determinateness of subject and predicate as against each other, and partly also their relation, which, however, is abstract. The judgment at first affirms that the subject is the predicate; but, since the predicate is held *not* to be what the subject is, there is a contradiction which must be resolved, or pass over into some result. But, since in and for themselves subject and predicate are the totality of the concept and the judgment is the reality of the concept, its progress is only development. (*GW* 12, 59; *S.* 6, 309–310; *L.* 630)

The final outcome of the movement of reciprocal modification of subject and predicate (in the course of which the different forms of judgment are generated) is a judgment that expresses truth, that is, a judgment in which the predicate is fully identical with the subject and therefore in which, from the standpoint of finite consciousness, cognition (expressed by the predicate of the judgment) is identical to its object (expressed in the subject of the judgment).

Now according to Hegel, judgment has reached truth in the sense just stated only when its predicate *expresses precisely such an agreement* between subject and predicate, object and concept. Hegel indicates this from the outset of his exposition of judgment, in the *Science of Logic*, when he gives as an example of such a *true* judgment: "This action is good" (*GW* 12, 55; *S.* 6, 305; *L.* 626). The predicate, "good," expresses the agreement with the concept (here, the *concept of the action* to which the individual action under consideration ought to conform), of the *individual object* which occupies the position of the subject in the judgment (here, the individual action under consideration). Only such a judgment is a *true* judgment (in which there is agreement of the predicate and subject, that is, for finite consciousness, of the cognition and the object). In such a judgment, Hegel writes, "the subjective significance of judging

and the indifferent external persistence of subject and predicate are again superseded" (*GW* 12, 55; *S.* 6, 305; *L.* 626).

In Hegel's exposition, such a judgment (e.g. "this action is good") opens the way to the syllogism, in which the reciprocal mediation of the subject and predicate of the judgment is made explicit (more on this below). But this judgment itself is the result of the process through which subject and predicate are gradually modified until that judgment is reached in which they are identical.

Strikingly, Hegel's exposition of the process through which judgment achieves truth, which he presents as the self-development of the concept (of the I, a non-empty I, an I immanent to the sensible given it negates), follows the order of Kant's table of logical functions of judgment, in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (A70/B95). This is surprising if we think about Hegel's dismissive comments about Kant's table. At the end of the Introduction to the Subjective Logic, "On the Concept in General," then again in the Remarks to the section devoted to "Particular Concept," Hegel chastises Kant for having passively followed available logic handbooks in laying out his table of logical forms, and for having then mechanically patterned his table of categories after it (see *GW* 12, 253–254; *S.* 6, 289; *L.* 613). One way to resolve this apparent inconsistency might be to note that Hegel's criticism, in these passages, is directed less at the table itself than at Kant's lame justification of it. Hegel, for his part, does not claim to offer a complete and systematic table of logical forms judgment that is supposed to follow from the mere characterization of what the function of judging consists in.[11] Rather, he offers an exposition of crucial stages in a progression which is that of the self-division of the concept and its return to its own unity. This progression is supposed to give a better account of the titles of Kant's table than Kant was able to give, and also thereby to provide a better account of Kant's categories and their objective validity, since the determinations of Being (in Book 1 of the *Science of Logic*) and of Essence (in Book 2), among which Kant's categories appeared prominently, are now revealed to be results of the self-division of the concept and its return to its own unity, expressed in judgment and fully developed in the syllogisms that follow the exposition of judgment.

However, comparing Hegel's exposition with Kant's raises a series of further difficulties. First, for Kant, *any* discursive judgment (combination of concepts, as general and reflected representations) is analyzable as to its quantity, as to its quality, as to the relation between an assertion and its condition, and as to its modality. In contrast, in Hegel's

presentation, the four titles of judgment characterize four *distinct* types of judgments. Second, even though within each of the four titles, Hegel adopts Kant's divisions (affirmative, negative, infinite for Kant's "quality" of judgment; universal, particular, singular for Kant's "quantity"; under "relation": categorical, hypothetical, disjunctive for Kant's "relation"; problematic, assertoric, apodictic for Kant's "modality"), the four titles themselves are changed: Kant's title "quality" becomes in Hegel's Logic "judgment of determinate being" ("*Das Urteil des Daseins*": *GW* 12, 59; *S.* 6, 311; *L.* 630). Kant's title of "quantity" becomes in Hegel's Logic "judgment of reflection" ("*Das Urteil der Reflexion*": *GW* 12, 71; *S.* 6, 326; *L.* 643). Kant's title of "relation" becomes "judgment of necessity" ("*Das Urteil der Notwendigkeit*": *GW* 12, 77; *S.* 6, 335; *L.* 650). And finally, Kant's title of "modality" becomes "judgment of the concept" ("*Das Urteil des Begriffes*": *GW* 12, 84; *S.* 6, 344; *L.*657). Now this change in the titles corresponds to a more fundamental change in what they are supposed to capture. As I said, they no longer refer, as was the case with Kant, to different aspects according to which one and the same judgment can be analyzed as to its form. Rather, what we now have under the different titles are different types of judgments characterized by their form *and their content*: they correspond respectively to different moments in the progression towards the identity of predicate and subject in judgment, and so to different contents for *both* predicate and subject. Moreover, it appears that these contents are no other than the various stages of determinations of Being and Essence laid out in the first part of the *Science of Logic* (the Objective Logic), now internalized within the process of self-division and return to self-identity of the concept.

Let me now briefly consider those different figures or stages of judgment according to Hegel.

Judgments of determinate being attribute to a subject, something immediately given, qualitative determinations soon revealed to be disappearing or inadequate: "the rose is fragrant" (*GW* 12, 62; *S.* 6, 314; *L.* 633).[12] *Judgments of reflection* (singular, particular, universal) attribute to a subject, i.e. to some individual entity in relation to other entities, or to a plurality of individual entities, determinations that reflect their relations to one another. Such predicates are those laid out in Section 2 of the Doctrine of Essence, "Appearance" (*GW* 11, 323; *S.* 6, 124; *L.* 479). The distinction between "one," "some," and "all," which determines the "quantity" of the judgment, therefore presupposes a progression (with respect to the first moment, "judgments of being-there") in the determination of predicates. The latter are no longer immediately

given qualities, but determinations of reflection. This is why, instead of Kant's title "quantity" for universal, particular, and singular judgments (whose order Hegel reverses to singular, particular, universal), Hegel prefers *judgments of reflection*, or *judgments of subsumption* (*GW* 12, 71–72; *S.* 6, 326–338; *L.* 643–645). Individual entities related to one another become subsumed under one and the same concept, and this is how the different quantities of judgments become determined:

> The predicate no longer inheres in the subject; rather, it is that under which, while it is in itself, the other, which is an individual, is *subsumed* as accidental. If the Judgments of Determinate Being can also be determined as Judgments of Inherence, the Judgments of Reflection are rather Judgments of *Subsumption.* (*GW* 12, 72; *S.* 6, 328; *L.* 645)

With respect to universal judgments, Hegel raises the problem of induction: how can one empirically justify a proposition that makes a claim to universality? (*GW* 12, 75; *S.* 6, 332; *L.* 648).

The effort of thought to resolve this difficulty leads to the formation of a new type of predicate: predicates expressing natural kinds and their specifications. Forming concepts of natural kinds (*genera* and their specific differences, under which individual things are subsumed) means that one has found a justification to represent as an objective whole (or a totality of things united by objective determinations) what presented itself as an empirically determined collection of similar things. In contrast to such an empirically determined, random collection, an "objective" whole is grounded on the very being of the things summed up under the concept that defines that whole (*GW* 12, 76; *S.* 6, 333; *L.* 649).

Thus from "all plants" we move to "the plant" as a genus. The discovery of the genus is what leads to forming the judgments Hegel calls *judgments of necessity* (*GW* 12, 77; *S.* 6, 335; *L.* 650). Under this title, Hegel groups the judgments Kant grouped under the term "relation": categorical, hypothetical, and disjunctive judgments. However, when we reach this point the distance Hegel has taken from Kant's treatment of judgment has become obvious. A judgment such as "the rose is red," which Kant would have called "categorical" (having the form "subject-copula-predicate") can certainly not be called a categorical judgment in Hegel's use of the term. On the other hand, "the rose is a plant" does deserve the name. For in Hegel's vocabulary, only judgments in which the predicate expresses the genus under which the subject of the judgment falls, can legitimately be called "categorical."

> [I]f, for example, the judgments "the rose is red," "the rose is a plant," or "this ring is yellow," "it is gold" are confounded into one class, and if so external a property as the color of a flower is taken as a predicate of equal rank with its vegetable nature, then a distinction is overlooked which must be obvious to the most vulgar apprehension. – The categorical judgment must therefore be definitely distinguished from the positive and the negative judgment; in these that which is predicated of the subject is an individual and contingent content, in the categorical judgment it is the totality of the intro-reflected form. In it therefore the copula signifies necessity, but in the positive and negative only abstract and immediate being. (*GW* 12, 78; *S.* 6, 336; *L.* 651)

Hegel transforms Kant's notion of a hypothetical judgment in a similar way. Strictly speaking, only a judgment expressing the fact that an existence determined with respect to its genus is conditioned by another existence equally determined by its genus, deserves the name of hypothetical judgment.

> The proposition of identity merely states that *A* is only *A* and not *B*, and *B* is only *B* and not *A*: in the hypothetical judgment, on the contrary, the being of finite things according to their formal truth is posited through the concept; that is, it is posited that the finite is its own being, but equally is not its own but is the being of another. In the sphere of being the finite changes and becomes another; in the sphere of essence it is appearance, and it is posited that its being consists in this, that another sheds its light into it, and here necessity is the inner relation not yet posited as such. But the concept is this, that this identity is *posited*, and that the entity is not abstract self-identity, but *concrete* identity; it is immediately of itself the being of an Other. (*GW* 12, 79; *S.* 6, 337–338; *L.* 652)

Finally, a disjunctive judgment expresses the division of a genus in the exhaustive totality of its species, which supposes a rational division that is never completely possible in the cognition of nature. Because of this, no empirical judgment can legitimately have the form of a disjunctive judgment.

> An empirical disjunctive judgment lacks necessity; *A* is either *B* or *C* or *D* and so forth because the species *B*, *C*, *D*, and so forth are given; really no "either-or" can be expressed by this judgment. (*GW* 12, 81; *S.* 6, 340; *L.* 654)

> A color is either violet, dark blue, light blue, green, yellow, orange, or red; – such a disjunction shows plainly its empirical admixture and impurity; and considered from this side, and by itself, it may even be called barbarous. (*GW* 12, 83; *S.* 6, 343; *L.* 656)

The knowledge of genus and of the way its specific differences are determined is what makes it possible to consider a thing *according to its proper concept*, and to evaluate its adequacy to this concept. This gives rise to the *judgment of concept*, for which Hegel cites as possible predicates "good," "bad," "true," "beautiful," "correct" (*GW* 12, 84; *S.* 6, 344; *L.* 657–658). In this context, an assertoric judgment is one in which such a predicate is merely asserted: "this house is bad, this action is good." But as long as the assertion is not justified by the clarification of the relation between the singular thing and its concept, the judgment remains *problematic* (one whose contrary could just as legitimately be asserted). In contrast, the judgment is *apodictic* if the predicate is attributed to a subject presented at once as an individual thing and as the instantiation of a concept, specified by the particular constitution of the thing:

> Here we have the apodictic judgment (e.g., "*This* – immediate singularity – *house* – genus –, *being constituted thus and so* – particularity – is good or bad"). – *All things* are a *genus* (which is their determination and purpose) in a *singular* actuality with a *particular* constitution; and their finitude consists in the fact that what is particular in them may or may not conform to the universal. (*GW* 20, 190–191; *S.* 8, 331; *E.L.* §171, 256)

Note how Hegel transforms the meaning of Kant's modal vocabulary. The transformation was already apparent in the way Hegel replaced Kant's title "relation" (the third title in Kant's table of logical forms of judgment) by the title "judgments of necessity." The transformation is now apparent again in the way Hegel replaces Kant's title "modality" (the fourth title in Kant's table of logical forms) by the title "judgments of the concept," and then includes under this title Kant's three logical modalities of judgment: problematic, assertoric, apodictic. I suggest that the "necessity" of Hegel's "judgments of necessity" (third title, replacing Kant's title "relation") should be related back to the merely "relative" necessity expounded in the chapter on "Actuality" in the Doctrine of Essence (cf. *GW* 11, 385–389; *S.* 6, 207–213; *L.* 546–550).[13] And I suggest, in contrast, that the three modal determinations of judgment (assertoric, problematic, apodictic), which Hegel lists under the title "judgment of the concept," determine different degrees of immanence of the concept in the individual thing. They thus correspond to the "absolute necessity" which, in the Doctrine of Essence, prepared the way to the Doctrine of Concept (cf. *GW* 11, 389–392; *S.* 6, 213–217; *L.* 550–553).[14]

As I said earlier, the most fundamental difference between Hegel's exposition of judgment and Kant's table of logical functions of judgment, is that in distinguishing between judgments of being-there (quality), judgments of reflection (quantity), judgments of necessity (relation), and judgments of concept (modality), Hegel does not mean to characterize different aspects of the form of one and the same judgment (as Kant did with his table of logical functions, or forms, of judgment). Nor does he mean to present judgments distinguished by their form alone independently of any content, that is, independently of the meaning of the concepts connected in the judgment. Rather, Hegel presents us with judgments that differ with respect to the type of content they connect (the content of the predicate, and thus, inseparably, the content of their subject), because they represent different moments in the unfolding of the form, that is, different moments in the activity of the concept, or again different moments in the activity of judging as the self-division, *Ur-teilung*, of the concept. Does this mean that the use of Kant's table of logical forms a mere artifice, so that one could accuse Hegel of doing what he reproached Kant for: of yielding to the authority of a table of judgments he inherits from an empirically established tradition (in this case, the Kantian tradition)? Hegel's defense might be to argue that on the contrary, his exposition of judgments reveals what Kant's table was forgetful of, or worse, what it ossified: the process of mutual transformation of the predicate and subject of judgment. In the course of this process, the proper role of the copula is to drive the activity of judging towards its goal: achieving the identity of the predicate and subject, an identity which is realized only with the *judgment of the concept*, when the reciprocal mediation of the individual entity (the object being-there, *this* house), the particular (the constitution of the house, determined by the internal relation of its elements as well as by its relation to the other objects), and the universal (the concept) is fully articulated. This reciprocal mediation is subsequently developed in the syllogism. For Hegel's "syllogism" is the explication of the unity of "Concept" and "Judgment," or the return from the division (judgment, *Urteilung*) to the unity of the concept: "the identity of identity and non-identity."

The syllogism and the rational

The description *rational* applies exclusively to the syllogism, or to something insofar as it can be described as a syllogism.

> The syllogism is the rational. (*GW* 12, 90; *S.* 6, 351; *L.* 664)
>
> Not only is the syllogism rational, but whatever is rational is a syllogism. (*GW* 12, 90; *S.* 6, 352; *L.* 664)

"The rational," as it is understood here, is what was already "in itself," in an undeveloped state, in the concept, and can be fully developed only after the process of judgment that was just laid out. This is why Hegel, even while defining the syllogism as "the rational," objects to the habitual meaning of the term "rational." If by the latter one means the mere form of the syllogism, or the rational concepts (the Ideas of reason) as Kant understood them, what is thus designated, says Hegel, is something belonging to the understanding rather than reason. For the rational so understood is premised on a dualistic standpoint, on the separation between the intellectual and the sensible, between essence and being. In contrast, the concept and its self-division in judgment as they were laid out in the *Science of Logic* were already on the side of the rational understood in its true sense, that which in *Faith and Knowledge* Hegel called "the identity of the heterogeneous." Indeed, here again Hegel affirms the "highest inspiration" of the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories against what Kant himself made of his own discovery. Thus in an oral addition to the *Encyclopedia Logic*, Hegel says:

> In conformity with the above-mentioned interpretation of the syllogism as the form of what is rational, reason itself has been defined as the faculty of syllogistic inference, while the understanding, in contrast, has been defined as the faculty of forming concepts. Quite apart from the underlying superficial representation of the spirit as a mere composite of forces or faculties subsisting side by side, there is this to be said about the association of the understanding with the concept and of reason with the syllogism: that we ought not to regard the concept as a mere determination of the understanding any more than we ought to regard the syllogism as rational without qualification. For, on the one hand, what is usually dealt with in formal logic as the doctrine of the syllogism is nothing but the mere syllogism of the understanding. It does not deserve the honor of counting as the form of the rational, of counting indeed as what is rational purely and simply. Nor yet, on the other hand, is the concept as such just a mere form of the understanding. On the contrary, it is only the abstractive understanding [*der abstrahierende Verstand*] that depreciates the concept in this way. (*S.* 8, 334; *E.L.* §182ad., 246)

Already in the course of the presentation of judgment in the *Science of Logic*, both the concept and the judgment were identified with the

rational: "The concept (which includes the judgment issuing from it) is the true thing-in-itself or rational entity [. . .]" (*GW* 12, 67; *S.* 6, 320; *L.* 639).

It is important not to lose sight of the astonishing shift in the definition of the rational here, in order to get some grip on the meaning of Hegelian "rationalism." Already the *Phenomenology of Spirit* alerted us to the originality of what Hegel means by "reason." Defining reason as the "certainty of consciousness that it is all reality," Hegel included in the chapter entitled "Reason" on the one hand what Kant would have called the theoretical use of reason ("observing reason," in which consciousness seeks and finds first in nature, then within itself, forms of unity in which it recognizes the result of its own act of unification: see *GW* 9, 137–171; *S.* 3, 185–233; *Phen.* 145–185); but also, on the other hand, moments of consciousness as unexpected as, for instance, "pleasure and necessity" or "the law of the heart and the frenzy of self-conceit" (*GW* 9, 198–207; *S.* 3, 270–283; *Phen.* 217–228). If such figures are included under Hegel's notion of "reason," it is because regardless of their one-sided and catastrophic character, they are moments in the effort of consciousness to accomplish its demand for recognizing itself in all reality. Translated into the vocabulary and perspective of the *Science of Logic*, they are moments in the process by which the concept tends towards its own accomplishment. This, in turn, is achieved only when reason thinks itself and accomplishes itself as spirit. In the terms, of the *Phenomenology*, "Reason is Spirit when its certainty of being all reality has been raised to truth, and it is conscious of itself as its own world, and of the world as itself" (*GW* 9, 238; *S.* 3, 324; *Phen.* 263). In the terms of the *Science of Logic*, "what is rational" (or "the Idea") is the being in which the self-identity of the concept has been thought, and eventually accomplished, even while its greatest differentiation from itself, which is judgment, has taken place and continues to take place. It is in Hegel's presentation of this *Ur-teilung* that the demand for immanence he opposes to Kantian dualism is most clearly apparent. Consequently, one must have grasped the nature of judgment, according to Hegel, in order to grasp the meaning of the syllogism as the immanent structure of what is rational and in order to understand the famous (or infamous) formulation of the *Philosophy of Right*: "What is rational is actual, and what is actual is rational" (*S.* 7, 24; *R.* xxvii). "What is rational" is not what is derived or derivable by rational inference. Rather, "what is rational" is an actual individual existence presenting a particular constitution that manifests the presence of the concept, or *I*, or thought,

determining everything that is according to its own norm of what it *ought to be*.

There is reason to be puzzled at this Hegelian definition of "the rational." With it, Hegel makes the paradoxical gesture of leaning on Kant's "Copernican Revolution" in order to return to a philosophical project that seems to hark back to that of that very rational metaphysics whose possibility Kant believed he had definitively eliminated. Moreover, like Fichte and Schelling before him, Hegel proposes as the building block for the reconstruction of such a metaphysics a concept "I" inherited from Kant, but which Kant, for his part, was content to elucidate in the context of the various modes of representing and thinking (theoretical, practical, aesthetic) in which it is at work, which were those of a finite consciousness. Whether it was at all possible to abandon this "human standpoint" to which Kant rigorously limited himself, precisely in those parts of his system which Hegel professed to admire the most (the doctrine of transcendental imagination, the doctrine of the categories, the doctrine of reflecting judgment), one has every reason to doubt. Despite his efforts to provide a justification, for the transition from the standpoint of finite consciousness to the standpoint of the absolute, I suggest one can hail only as a strange and grandiose philosophical novel Hegel's presentation of judgment according to which the act of finite subjectivity that is the act of judging as Kant describes it, is the mere phenomenal manifestation of an act of self-thinking and self-accomplishing which is that of being itself, considered in its totality.

NOTES

Preface

1. See in particular "Holism and Idealism in Hegel's *Phenomenology*" and "Some Pragmatic Themes in Hegel's Idealism," in Robert Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 178–234 (chs. 6 and 7).
2. For an illuminating perspective on the importance of Hegel's metaphysical monism in the development of his overall philosophical project, see Dieter Henrich, "Erkundung im Zugzwang. Ursprung, Leistung und Grenzen von Hegels Denken des Absoluten," in Wolfgang Welsch and Klaus Vieweg (eds.), *Das Interesse des Denkens: Hegel aus heutiger Sicht* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2003), pp. 9–32. See also in the same work, Rolf-Peter Horstmann, "Den Verstand zur Vernunft zu bringen? Hegels Auseinandersetzung mit Kant in der *Differenzschrift*," pp. 89–108. For an interesting reconstruction of the German Idealists' argument for ascending to an "absolute" standpoint, see Paul Franks, *All or Nothing: Skepticism, Transcendental Arguments, and Systematicity in German Idealism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005). Paul Franks and I agree in relating Kant's "intuitive understanding" in the third *Critique* and Kant's analysis of the Transcendental Ideal in the first *Critique*, and in reading in light of both concepts Hegel's claim, in the *Science of Logic*, that the concept of God ought to be the starting point of all philosophy. But unlike me, Paul Franks takes Hegel's claim to lead us from finite to infinite (intuitive) understanding to be justifiable, indeed he takes it to be called for as the only possible response to Agrippan skepticism, a response that Kant's critical system had been unable to offer.

Introduction

1. See Benedetto Croce, *Cio che è vivo e cio che è morto della filosofia di Hegel* (Bari: Laterza, 1907); Eng. trans. as *What is Living and What is Dead in the Philosophy of Hegel* (Kitchener, Ont.: Batoche, 2001).
2. *Die Wissenschaft der Logik und die Logik der Reflexion*, ed. Dieter Henrich, Hegel-Tage Chantilly 1971, Hegel-Studien 18 (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1978), p. vii.

3. Gérard Lebrun, *La Patience du concept* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972).
4. These three terms refer respectively, in the contexts mentioned above, to what is apparently external to thought, and to which thought nevertheless always relates (see *GW* 11, 43; *S.* 5, 82; *L.* 81. *GW* 11, 380; *S.* 6, 200; *L.* 529. *GW* 12, 127; *S.* 6, 402; *L.* 705). The progression of the Logic gradually reveals that this apparent exteriority is always itself immanent to the unity of thought.
5. Kant's "metaphysical deduction" of the categories: see *Critique of Pure Reason*, A77–83/B102–109 and B159; Kant's "transcendental deduction" of the categories: see A84–129/B116–169.
6. One can find an example of this interpretation in Friedrich Engels, *Dialectic of Nature*, trans. and ed. Clemens Dudd, with preface and note by J. B. S. Haldane, FRS (New York: International Publishers, 1940).
7. See Kant, *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*, AA4, 260: "I freely admit that the remembrance of David Hume was the very thing that many years ago first interrupted my dogmatic slumber and gave a completely different direction to my researches in the field of speculative philosophy."
8. Admittedly, neither of these two alternatives strictly corresponds to Kant's position. I will come back to this point in Chapter 1.
9. This will be explained in what follows, especially below, Chapter 5.
10. Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge* (London: Verso, 1988).

1 Transcendental logic and dialectical logic: from Kant to Hegel, a critique of all dogmatic metaphysics

1. Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetic*: see *Vorlesungen über die Aesthetik*, *S.* 13, 14, 15 (these have not yet been published in the *Gesammelte Werke*); trans. T. M. Knox, as *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975). Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: see *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, *GW* 14 (forthcoming), *S.* 7; trans. H. B. Nisbet, ed. Allen Wood, as *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*: see *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, *S.* 12 (not yet published in the *Gesammelte Werk*); trans. J. Sibree, as *The Philosophy of History* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1991).
2. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, *GW* 9, 11; *S.* 3, 14; trans. A. V. Miller, as *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 3.
3. But a fantasy, as we well know (and as Hegel is one of the first to have taught us), possesses a formidable degree of reality. This point will come up again in what follows.
4. On the twofold character of the *Phenomenology*, at once an introduction to, and a part of, the system, see Pierre-Jean Labarrière, *Structures et mouvement dialectique dans la 'Phénoménologie de l'esprit' de Hegel* (Paris: Aubier 1968), ch. 1. On the importance of the logical structure of the *Phenomenology*, see Johannes Heinrichs, *Die Logik der Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1974).
5. Lebrun, *La Patience du concept*, p. 222.

6. On the regulative use of the Ideas of reason according to Kant, see A642/B670. For Hegel's criticism of this limitation of the role of the reason, see *GW* 12, 23; *S.* 6, 261–262; *L.* 589–590.
7. The logic we are talking about here is of course not formal logic, which "abstracts [. . .] from all content of cognition, i.e. from any relation of it to the object, and considers only the logical form in the relation of cognitions to one another" (A55/B79), but transcendental logic, which contains "the rules of the pure thinking of an object" (A55/B80). Hegel considers his own Objective Logic (the first and second books of the *Science of Logic*) as the direct descendant of Kant's transcendental logic (see *GW* 11, 31; *S.* 5, 59; *L.* 62).
8. See Richard Kroner, *Von Kant bis Hegel*, 2 vols. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1921–24).
9. Jean Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, trans. Leonard Lawler and Amit Sen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), p. 58.
10. Letter of November 2, 1800. Quoted by Bernard Bourgeois in the *présentation* of his translation into French of the *Encyclopedia Logic*: *Encyclopédie des Sciences Philosophiques, I: La Science de la Logique* (Paris: Vrin, 1970), p. 15; cited hereafter as *Présentation de G. W. F. Hegel.*
11. See Bourgeois, *Présentation de G. W. F. Hegel.* On this point, see also Martial Gueroult, "Le jugement de Hegel sur l'antithétique de la raison pure," in *Etudes sur Hegel*, special issue of the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* (1931).
12. *GW* 9, 18; *S.* 3, 23; *Phen.* 10.
13. Cf. Jules Vuillemin, *L'Héritage kantien et la révolution copernicienne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954), esp. ch. 1.
14. Cf., for example, Friedrich Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (London: Electric Book Company, 2001), pp. 21–22.
15. B137, quoted by Hegel in the Introduction to the Doctrine of the Concept: *GW* 12, 18; *S.* 6, 254; *L.* 584. The first two emphases are Kant's, all others are Hegel's.
16. Kant distinguishes appearances, *Erscheinungen*, "the undetermined object(s) of an empirical intuition" and *phaenomena*, "appearances [*Erscheinungen*], to the extent that as objects they are thought in accordance with the unity of the categories" (A248/B305). However, in most of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant does not hold fast to this terminological difference, and calls *Erscheinung* the appearance determined under the categories.
17. Cf. *GW* 12, 17; *S.* 6, 254; *L.* 384, cited above, p. 14.
18. See Kant's diagnosis of the Antinomies of Pure Reason in the Transcendental Dialectic of the *Critique of Pure Reason*: A498–507/B525–535.
19. Vuillemin, *L'Héritage kantien*, p. 10.
20. *L'Héritage kantien*, ch. 4, §11 ("The Displacement of Concepts in the Fichtean Interpretation"), ch. 6, §6 ("The Displacement of Concepts in the Neo-Kantian Interpretation"), ch. 8, §23 ("The Displacement of Concepts in the Heideggerian Interpretation"). "The Absolute" here can be understood as "the thing as it truly is," i.e. the thing in itself.
21. In Chapter 3, I shall take a closer look at the relation Hegel establishes between "condition" (*Bedingung*) and "ground" (*Grund*).
22. On ambiguity of this term, see above, p. 220, n.16.

23. In the *Phenomenology*, see Chapter 3, "Force and the Understanding," *GW* 9, 82–102; *S.* 3, 107–137; *Phen.* 79–103. In the *Science of Logic*, see Chapter 2 of Section 2 of the Doctrine of Essence, "The Appearance," *GW* 11, 341–352; *S.* 6, 147–164; *L.* 499–512. See especially the second section (B) in this chapter, "The World of Appearance and the World in Itself," *GW* 11, 347–350; *S.* 6, 156–161; *L.* 505–509.
24. The agreement of thought with itself is the only way the agreement of thought with its object can be achieved. There is a case to be made (which Hegel does make, as we shall see) for the idea that Kant works his way towards such a conception of truth when he speaks of a "transcendental truth, which precedes all empirical truth and makes it possible" (A146/B185). I would therefore not oppose Hegel's and Kant's conceptions of truth as radically as Gérard Lebrun does. Lebrun is mistaken, I think, both in taking Kantian philosophy to be just another case of representational metaphysics (*La Patience du concept*, p. 378), and in projecting Hegel's philosophy towards a modern problematic of the dissolution of philosophical problems as mere symptoms of language games.
25. Vuillemin, *L'Héritage kantien*, p. 9.
26. Cf. above, pp. 18–23.
27. See above, p. 17.
28. Dieter Henrich, *Hegel im Kontext* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Suhrkamp, 1971), ch. 4: "Hegels Logik der Reflexion," p. 104.
29. G. W. F. Hegel, *Science de la Logique*, vol. 1, bk 1: "l'Etre", 1812 edn, intro and notes by Pierre-Jean Labarrière and Gwendolyn Jarczyk (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1972), *Présentation*, p. xxiii.
30. Bourgeois, *Présentation de G. W. F. Hegel*, p. 16.
31. G. W. F. Hegel, *Die Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems der Philosophie*, *GW* 4, 5; *S.* 2, 9 ("räsonierende Reflexion") and *GW* 4, 6; *S.* 2, 11 ("Endlichkeit und Entgegensetzung"); trans. as *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, trans. H. S. Harris and W. Cerf (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977), pp. 79 and 81. Harris and Cerf translate "räsonierende Reflexion" as "the arguments of reflection."
32. See *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, Part 1: Die Wissenschaft der Logik, Vorbegriff, §81, *GW* 20, 119; *S.* 8, 172; *E. L.* 115–116.
33. See especially "Hegels Logik der Reflexion," in Henrich, *Hegel im Kontext*, pp. 95–156.
34. See above, pp. 33–34.
35. Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, p. 91.
36. Jean Cavaillès, *Sur la Logique et la théorie de la science* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 1960), pp. 3–4.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 5. The quotations marks seem to indicate that this is a citation from Hegel, but I have not found the exact source. Cavaillès wrote this essay while in jail for his activities in the French resistance in 1942. He had no access to books. He escaped, was later arrested again and was executed by the Gestapo in 1944. His important work in the philosophy of mathematics remained unfinished.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 78. Cf. Hegel, *GW* 12, 17; *S.* 6, 253; *L.* 27. And see above, pp. 28–29.
39. Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, p. 52, n. 6.

40. Cavaillès, *Logique*, pp. 24 ff.
41. "Un pur travail du langage sur lui-même": see *La Patience du concept*, p. 410.

2 Twists and turns of Hegel's contradiction

1. G. R. G Mure, *A Study of Hegel's Logic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), p. 83.
2. See Chapter 1, p. 29.
3. *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. E. S. Haldane, 3 vols. (New York: The Humanities Press, 1955), 1, pp. 292–293; *S.* 18, 337 (these lectures have not yet been published in the *Gesammelte Werke*). Since the Haldane translation is very defective, citations from the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* will all be my own translations. See also Lebrun, *La Patience du concept*, p. 282.
4. By "traditional logic" is to be understood the logic of Aristotelian inspiration reformulated in terms of a logic of ideas by the *Logique ou l'art de penser* of Pierre Arnauld and Antoine Nicole (known as "the Port-Royal Logic"), which dominated German logic text-books, including Kant's own. Kant's *Logic*, a compendium of Kant's lectures put together under Kant's supervision by his student Jäsche, was published in 1804. See *The Jäsche Logic*, in Kant's *Lectures on Logic*, trans. J. Michael Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
5. How accurate or well documented Kant's view of Leibniz is, is not my concern here. My hope is only to help our understanding of Hegel's "determinations of reflection" by pointing out their parentage with, and distinction from, the "concepts of reflection" Kant expounds in the Amphiboly of Concepts of Reflection in support of his polemic against rational metaphysics.
6. For this distinction in Kant, see B146–147.
7. Cf. above, p. 46.
8. Here I am referring of course to the contradictions reason inevitably falls into, according to Kant, when attempting to determine as an object "the totality of conditions for a given conditioned" i.e. the concept of a world-whole. These contradictions are expounded in the Antinomies of Pure Reason: see A405/B432-A460-B488. On the relation between Hegel's notion of contradiction and Kant's Antinomies of Pure Reason, see pp. 75–77.
9. Cf. above, Chapter 1, pp. 33–35.
10. Cf. *GW* 11, 245; *S.* 6, 18; *L.* 394: "Essence is *superseded being* [Das Wesen is das *aufgehobene Sein*]" (Hegel's emphasis). "Aufheben," and its cognates, connotes the idea of something that is negated at one level only to be maintained in a higher, more inclusive mode of thinking. The whole realm of being is thus "superseded" in essence.
11. Cf. above, pp. 41–42.
12. See Hegel's denunciation of what he calls the "First Attitude of Thought to Objectivity" in the Preliminary Concept of the *Encyclopedia Logic*: *GW* 20, 69–74; *S.* 8, 93–106; *E. L.* §26–36, 47–59.
13. "Positing reflection" and "external reflection" have corresponding figures of thought in the first two "Attitudes of Thought to Objectivity," described in the Preliminary Concept of the *Encyclopedia Logic*. These attitudes are, for

the first, dogmatic metaphysics, and for the second, empiricism and critical philosophy. The parallel between the two texts – Greater Logic and *Encyclopedia Logic* – is very instructive in these two cases. But the third "attitude of thought" described in the Preliminary Concept is the "immediate knowing" of Jacobi, in which Hegel denounces a return to the naive metaphysics of the first attitude. Far from advocating such a return, Hegel puts forward *determining reflection*, the third moment of reflection in the Doctrine of Essence. Note that to the extent that they are considered not in isolation, but in the unity of the process of reflection, the two "moments" of positing reflection and external reflection are not reducible to dogmatic metaphysics on the one hand, and empiricism and critical philosophy on the other. Rather, they show that in these philosophical positions, necessary moments of thought are arbitrarily fixed instead of moving on to a further stage of reflection.

14. Cf. Hegel, *Science de la Logique*, vol. 1, bk 2: "La Doctrine de l'Essence," 1812 edn, intro. and notes by Pierre-Jean Labarrière and Gwendolyn Jarczyk (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1976), pp. 34–35, n. 2.
15. See above, pp. 44–46.
16. The additions to the main text of the *Enzyklopädie* found in the Suhrkamp edition are not printed in the Meiner edition of Hegel's *Gesammelte Werke*. For this reason, citations of these passages will not include a reference to the *Gesammelte Werke*.
17. Cf. above, Chapter 1, pp. 28–30.
18. Mure helpfully emphasizes this reference in his commentary of the *Science of Logic*: Mure, *Hegel's Logic*, pp. 99–102. Cf. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, bk 1, Part 1, section 4 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 11.
19. Hegel borrows this image from Leibniz; see *Nouveaux essais sur l'entendement humain*, chronology, intro. and notes by Jacques Brunschwig (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1990); trans. Jonathan Bennet and Peter Remnant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), ch. 27, §3; Kant discusses Leibniz's view on a different example, that of two drops of water, in the Amphiboly of Concepts of Reflection: see A263–264/B319–320.
20. See above, p. 47.
21. See above, p. 53.
22. Immanuel Kant, *Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy*, in *Theoretical Philosophy, 1755–1770*, trans. David Walford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
23. For example, *GW* 11, 277; *S.* 6, 61–62; *L.* 429: "In −8 + 3, the 3 positive units are negative in 8. The opposites are cancelled in their combination. An hour's journey to the east and the same journey to the west, cancels the first journey; an amount of liabilities reduces the assets by the same amount, and an amount of assets cancels a similar amount of liabilities." Cf. Kant, *Negative Magnitudes*, 2:175–176.
24. See Kant, *Negative Magnitudes*, 2:169. Although this is a pre-critical text, it should be noted that Kant's position remains unchanged in the critical period, indeed Kant's analysis in the pre-critical text on negative magnitudes is a major step on the way to his critical position. In the latter too he maintains that positive and negative magnitudes, both in pure mathematics and their

application to empirically given magnitudes in nature, are defined only in relation to one another, while also maintaining that outside this relation, all real determinations are *positive*: outside the *relation* in which positive and negative magnitudes are defined with respect to one another, "negation" means only absence, *privation*: see A291–292/B348–349.

25. Strictly speaking, this is not true for Kant either, in the critical period: things, or empirical substances, are *nothing but relations*: see A285/B341. But Hegel extends the point to any qualitative *determinations* or *properties*: *all* determinations are what they are only relative to one another. I say more about this point below.
26. Of course, this is only true of Kant if one takes into account the use Kant makes in the critical period of the insights he first introduces in the precritical *Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy*. On this point, see n. 24.
27. Cf. above, p. 41.
28. The "relation of whole and parts" is the first figure of the "essential relation" that is the object of Section 2, Chapter 3, in the Doctrine of Essence ("Appearance"). See *GW* 11, 254–259; *S.* 6, 166–172; *L.* 513–518.
29. See below, Chapter 3, pp. 107–108.
30. It is worth noting here that Kant's "condition" and "conditioned" are not the same as Hegel's. Any member in the series of sensible things or determinations is both *condition* for the next in the series and *conditioned* by the preceding. But for Hegel, it is the *ground* (as the thought of the totality of relations) that is conditioned by the *conditions* (the particular terms or *relata*). We shall encounter this transformation of the Kantian terminology again and again. It is of course more than a mere change of terminology: what matters to Hegel is always the relation between a totality of relations and the particular elements thus related. This point will become more and more apparent in the following chapters: see in particular Chapter 4, pp. 130–131, and Chapter 5, p. 184.
31. For Kant's exposition of the pattern common to all four Antinomies, see A462–476/B490–504.
32. Galvano Della Volpe, *Logic as a Positive Science*, trans. Jon Rothschild (London: New Library, 1980); Lucio Colletti, *Marxism and Hegel*, trans. Lawrence Garner (London: Verso, 1973).
33. Della Volpe, *Logic*, p. 48. For the relevant chapters of the *Phenomenology*, see *GW* 9, 63–102; *S.* 3, 82–136; *Phen.* 58–103.
34. For the exposition and complete discussion of Aristotle's critique, see Della Volpe, *Logic*, pp. 88–108. For *diairesis* in Plato, cf. *The Sophist*, 253d–263d, and *The Politic* in Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997). For Aristotle's criticism, see *Analytica Priora*, I, 31, and *Analytica Posteriora*, II, 5, in Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. W. D. Ross, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, intro. C. D. C. Reeve (New York: The Modern Library, 2001; repr. from 1st edn, Random House, 1947).
35. Della Volpe, *Logic*, p. 159.
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*

38. Colletti, *Marxism and Hegel*, p. 102.
39. In these pages from the Introduction to the Doctrine of the Concept, Hegel discusses Kant's view of the relation between concepts and intuitions in cognition, and cites Kant's well-known sentence: "Intuitions without concepts are blind, concepts without intuition are empty." He notes that Kant's view of the relation between sensibility and understanding belongs to a psychology of cognition, and adds that in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which is a doctrine of consciousness, he too (Hegel) has presented sense-certainty and perception as preceding and preparing understanding. But these distinctions, he says, do not belong in the *Science of Logic*.
40. Is it completely absurd to compare this "exposition of God" to what Nelson Goodman writes: "Without presuming to instruct the Gods or other worldmakers, or attempting any comprehensive or systematic survey, I want to illustrate and comment on some of the processes that go into worldmaking" (*Ways of World-Making* [Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1979], p. 7). Goodman would certainly not have approved of this comparison. And it is true that Hegel, for his part, does want, if not to instruct God, at least to undertake "a systematic survey" of world-making. In drawing this parallel between Hegel and Goodman, I mean to emphasize once again that Hegel's *Science of Logic* is first and foremost an attack on the metaphysics of Kant's rationalist predecessors.

3 *Ground* against *concept*?

1. Cf. above, Chapter 2, p. 55.
2. Cf. *GW* 12, 17–18; *S.* 6, 254–255; *L.* 584–585. Cf. above, Chapter 1, p. 18.
3. Formal ground, real ground, and complete ground are the three moments of determinate ground. See *GW* 11, 302–314; *S.* 6, 96–112; *L.* 466–469. Law: see *GW* 11, 342–347; *S.* 6, 150–156; *L.* 500–505. Force: see *GW* 11, 359–364; *S.* 6, 172–179; *L.* 518–523. Formal Actuality: see *GW* 11, 381–385; *S.* 6, 202–207; *L.* 542–546. Causality: see *GW* 11, 396–407; *S.* 6, 222–237; *L.* 558–569. Reciprocal Action [*Wechselwirkung*]: see *GW* 11, 407–409; *S.* 6, 237–240; *L.* 569–571.
4. "Law" and "Force" belong to Section 2 of the Doctrine of Essence: "Appearance." "Formal Actuality," "Relation of Causality," and "Reciprocal Action" belong to Section 3: "Actuality." Recall that "Ground" is the third and last chapter of Section 1, "Essence as Reflection in itself" ("*Wesen als Reflexion in ihm selbst*").
5. See *GW* 12, 90–126; *S.* 6, 351–402; *L.* 664–704. On the meaning and role of syllogism in the Doctrine of the Concept, see below, Chapter 6, pp. 214–216.
6. I borrow the expression "relation of relations" from Labarrière and Jarczyk: see below, n. 14. On Althusser's criticism, see pp. 100–104 and n. 15.
7. Newton, *Optics*, quoted in Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Copernican Revolution: Planetary Astronomy in the Development of Western Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 259.
8. On this reversal, cf. H. G. Gadamer, "Hegels verkehrte Welt," in *Hegels Dialektik: fünf hermeneutische Studien* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1971). Gadamer does

not make the comparison I am proposing here between this chapter of the *Phenomenology* and "formal ground" in the Logic.

9. Marx, *Critique of Hegel's "Philosophy of Right"*, trans. Annette Jolin and Joseph O'Malley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 8. "Subject" should be understood in the metaphysical sense: substrate, bearer of properties (what Marx calls "predicates").
10. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 36. These texts are cited by Della Volpe, *Logic*, pp. 120–123.
12. We could take even further the suggestion of an empiricist inspiration of Hegel's criticism of formal ground. When Della Volpe, in yet another expression of his anger at Hegel, cites John Dewey against Hegelian hypostasis, one cannot but note the proximity between Dewey's formulations and Hegel's own, among which those I quoted above. See Della Volpe, *Logic*, pp. 122–123, n. 117. Among other passages from Dewey, Della Volpe cites the following: "The essential error of the rationalist tradition in logical theory consists in taking the consistency of the constituents of the *conceptual* contents (which form the *predicate*) as a final criterion of truth or assertability. Subject-matter which, in its logical form, is a means for performing experimental activities to modify prior existences, is mistaken to be final and complete in itself. Thereby an inherent ontological status is imputed to it" (John Dewey, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* [New York: H. Holt and Company, 1938], p. 132). This could be straight out of Hegel's criticism of formal ground. It remains that the empiricist inspiration is only a moment in Hegel's Logic, a moment that is superseded as soon as it is formulated. We therefore need to understand how and why it is never formulated without already being superseded.
13. Here I summarize Hegel's explanations in the section on "real ground," *GW* 11, 307–309; *S.* 6, 102–105; *L.* 461–463.
14. See Labarrière and Jarczyk, *Science de la Logique*, p. 129, n. 173.
15. Louis Althusser, *Reading Capital*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), p. 187.
16. Cf., for example, Engels' letter to F. A. Lange of 29 March 1865, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, trans. I. Lasker, ed. S. Ryazanskaya, 2nd rev. edn (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965): "The absurdities of detail in Hegel's philosophy of nature I grant you readily enough, but his *real* philosophy of nature is to be found in the second part of his Logic, in the Doctrine of Essence, the true kernel of the whole theory. [...] I am of course no longer a Hegelian, but I still have a great feeling of devotion and piety towards the colossal old chap."
17. See Plato, *Meno*, 81a–82a.
18. Cf., for example, Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1973), p. 5: "Contradiction is nonidentity under the aspect of identity; the dialectical primacy of the principle of contradiction makes the thought of unity the measure of heterogeneity. As the heterogeneous collides with its limit it exceeds itself." Or p. 146: "The antithesis of thought to whatever is heterogeneous to thought is reproduced in thought itself, as its immanent contradiction."
19. Bourgeois, *Présentation de G. W. F. Hegel*, p. 109.

20. "Determinate ground," with its three moments ("formal ground," "real ground," and "complete ground"), leads to "Condition" and the second section in "Condition" is "the Absolutely Unconditioned": see *GW* 11, 316–319; *S.* 6, 115–119; *L.* 472–474.

4 What is rational is actual, what is actual is rational

1. See, for instance, this striking statement of the Introduction to the *Principles of the Philosophy of Right*: "Philosophy [. . . shows] that it is the concept alone [. . .] which has *actuality*, and further in such a way that it gives this actuality to itself" (*S.* 7, 29; *R.* 25).
2. Cf. what I say in the Introduction (p. 5) about Hegel's *Science of Logic* providing at once a metaphysical and a transcendental deduction (in Kant's sense) of the concepts of metaphysics.
3. More precisely: "Contingency, or Formal Actuality, Possibility and Necessity": *GW* 11, 381–385; *S.* 6, 202–207; *L.* 542–546; "Relative Necessity, or Real Actuality, Possibility and Necessity": *GW* 11, 385–389; *S.* 6, 207–213; *L.* 546–550; "Absolute Necessity": *GW* 11, 389–392; *S.* 6, 213–217; *L.* 550–554). These titles will be explained in the corresponding sections of the present chapter.
4. See, for example, Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Z, 14–16, 1039^{a}–1041^{a}. Cf. Hegel, *S.* 19, 155; *H. P.* 2, 139–140.
5. Commentators note more often the equivalence between *Tätigkeit* in Hegel and ἐνέργεια in Aristotle. Hegel himself indicates at least as often the equivalence between his notion of actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) and Aristotle's ἐνέργεια (cf. in particular the chapter on Aristotle in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, *S.* 19, 132–248; *H. P.* 2, 117–131). There is a reason for this twofold correspondence. When we succeed in thinking actuality in its absolute necessity, we shall see that it is nothing else than *activity* (*Tätigkeit*): activity of the form, i.e. of reflection. See below, conclusion to Part I, pp. 160–162.
6. The confusion of "laws of thought" for determinations of things: see *GW* 11, 259; *S.* 6, 37–38; *L.* 410–411. Cf. above, Chapter 2, p. 45. The confusion of regularities in given entities for abstract entities having their own separate existence: see the criticism of formal ground, *GW* 11, 304–307; *S.* 6, 98–102; *L.* 458–61. Cf. above, Chapter 3, pp. 94–97.
7. Bourgeois, *Encyclopédie des sciences philosophiques, I: La Science de la Logique*, p. 576, n. 3.
8. Cf. Yvon Belaval, *Etudes Leibniziennes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), p. 275.
9. Cf. Lebrun, *La Patience du concept*, p. 350.
10. Whether rationality is itself contingent on divine free will (Descartes) or has a necessity of its own (Leibniz). Cf. Yvon Belaval, *Leibniz critique de Descartes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), pp. 372 ff.
11. On this distinction, see above, pp. 28–30.
12. On this point, see above, Chapter 1, pp. 18–21.
13. Cf. p. 111: "Actuality is the *unity of essence and existence*; in it, *formless* essence and *unstable* appearance, or subsistence devoid of determination and multiplicity devoid of subsistence have their truth" (*GW* 11, 369; *S.* 6, 186; *L.* 529).

14. Labarrière and Jarczyk point out (*Science de la Logique*, p. 145, n. 1) that the "appearance" being for Hegel "the manifestation without left-over of both the inner and the outer," "we must get rid of its Kantian connotations as much as possible." It seems to me that, on the contrary, *because* Hegel constructs his "appearance" (*Erscheinung*) in an explicit polemic against Kant, the Kantian connotation is essential to the comprehension of this whole section.
15. This is the topic of Chapter 2, which expounds the dialectic of the modal categories.
16. It is presumptuous to talk of "classical metaphysics" without further precision, and even more presumptuous to do so in reference to a problem so complex and controversial as that of the modal categories. My only justification is that I am referring to the paradigm that Hegel calls "formal" (formal ground, formal modal categories) and that Kant calls dogmatic metaphysics. Kant's Copernican Revolution and Hegel's transformation of it are defined in opposition to it. The purest representative is Leibniz, but what Hegel, like Kant, mostly has in mind are probably the post-Leibnizian German rationalists (Wolff, Baumgarten). As shown by the final paragraphs of his exposition of "formal" modality, he also has in mind Schelling's and Fichte's attempts at an a priori "construction" of what is empirically given.
17. Cf. Belaval, *Leibniz critique de Descartes*, pp. 374–375.
18. Jules Vuillemin, *Physique et métaphysique kantiennes* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955).
19. Cf. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 10: "[Hegel] remains in the reflected element of 'representation', within simple generality. He represents concepts instead of dramatizing Ideas: he creates a false theatre, a false drama, a false movement. We must see how Hegel betrays and distorts the immediate in order to ground his dialectic in that incomprehension, and to introduce mediation in a movement which is no more than that of his own thought and its generalities." Against this interpretation of Hegel's philosophy as "representation," see Lebrun, *La Patience du concept*, pp. 371–372, n. 5.
20. Cf. above, Chapters 2 and 3: positing reflection, external reflection, determining reflection; formal ground, real ground, complete ground.
21. One could object that this example is of a different nature altogether; for the general laws of motion are not obtained through the thoughtless application of the principle of identity, as is the case for the ironical examples Hegel gives in the *Encyclopedia*. This is what makes my example more plausible, but would also tend to prove that Hegel is attacking windmills, so caricatural is his presentation of the "formal" approach. However, I believe that the example I am proposing is faithful to what Hegel is trying to show: to try to define the possibility of something, whatever it is, independently of the specific relations in which the entity under consideration is given to thought, is to remain limited to the ultimate authority of what is, of brute facts. This is why "formal possibility" leads on its own movement towards another type of approach, that which defines "real possibility."
22. Compare again with Kant, A244/B302: "No one has ever been able to define possibility, existence, and necessity except through obvious tautologies if

he wanted to draw their definition solely from the pure understanding. For the deception of substituting the logical possibility of the *concept* (the fact that it does not contradict itself) for the transcendental possibility of *things* (where an object corresponds to the concept) can deceive and satisfy only the inexperienced."

23. In denouncing philosophers' attempts to "construct a priori" the contingent, Hegel's target is clearly not just classical metaphysics, but the post-Kantian German idealists, Fichte and Schelling, whom he thus accuses of falling back into patterns of thought that Kant should have sufficiently warned against.
24. See above, Chapter 3, p. 94.
25. See above, pp. 94–97.
26. See above, pp. 99–105.
27. See, for instance, Mure, *Hegel's Logic*, p. 135; Belaval, "La Doctrine de l'essence chez Hegel et chez Leibniz," in *Etudes leibniziennes*, p. 359.
28. See above, Chapter 3, pp. 105–108.
29. See above, Chapter 3, p. 108 (in "Ground, Conditions, and the Absolutely Unconditioned").
30. On the interpretation of reflecting judgment as reason's reflection on itself, cf. Kroner, *Von Kant bis Hegel*, 1, pp. 245 ff. See also below, Chapter 5, p. 165.
31. Cf. Kant's characterization of modal categories: they express "the relation [of the object] to the faculty of cognition" (A219/B266). "The postulate for cognizing the *actuality* of things [i.e.: 'That which is connected with the material conditions of experience (sensation) is actual'] requires *perception*, thus sensation of which one is conscious – not immediate perception of the object itself the existence of which is to be cognized, but still its connection with some actual perception in accordance with the analogies of experience, which exhibit all real connection in an experience in general" (A225/B272).
32. Cf. above, p. 122.
33. Cf. above, Chapter 3, p. 105.
34. Compare with "formal ground": see above, Chapter 3, p. 95.
35. Cf. above, p. 94, the ridiculous possibilities envisaged by modal formalism. Compare with the irony Kant directed at those who raise questions about the respective extension of the possible and the real. See A230/B282 ff.
36. Mure, *A Study of Hegel's Logic*, pp. 140–141.
37. See above, pp. 129–130 (introductory paragraphs of "real modality").
38. Kroner, *Von Kant bis Hegel*, 1, p. 250.
39. Pp. 238–58.
40. See in particular Kant's solution to the antinomy of teleological judgment: 5:397–401.
41. According to Kant, admitting the *possibility* of the hypostasis of the idea belongs to the *legitimate* use of reason (see A673/B701). *Asserting* that hypostasis, as an actual existence, belongs to the illegitimate, dogmatic use of reason (A681–682/B709–710).
42. One final note concerning Hegel's relation to Kant's modal categories. It might seem surprising that precisely in the chapter of the *Science of Logic* where he discusses modality, Hegel nowhere discusses Kant's treatment of modal categories in the Postulates of Empirical Thought, in the first *Critique*.

Although Hegel does not say so explicitly (except, as we have seen, in the case of possibility), Kant's definitions can only be, from his point of view, a first, insufficient step in distancing himself from modal formalism. Hegel's "really actual" is perhaps what is closest to the corresponding Kantian category, insofar as it is the synthesis of content and form, i.e. the synthesis of a given (with all the reservations one must have about this term from the Hegelian perspective) and forms of thought. We have seen how the *really possible* departs from the Kantian possible, which is only formally possible (although the forms with which it must be in agreement include those of sensibility, and although Kant sometimes describes his own transcendental definition of the possible as *real* possibility, as opposed to the merely logical possibility defined by noncontradiction of a concept). Cf. on this point, Bernard Rousset, *La Doctrine kantienne de l'objectivité: L'Autonomie comme Devoir et Devenir* (Paris: Vrin, 1967), pp. 24–26. Finally, where the modality of *necessity* is concerned, it seems to me that Hegel would judge that the necessity of existence defined by Kant is not easily distinguished from contingency and a merely formal necessity, if the explanation I gave above is correct: according to Hegel, if the totality of conditions is not determined, necessity is quickly reduced to the status of merely "formal" necessity. Nevertheless, it remains that Kant's fundamental contribution is the definition of modality as a relation of objective determinations to the unity of the "I think" and not, as it was the case for classical metaphysics, in relation to a rational order determined from God's standpoint. The parallel that I drew between Hegel's "real necessity" and Kant's unity of nature under empirical laws as both "contingent" (for understanding) and "necessary" (from the standpoint of reflective judgment) seems to me to prove that Hegel, even when he is opposed to Kant, thinks within the framework set up by Kant.

43. See above, Introduction, pp. 7–8.
44. See above, Chapter 1, p. 29. Cf. *S.* 6, 253; *L.* 583.
45. The first example is from the *Philosophy of Right* (see *S.* 7, 399; *R.* 276). The others are from the Doctrine of the Concept (see *GW* 12, 36; *S.* 6, 279; *L.* 605).
46. The passage I am referring to is *GW* 11, 391–392; *S.* 6, 215–217; *L.* 552–553: "Absolute necessity is thus the reflection or form of the absolute . . . " to the end of the chapter.
47. Cf. Spinoza, *Ethics*, I, 40, Scholium 2, ed. and trans. Edwin Curley, *The Collected Works of Spinoza* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 477–478.
48. See the last three chapters of the Logic of Essence, i.e. the three chapters of Section 3, "The Absolute Relation": "The Relation of Substantiality," "The Relation of Causality," "Reciprocity."
49. Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, pp. 58–59. Actually, for reasons stated above, I now think this is not the best expression of the situation.
50. Friedrich Engels, *Herr Eugen Dührings Umwälzung der Wissenschaft* (Zurich: Ring-Verlag A.-G., 1934), p. 102; trans. I. Lasker, as *Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science* (New York: International Publishers, 1939), p. 125. "Hegel was the first to present accurately the relation between freedom and necessity. For him, freedom is the intellection of necessity [*die Einsicht in die Notwendigkeit*]. 'Necessity is blind only insofar as it is not conceived [*begriffen*].' Freedom does not consist in the fantasized independence

[*in der geträumten Unabhängigkeit*] with respect to natural laws, but in knowledge of these laws, and in the possibility thereby afforded to systematically use them for definite ends."

51. Cf. Spinoza, *Ethics*, I, Prop. 17, Cor. 2.
52. Cf. the Idea of the True and the Idea of the Good in the final section of the *Science of Logic*; see *S.* 6, 498–548; *L.* 783–823.
53. On this point, cf. Jacques D'Hondt, *Hegel, philosophe de l'histoire vivante* (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1966), pp. 262–290; Henrich, "Hegels Theorie über den Zufall," in *Hegel im Kontext*, pp. 157–186.
54. On this conclusion, and more generally the argument of this Chapter, see the Preface to this book, esp. pp. xix–xx. On Hegel's view of "reason" and its difference from Kant's, see Chapter 5.

Conclusion

1. Part 2 of the *Science of Logic* is called in its entirety "The Subjective Logic or the Doctrine of the Concept." But "The Concept" is also the title of Chapter 1 in Section 1 ("Subjectivity"): see *GW* 12, 32; *S.* 6, 273; *L.* 599. This of course raises the question, whether "concept" means the same in this general title and in Chapter 1. I think they do: Chapter 1 expounds the kernel that unfolds in the whole Part 2, just as Part 2 expounds the kernel that unfolds in the rest of the system. But I cannot develop this point here.
2. This unity has three forms or stages: immediate in "Life" (*GW* 12, 179; *S.* 6, 469; *L.* 761), self-reflective or divided in the Idea of the True and the Idea of the Good (*GW* 12, 199; *S.* 6, 498 and 541; *L.* 783 and 818); fully self-transparent (or the fruit of the return to immediacy after the division of reflection) in "the Absolute Idea" (*GW* 12, 236; *S.* 6, 548; *L.* 825).

5 Point of view of man or knowledge of God. Kant and Hegel on concept, judgment and reason

1. On the "true idea of reason": see "Glauben und Wissen," *GW* 4, 326; *S.* 2, 304; *Faith and Knowledge*, trans. H. S. Harris and W. Cerf (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977), p. 69. On the "trampling down of reason" which is presupposed in Kant's conception of practical reason, see *GW* 4, 338; *S.* 2, 321; *Faith*, 85. The "trampling down of reason" is achieved, according to Hegel, in Kant's criticism of the ontological proof. I shall return to this point later.
2. See *The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate*, *S.* 1, 274–418; trans. in G. W. F. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox, ed. and trans. Richard Kroner (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), pp. 182–301. Knox's translation is from Herman Nohl's edition of *Der Geist des Christentums und ihre Schicksal*, in *Hegels theologische Jugendschriften* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1907). The texts from Hegel's Frankfurt period, to which *Der Geist des Christentums* belongs, will occupy vol. 3 of the Meiner edition, which has not yet been published. I therefore quote only from Suhrkamp, which is a reprint of Nohl's edition.
3. Quotes in support of this claim will be given below in Parts 1 ("Concept"), 2 ("Reason"), and 3 ("Judgment").

4. Cf. *GW* 4, 346; *S.* 2, 333; *Faith*, 96: "The purity of the infinite concept . . . is posited at the same time in the sphere of understanding as the objective, but here in the dimensions of the categories; and on the practical side as *objective law*." Hegel also uses the term "understanding" (*Verstand*) and "what belongs to understanding" (*das Verständige*) instead of "concept" to describe Kant's "pure reason" (cf. for instance *GW* 4, 325, 327, 328–329; *S.* 2, 302, 305, 307; *Faith*, 67, 70, 72). On the other hand, as we shall see, Hegel calls "reason" Kant's intuitive understanding, or his own transformation of it. This shift in vocabulary is essentially maintained all the way into the mature period of Hegel's philosophy (see concluding remarks of this chapter).
5. Cf. the three formulations of the categorical imperative in *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), AA4, 402, 428, 431–432.
6. Cf. *Jäsche Logic*, §1, AA9, 91.
7. Cf. *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), AA5, 28–31.
8. "Unconditioned knowledge," namely knowledge expressed in a proposition which provides the condition for its own truth, either expressed in its subject (in a categorical judgment), or in its antecedent (in a hypothetical judgment) or in the divided concept (in a disjunctive judgment). Therefore "knowledge of the unconditioned," namely knowledge of an object which can be thought as a subject providing a sufficient ground for its synthetic predicates; or, which can be thought as the complete totality of antecedent conditions for a given event; or, which can be thought as the object whose concept is sufficient ground of all positive determinations of things. See A333/B390.
9. Cf. Spinoza: *Ethics*, I, Def. 2, ed. Curley, *Collected Works*, p. 408: "That thing is said to be finite in its own kind (*in suo genere finita*) that can be limited by another of the same nature."
10. I borrow this striking charge against Kant's moral philosophy from the part of Hegel's paper which is devoted to Jacobi. But see similar complaints in the exposition of Kant's philosophy: *GW* 4, 336; *S.* 2, 318; *Faith*, 81. In expounding Kant's Third Antinomy of Pure Reason, Hegel denounces Kant's view of reason, characterized as free but plagued with opposition. This opposition, Hegel says, becomes destructive contradiction when the very emptiness of reason is turned into a content and thus grounds a doctrine of duties.
11. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), §76, AA5, 403–404.
12. I take the notions of "intuitive understanding," "intellectual intuition," and "complete spontaneity of intuition" to have the same referent. An "intellectual intuition" would be a capacity for intuiting which unlike the capacity for intuiting we human beings have, would not depend on being affected by the object. Rather, it would be a capacity immediately to present the object by virtue of thinking it. Correspondingly, an intuitive understanding would be an understanding that would not be reduced to "thinking" (= forming concepts as "general and reflected representations" of individual objects whose representation as such individuals depends on sensibility: cf. *Critique of Pure Reason*, B135), but would present to itself the individual object it

thinks, just by virtue of thinking it. Both intellectual intuition and intuitive understanding would thus be a "pure spontaneity of intuition": an active capacity of the mind to immediately present to itself its individual objects. This is not to say that Kant uses those three expressions indifferently. For an impressive analysis of their different meanings and the contexts in which they are employed, see Eckart Förster, "Die Bedeutung von §§76, 77 der *Kritik der Urteilskraft* für die Entwicklung der nachkantischen Philosophie," *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*, 56/2 (2002), pp. 169–190, esp. p. 179; and 56/3 (2002), pp. 321–345. I do not agree with Förster, however, when he claims that "intellectual intuition" and "intuitive understanding" designate two different capacities (although I think he is correct in claiming that the choice of one or the other expression carries different emphases). Nor do I think that the text supports his claim that Kant is concerned with intellectual intuition in §76 of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, and with intuitive intellect in §77. In both sections, Kant's main concern is to contrast our human understanding with what an intuitive understanding might be. In addition, in §77 he contrasts our own, merely sensible intuition, with what an intellectual intuition would be (cf. AA5, 406; AA5, 409). My claim is that although *sensible intuition* and *discursive understanding* are clearly two different capacities, *intellectual intuition* and *intuitive understanding* are not: with them, there is no more *passive* representational capacity and thus no more *discursive* understanding, and therefore intuition and understanding are now one: intellectual intuition and intuitive understanding.

13. On mechanism according to Kant, see Henry Allison, "Kant's Antinomy of Teleological Judgment," in *System and Teleology in Kant's Critique of Judgment: Spindel Conference 1991*, ed. Hoke Robinson (Memphis: Memphis State University, 1992), pp. 26–28.

14. As Klaus Düsing has pointed out, this does away with Leibniz's distinction between possible, represented in God's intellect, and actual, brought into existence by God's will (see Klaus Düsing, "Ästhetische Einbildungskraft und intuitiver Verstand. Kants Lehre und Hegels spekulativ-idealistische Umdeutung," in *Hegel-Studien*, 21 [1986], pp. 106–107, n. 6). One might then be tempted to say that Kant's intellectual intuition, or intuitive understanding, is more like Spinoza's *deus sive natura* than like Leibniz's infinite intellect. However, it should be noted that not only the distinction between possible and actual but *all* modal categories (including that of necessity) disappear from knowledge of objects in an intuitive understanding (cf. §76, AA5, 403: "if our understanding were intuitive, it would have no objects except what is actual." Also AA5, 403: "I cannot presuppose that in every [cognitive] being thinking and intuiting, hence the possibility and actuality of things, are two different conditions for the exercise of its cognitive faculties. For an understanding to which this distinction did not apply, all objects that I cognize would *be* [exist], and the possibility of some that did not exist, i.e. their contingency if they did exist, as well as the necessity that is to be distinguished from that, would not enter into the representation of such a being at all.") Why does Kant nevertheless persist in describing as an "absolutely necessary being" the putative object of an intuitive understanding, which

as such is "an indispensable idea of reason but an unattainable problematic concept for the human understanding" (AA5, 402)? Perhaps because it is a representation formed by *our discursive* reason, for which modal categories of course hold even in its consideration of an understanding for which they would lose the meaning we give them by virtue of the discursive nature of our understanding. This uneasy transition from discursive reason to intuitive understanding and the annihilation, in intuitive understanding, of all familiar modal determinations, is I think a major source for the transition, in the mature *Science of Logic*, from Hegel's exposition of modal categories in the last chapter of the Doctrine of Essence, to the Doctrine of the Concept where necessity gives way to freedom: see *GW* 11, 380–392 and 408–409; *S.* 6, 200–217 and 239–240; *L.* 541–43 and 570–571. I will have more to say, at the end of this chapter, about the ways in which Hegel's confrontation with Kant in *Faith and Knowledge* helps clarify important aspects of his mature system.

15. Thus unlike Förster, I do not see Kant as introducing the notion of intellectual intuition in connection with his discussion of modal categories, but that of intuitive understanding in connection with his discussion of mechanism and teleology as principles of merely reflective judgment applied to organisms (see Förster, "Die Bedeutung von §§76, 77 in der *Kritik der Urteilskraft*," p. 177). I think the two issues are intimately connected, and with respect to *both*, Kant contrasts our "merely discursive" understanding with what an intuitive understanding would be. I think, moreover, that since in such an understanding *concepts* and *intuitions* would not be distinct, this understanding would also be what Kant calls *intellectual intuition* (where "understanding" and "intuition" are understood both as a *capacity* and as the *actualization of that capacity in the production of representations*). However, when Kant uses the latter expression it is to contrast intellectual intuition with our own, *sensible* intuition. When he uses the former it is to contrast intuitive understanding with our own, *discursive* understanding. Only in our own, finite cognitive capacities do the two notions (intuition, understanding) fall out of each other. Our understanding is discursive (not intuitive) *because* our intuition is sensible (not active). An intuition that would be "pure spontaneity of intuition" would be, at one stroke, intuitive understanding and intellectual intuition.
16. "It is not necessary to prove that such an *intellectus archetypus* is possible, but only that in the contrasting it with our discursive, image-dependent understanding (*intellectus ectypus*), and in considering the contingency of such a constitution of our understanding, we are led to this idea (of an *intellectus archetypus*) and that it does not contain any contradiction" (AA5, 408).
17. "In order to be able at least to think the possibility of such an agreement of things in nature with the power of judgment (an agreement that we think as contingent, and therefore as possible only through a purpose directed towards it) we must think at the same time another understanding, in relation to which and before any purpose attributed to it, we can represent this agreement of natural laws with our power of judgment, which for our understanding is thinkable only through the mediation of purposes, as *necessary*" (AA5, 407).

The role of the supposition of a higher understanding in grounding the unity of nature under empirical laws is announced in the Introduction to the *Critique of Judgment*: see AA5, 180. However, there Kant merely mentions "an understanding (even if it is not ours) . . . [which makes possible] a system of experience in accordance with particular laws of nature." The concept of an intuitive understanding is not mentioned before §76, in the course of the solution to the dialectic of teleological judgment.

18. Cf. A577/B605: "The transcendental major premise which is presupposed in the complete determination of all things is therefore no other than the representation of the sum of all reality; it is not merely a concept which, as regards its transcendental content, comprehends all predicates *under itself*; it also contains them *within itself*; and the complete determination of any and everything rests on the limitation of this *total* reality." This idea of a "sum of all reality" in turn leads to that of the *ens realissimum* as the *ground* of all reality or positive determination in finite things: "All possibility of things (that is, of the synthesis of the manifold in respect of its content) must therefore be regarded as derivative, with only one exception, namely, the possibility of that which includes in itself all reality. . . . All negations (which are the only predicates through which anything can be distinguished from an *ens realissimum*) are merely limitations of a greater, and ultimately the highest, reality" (A578/B606). I analyze these difficult texts in "The Transcendental Ideal, and the Unity of the Critical System," *Proceedings of the Eighth International Kant-Congress* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1995), vol. 1/ii, pp. 521–539 (revised in *Kant and the Human Standpoint* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005], ch. 8).
19. On the relation between "subjective universality" and "objective universality" of empirical judgments and the contrast between the latter and the "subjective universality" of aesthetic judgments, see my "Kant et les jugements empiriques: jugements de perception et jugements d'expérience," *Kant-Studien*, 86 (1995), pp. 278–307. See also *Kant and the Capacity to Judge: Sensibility and Discursivity in Transcendental Analytic of the Critique of Pure Reason* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), ch. 8 (originally published as *Kant et le Pouvoir de juger: Sensibilité et discursivité dans l'Analytique Transcendantale de la "Critique de la Raison Pure"* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1993); and *Kant on the Human Standpoint*, ch. 10.
20. Indeed, Kant sometimes calls "concept" this very activity. Cf. *Critique of Pure Reason*, A103 ("On the Synthesis of Recognition in Concept"): "The word 'concept' could already lead us by itself to this remark. Indeed, it is this consciousness which unifies in a representation the manifold which has been successively intuited, and then reproduced."
21. Here Hegel's debt to Schelling is most apparent. Cf. Düsing, "Ästhetische Einbildungskraft und intuitiver Verstand."
22. This is Kant's characterization of space and time in the Transcendental Aesthetic: cf. A25/B39, A32/B48.
23. "Unnatural scholastic trick" is a loose quote from Kant's criticism of the ontological proof: cf. A603/B631.
24. Cf. Klaus Düsing, *Das Problem der Subjektivität in Hegels Logik* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1976), pp. 109–112; Manfred Baum, *Die Entstehung der Hegelschen Dialektik* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1986), pp. 199–200; Robert Pippin,

Hegel's Idealism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 80–86; Béatrice Longuenesse: "Hegel, Lecteur de Kant sur le Jugement," *Philosophie*, 36 (Autumn 1992), pp. 42–70 (now translated as Chapter 6 in the present book).

25. *Jäsche Logic* §36, AA9, 606–607; *Refl.* 3042, AA16, 629; *Refl.* 4634, AA17, 616. *Critique of Pure Reason*, A68–69/B93–94. See also my *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*, pp. 86–88 and 108–11.
26. This also means that "subsumption" acquires in this context a new meaning, since the traditional relations between *Umfang* and *Inhalt* are superseded. Cf. Düsing, *Subjektivität*, p. 161. See also Hegel's remarks on this point in his mature *Subjective Logic*: *GW* 12, 56–57; *S.* 6, 308–309; *L.* 628–629.
27. Cf. A581–582/B609–610. "An object of the senses can be completely determined only if it is compared with all the predicates of appearances, and is represented positively or negatively by means of these predicates. But because that which constitutes the thing itself (in the appearance), i.e. the real, must be given, because otherwise it could not be thought, but that in which the real of all appearance is given is one all-embracing experience, the matter of the possibility of all objects of the senses must be presupposed as given in a complete whole [*in einem Inbegriffe*] on the limitation of which alone all possibility of empirical objects, their differences among one another and their complete determination can rely . . . " I have commented on this passage in "Transcendental Ideal," *Kant on the Human Standpoint*, ch. 8. See also my *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*, pp. 306–310. On space and time as formal intuitions, cf. B161n., A430/B457n.
28. *GW* 4, 326–327; *S.* 2, 304; *Faith*, 69: "What happened to Kant is what he reproached Hume for, namely he was far from thinking the task of philosophy with sufficient determination and universality, but remained within the *subjective* and external meaning of this question ['How are synthetic a priori judgments possible?'], and believed that he had exhibited the impossibility of rational knowledge; according to his conclusions everything called philosophy would end up being a mere folly of illusory rational insight."
29. As the *Science of Logic* will confirm, Hegel has a poor opinion of Kant's analysis of mathematical judgments as synthetic a priori; see *S.* 5, 237–238; *L.* 207–208 (note that the relevant *Anmerkung* in the Meiner edition [see *GW* 11, 128] does not contain the criticism of Kant I am referring to here; this is because the version available in vol. 11 of Meiner is that of the 1812 edition of the *Science of Logic*; the version made available by Suhrkamp is the 1831 edition, for which Hegel revised only vol. 1, bk 1, "Being"; Hegel's revision of the whole book was interrupted by his death in 1830). Where the Analogies of Experience are concerned, in *Faith and Knowledge* Hegel chastises Kant for having reduced his principles of pure understanding to mere subjective principles (*GW* 4, 331; *S.* 2, 311; *Faith*, 75–76).
30. For a long time, this has not been a very fashionable thing to say in anglophone Kant-commentary. Kant's theory of imagination and the whole "imaginary topic of transcendental psychology" (Strawson) were to be excused from the table of serious philosophy. But the fact is that understanding Kant's theory of imagination is an essential condition for understanding his relation to his idealist successors as well as to his empiricist predecessors.

31. "The original synthetic unity of apperception comes to the fore in the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories, and is recognized as being also the principle of the figurative synthesis, or of the forms of intuition, and space and time themselves are conceived as synthetic unities and productive imagination: spontaneity and absolute synthetic activity are conceived as the principle of sensibility, which before had been characterized merely as receptivity. This original synthetic unity [...] is the principle of the productive imagination, of the unity which is blind, drowned in difference and not distinguishing itself from it; and of the unity positing identically the difference, but differentiating itself from it, as understanding" (*GW* 4, 327; *S.* 2, 304–305; *Faith*, 70). On Kant's "analytic unity of apperception," cf. B134n.
32. See Sally Sedgwick, "Pippin on Hegel's Critique of Kant," *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 33/3 (Sept. 1993), pp. 00–00.
33. Cf. *GW* 4, 329; *S.* 2, 307–308; *Faith*, 73. *GW* 12, 17–18; *S.* 6, 254; *L.* 58. On the evolution of Hegel's thought between the early Jena period and the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, cf. Rolf-Peter Horstmann, "Probleme der Wandlungen in Hegels Jenaer Systemkonzeptionen," *Philosophische Rundschau*, 19 (1972), pp. 87–118; H. S. Harris, *Hegel's Development, II: Night Thoughts (Jena 1801–1806)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983); Baum, *Entstehung der Hegelschen Dialektik*; and Bernard Bourgeois, *Le Droit Natural de Hegel* (Paris: Vrin, 1986).
34. I thank Ken Westphal for questioning me on this point.
35. Cf. *GW* 12, 25–27; *S.* 6, 262–264; *L.* 591–592. See also my "Hegel, Lecteur de Kant sur le Jugement," translated as Chapter 6 in this volume.
36. On this point, see Chapter 6, below.

6 Hegel on Kant on judgment

1. For a more detailed exposition and analysis of these themes in Hegel, see Chapter 5 in this book.
2. See, for instance, *Christianity*, *S.* 1, 274–418; trans. Knox, pp. 182–301.
3. See A307/B364: "Reason in its logical use seeks the universal condition of its judgment (its conclusion), and the syllogism is nothing but a judgment mediated by the subsumption of its condition under a universal rule (the major premise). Now since this rule is once again exposed to this same attempt of reason, and the condition of its condition thereby has to be sought (by means of a prosyllogism) as far as we may, we see very well that the proper principal [*Grundsatz*] of reason in general (in its logical use) is to find the unconditioned for conditioned cognitions of the understanding, with which its unity will be completed."
4. See *GW* 12, 52; *S.* 6, 301; *L.* 622: "[The Concept's] return to itself is therefore the absolute and original division of itself [*die absolute, ursprüngliche Teilung seiner*]; or, as Individuality, it is posited as *Judgment* [*als Urteil gesetzt*]." *GW* 20, 182; *S.* 8, 316; *E. L.* §166, 244: "The *etymological* meaning of '*Urteil*' in our language is more profound and expresses the unity of the Concept as what comes first, and its distinction as the *original* division [*ursprüngliche Teilung*], which is what the judgment truly is."
5. The "complete crushing of reason" refers to Kant's critique of the ontological proof, which Hegel examines just before the passage cited.

6. On this point, see Eckart Förster, "Bedeutung von §§76, 77 in der *Kritik der Urteilskraft*," pp. 170, 179–180.
7. See *GW* 12, 11; *S.* 6, 245; *L.* 577: "From this side, and in general, the concept must be looked upon as the third term (where being and essence, or the immediate and reflection, are the other two). In this regard, being and essence are the moments of its becoming; but the concept is their foundation and truth, as that identity in which they have been submerged and are contained. They are contained in it because it is their result, but no longer as being and as essence: they have this latter determination only in so far as they have not yet passed back into this their unity."
8. Cf. A145–146/B185: "Thus the schemata of the concepts of pure understanding are the true and sole conditions for providing them with a relation to objects, thus with significance, and hence the categories are in the end of none but a possible empirical use, since they merely serve to subject appearances to general rules of synthesis through grounds of an a priori necessary unity (on account of the necessary unification of all consciousness in an original apperception), and thereby to make them fit for a thoroughgoing connection in one experience. All of our cognitions, however, lie in the entirety of all possible experience, and transcendental truth, which precedes all empirical truth and makes it possible, consists in the general relation to this."
9. Cf. the distinction between "correctness" and "truth" in the *Encyclopedia Logic* (S. 8, 369; *E. L.* §213ad., 287): "Truth is understood first to mean that I *know* how something *is*. But this is truth only in relation to consciousness; it is formal truth, mere correctness. In contrast with this, truth in the deeper sense means that objectivity is identical with the Concept."
10. Cf. *GW* 9, 60; *S.* 3, 78; *Phen.* 54–55: "Since consciousness thus finds that its knowledge does not correspond to its object, the object itself does not stand the test; in other words, the criterion for testing is altered when that for which it was to have been the criterion fails to pass the test; and the testing is not only a testing of what we know, but also a testing of the criterion of what knowing is. *Inasmuch as the new true object issues from it*, this *dialectical* movement which consciousness exercises on itself and which affects both its knowledge and its object, is precisely what is called *experience* [*Erfahrung*]."
11. For Kant's argument on this point, see A66–76/B91–102.
12. Note that in this example, the judgment has no quantitative determination: the subject of the judgment is neither *this* rose, nor *some* roses, nor *all* roses, but a "something" immediately present that we call rose, and to which is attributed the property of having a fragrant smell.
13. See my analysis of this section above, Chapter 4, pp. 141–148.
14. See my suggestions concerning this transition in Chapter 4, p. 158; also, Chapter 5, p. 234.

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Note: No entry has been given for "Kant," or for *Critique of Pure Reason* (although entries are present for *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and for a few others of Kant's works). The reason is that the comparison of Hegel's views with Kant's, especially in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, is present throughout this book. It made as little sense to have an entry "Kant" or *Critique of Pure Reason* as to have an entry "Hegel" or *Science of Logic*. Correspondingly, the reader will need to consider carefully, for each entry, whether a particular reference is to an explanation of Kant's view, or of Hegel's view, or of both. Page numbers in italics and bold letters are references to full chapters devoted to the referenced notion (in such a case particular pages in the chapter are also mentioned afterwards when they are especially relevant); page numbers in italics are references to sections of chapters or to several consecutive pages devoted to the referenced notion.

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