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Kant, Hegel, and the Transcendental Unity of Apperception

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DEDICATION

To

small things

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Kant, Hegel, and the Transcendental Unity of Apperception

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This dissertation focuses on the transcendental unity of apperception in the work of two major German philosophers: Kant and Hegel. The transcendental unity of apperception was first described by Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, where he gave it pride of place in his system of transcendental idealism. There, it was posited as a condition on the subject's representations, such that they must form a necessary unity in order to constitute experience of an object. While Hegel does not make the phrase 'transcendental unity of apperception' a central one his work, he and other post-Kantian German idealists can be read as transforming this central Kantian insight. Specifically, as I argue in my second chapter, Hegel criticizes Kant's construal of the unity of apperception as a condition among representations alone, and several commonly distinguished Hegelian criticisms of Kant can be understood as consequences of this central objection. Hegel's criticism of Kant on this point also creates a valuable point of entry into his own sometimes-obscure positive philosophical claims. In the third chapter, I make use of this by identifying Hegel's conception of Thought as the successor concept to the transcendental unity of apperception in Kant. By reading Thought as a transformation of the unity of apperception - a transformation that takes it from a condition on representations to a condition on reality as a

whole - I am able to provide a reading of Hegel that does justice to his more metaphysically-loaded texts as well as to his claims to be doing properly post-Kantian metaphysics.

INTRODUCTION

"Kant and Hegel disagree on their answer to the question: what *is* the unity of apperception?"[1]
- Béatrice Longuenesse

The aim of this dissertation is simple: to describe the transformation of an idea. More specifically, that idea is the transcendental unity of apperception originally put forward by Kant. My aim is to study how Hegel takes this idea and transforms it from a condition on the subject's representations to a condition on reality as a whole.[2] That Kant and Hegel are philosophers worthy of study is a claim that needs no defense; both could legitimately claim to among the most influential thinkers in history. Kant's ideas, in particular, continue to be of importance 200 years after his death in fields as disparate as computer science, philosophy of perception, and metaethics. And while Hegel's influence is perhaps less explicit, his ideas have impacted the vast majority of philosophers in the continental tradition, and the analytic tradition, too, was in part born out of Russell and Moore's reaction to Hegel's British disciples. And that is to say nothing of his student, Karl Marx, whose ideas have literally shaped the world in a quite tangible way.

Perhaps more important, then, is the question: why the transcendental unity of apperception? This esoteric phrase disguises, with its obscure terminology, one of the most important concepts in Kant's philosophy.[3] Indeed, Kant himself describes it as "the supreme principle of all use of the understanding."[4] Yet it is less clear that the concept has anything to do with Hegel. To be sure, Hegel does describe it as "one of the most profound principles for

[1] Longuenesse, *Hegel's Critique of Metaphysics*, 187.
[2] There is, in the second chapter, a brief consideration of other German Idealists and their approaches to the transcendental unity of apperception, but for the most part I focus entirely on these two philosophers.
[3] The reader will, I hope, forgive me for not explaining what exactly this concept is just yet - that will be made more clear in the first chapter. At this point it is sufficient to simply note that it is explicitly one of Kant's central concepts. The aim of this dissertation is to make clear the central role it plays in Hegel's thought as well.
[4] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B136.

speculative development," while at the same time claiming that Kant's "further development, however, did not live up to this beginning."[5] But that in itself does not demonstrate that a study of the transcendental unity of apperception could have any bearing on Hegel's positive philosophy.

That such a connection does exist is something that I aim to demonstrate in the course of this dissertation. In the first chapter, I outline the basic structure of Kant's theoretical philosophy, paying particular attention to the role of the transcendental unity of apperception. That done, the second and third chapters explore this point of connection. In the second, I show how many of Hegel's criticisms of Kant can be understood as rooted in Kant's specific way of conceiving the unity of apperception. This serves to establish the existence of a connection on this point, indeed a connection of central importance. Based on this connection, my third chapter shows how modifying the transcendental unity of apperception in accordance with Hegel's criticism yields the essential elements of the Hegelian system. Seen this way, the transcendental unity of apperception acts as a kind of key through which to read both Hegel's positive philosophy and his criticism of his predecessor. The value of the project, then, is demonstrated by carrying it out, since the result is, I hope, an illuminating and interesting view of Hegel and his relation to Kant.[6]

Just as important as what I *am* doing in this project is what I am *not*. I do not, for example, take myself to be presenting Hegel's own view of his relation to Kant. I present the transcendental unity of apperception connection as a helpful tool for understanding Hegel's philosophy and as valuable point of comparison between the philosophers. I remain agnostic as to whether Hegel himself would have seen his project as a modification of Kant's central

[5] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 12.22.
[6] In this sense, then, one could say that the proof is in the pudding.

concept.[7] More generally, this work is not intended as a historical reconstruction of Hegel or Kant's philosophy; the emphasis is not on the biographies of these thinkers or their personal formative experiences. Instead, I aim to give a philosophical reconstruction of how to understand their key ideas and the connections between them. As such, I try to stay true to the most charitable interpretation of their texts. But within the limits of these texts, it is more important to me to find the best arguments and highlight the relevant points of connection than to capture precisely what Hegel the man might have been thinking in his study. For this reason, I largely leave aside biographical details and questions of other philosophical influences.

I also set aside, for the purposes of this study, the ethical philosophy of my two central philosophers. The transcendental unity of apperception plays its most important role in Kant's theoretical philosophy; it has, arguably, only a tangential relation to his ethical works.[8] On the other hand, Hegel's moral philosophy is deeply rooted in his modification of Kant's principle. Here, however, we focus on that root, not the leaves: on the modification of the principle itself, not its ramifications for Hegel's ethics.

I am not the first to study the transition between Kant and Hegel, nor do I hope to be the last. I owe much to others who have studied this issue, and there are any number of diverse approaches to it, many of which I will take the time to present and criticize in the chapters to come. Sally Sedgwick, for example, focuses her account of the Kant-Hegel transition on the issue of intellectual intuition. For her, the important difference between these thinkers is that Hegel takes seriously the existence of this key faculty that Kant would deny to us. Béatrice

[7] There are passages where Hegel connects his philosophy to Kant's directly, and does so with reference to the transcendental unity of apperception. Still, I doubt he would agree that his philosophy is entirely or only a modification of this central principle, and he clearly has philosophical motivations that lie outside his concern with the transcendental unity of apperception.

[8] That connection is nonetheless important, insofar as Kant's theoretical philosophy arguably lays the foundation for his ethics. Not all commentators agree, however, that there is a necessary connection between them at all. Paul Guyer, for example, believes that Kant's ethics can be salvaged, even if his theoretical philosophy is hopelessly flawed.

Longuenesse, on the other hand, believes the central transition point to be the issue of truth. Should truth be understood as a correspondence between representations and reality, or are there deep problems with such a conception that require us to rethink the nature of truth itself? Kant, according to Longuenesse, would claim the former, but Hegel would argue for the latter. And there are yet other interpreters as well, each of whom would identify a different point of discrepancy between Kant and Hegel: Stephen Houlgate sees Hegel as carrying the epistemically critical goals of Kant's philosophy to their logical conclusion, Terry Pinkard sees Hegel as adding to Kant the social element that the latter overlooked, Michael Forster sees Hegel as concerned with Pyrrhonian skepticism where Kant focused on metaphysical skepticism, and the list could go on.[9]

The unique thing about the study presented here is the emphasis on the transcendental unity of apperception. In what follows, I hope to show how many of these other approaches can be understood as dealing with consequences arising from Hegel's critique of Kant's transcendental unity of apperception. But even should the transcendental unity of apperception be only one of many points of contact between these two thinkers, without any particular primacy, a study of the matter would still yield an interesting and fruitful perspective from which to understand these major philosophers of the past.

This last is the case because how one reads the transition from Kant and Hegel will impact how one reads Hegel himself. It is a common strategy in reading Hegel to take his criticism of Kant as a point of departure, and that strategy is followed here. For us, tracing Hegel's criticism of the transcendental unity of apperception yields a picture of Hegel that sees him as not merely concerned with the structure of the mind, but with the metaphysical structure

[9] See Houlgate, "Hegel's Critique of Kant"; Pinkard, *The Sociality of Reason*; Forster, *Kant and Skepticism*; Forster, *Hegel and Skepticism*. Forster does not believe that Kant did not pay attention to Pyrrhonian skepticism at all, but does present Kant as emphasizing metaphysical skepticism over other forms of skepticism.

of the world as a whole. The result is that our reading of Hegel is at odds with a number of more mind-focused readings such as those put forth by Terry Pinkard, Robert Pippin or Robert Brandom. Indeed, much of contemporary analytic philosophy, insofar as it is explicitly engaged with Hegel at all, has tried to sterilize many of his more grandiose claims by interpreting them as elements of a theory of mind. While such a reading can be interesting and enlightening for modern-day philosophers of mind, it does not do full justice to Hegel's texts, nor does it fit well with his criticisms of Kant. This dissertation hopefully does a better job of attending properly to Hegel's texts, while also clarifying to some extent the meaning of his more enigmatic and obscure claims. In presenting this more metaphysically-oriented interpretation of Hegel, I am aligning myself with a more recent trend in the study of his work, among whom Stephen Houlgate, Sebastian Rödl, and Sally Sedgwick could be counted.

Because of the bulk of this study focuses on presenting and defending a reading of Hegel's connection to Kant, some of the more fine-grained ramifications of that reading are left underexplored. In the final chapter there was only room to present the major outlines of Hegel's system as a modification of the transcendental unity of apperception, and not enough space to look more closely at some of the consequences of that modification. In particular, one interesting point to look more closely at would be Hegel's theory of judgement. For Kant, the transcendental unity of apperception is involved in all judgements; indeed it is a condition for the possibility of judgement. Hegel, too, spends many pages discussing the forms of judgement and deriving them from one another. It would be interesting to see how Hegel's conception of a judgement connects to Kant's, and how his more metaphysically-oriented conception of the unity of apperception modifies his theory of judgement. Some indications of this are given when

he claims, for example, that "all things are a judgement," but it would be worthwhile to examine the matter farther.[10]

Another point worthy of further investigation would be a comparison between the ethics of the two thinkers. I have set aside ethical issues in this dissertation largely because they would complicate an already complex issue. Nonetheless, there is reason to expect that Hegel's modification of the transcendental unity of apperception would affect his ethics - after all, his modification undermines the distinction between understanding and reason that is an essential element to Kant's ethical philosophy. For this reason, it would be worth comparing the ethical systems of the two philosophers. On the one hand, Hegel is able to grant us a more robust knowledge of our freedom compared to Kant. On the other hand, however, it is not clear that the dialectical system is able to incorporate a real ethical distinction between right and wrong actions; it could be that all actions are 'right' insofar as they are part of the dialectic. It may turn out that Hegel has granted us freedom only to render it meaningless. Tracing out the roots of these differences between Kant and Hegel could reveal structural connections relevant to any metaethical theory. At the very least, it is a topic I'd consider worth looking at more closely.

[10] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 167.

CHAPTER 1

Kant's Transcendental Unity of Apperception

The principal aim of this chapter will be to present in detail Kant's theory of the transcendental unity of apperception. In doing so, I take stands on a number of interpretive issues in Kant scholarship. I will flag these issues as they arise, but these are not the central concern of this chapter. Rather, my aim is primarily to present a clear and charitable interpretation of Kant's ideas. This will set the stage for an examination of internal tensions in Kant's position, tensions that Hegel will bring out in his criticisms and modifications of Kant's work. With this goal in mind then, I begin by presenting Kant's goals and basic assumptions. From there, I will explore the transcendental unity of apperception itself, showing how, from these basic assumptions, Kant builds a theory that can adequately address what he takes to be the most important philosophical issues of his time.

1 Kant's Primary Goals in the *Critique*

Understanding any philosophical author is made easier if one has an understanding of that author's goals. For this reason, instead of beginning immediately with an examination of Kant's theory of the transcendental unity of apperception itself, I begin with a brief presentation of the aims Kant had in mind when developing that theory. As the title suggests, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is an attempt to use reason itself to make sense of how reason could be used purely, that is, without relation to anything merely sensory. In Kant's hands, reason's self-criticism, as it could be called, ultimately breaks into three general aims. First, Kant will try to provide a response to skepticism about our knowledge of pure metaphysical principles such as that every alteration has a cause. Second, Kant will attempt to put an end to the Pyrrhonian

skepticism motivated by the long history of unresolved debates on metaphysical issues.[11] Third, in response to contemporary attacks on God, free will, and the immortal soul, Kant aims to defend the legitimacy of our faith in these (though his positive argument in favor of that faith comes only in other texts).[12] I examine each of these in turn.

Metaphysical skepticism aims to undermine our knowledge of metaphysical truths such as that every alteration has a cause or that there are substances with properties. These claims are meant to describe the necessary structure of our world, and the metaphysical skeptic denies that we have the ability to know this structure. The argument for this kind of skepticism begins by observing that while we may have direct sensory experience of colors and sounds, we have no direct sensory experience of things like causation. If one falls and gets a bruise, for example, what they experience is first a fall, and then a bruise. They do not, however, experience any further thing that might be the causal connection between the fall and the bruise. In other words, our senses present us with objects and their properties, but not with causality. More generally, our senses do not provide us any direct experience of necessity; they only provide us with experiences of various contingent objects.[13] But then, if we add to this the empiricist idea that our knowledge of the world must be built on the foundation of experience, the result is that we cannot have any knowledge of necessary truths; necessity is simply not something that is

[11] In much of what follows, I draw from Michael Forster's discussion of Kant's relation to different forms of skepticism in his book *Kant and Skepticism*. Roughly speaking, the Transcendental Analytic can be read as focusing on the problem of metaphysical skepticism and the Transcendental Dialectic can be read as focusing on Pyrrhonian skepticism.
For Kant's stated interest in metaphysical skepticism, see Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A9/B13-A10/B19. For Pyrrhonian skepticism, see Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Avii-ix, Bxiv-xv.
[12] See for example Kant's discussion in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Bxxvii-xxxi, where he discusses his famous claim to "deny knowledge in order to make room for faith." See also Bxxxiv, where he writes that "Through criticism alone can we sever the very root of materialism, fatalism, atheism, of freethinking unbelief, of enthusiasm and superstition, which can become generally dangerous, and finally also of idealism and skepticism, which are more dangerous to the schools and can hardly be transmitted to the public."
[13] "Experience teaches us, to be sure, that something is constituted thus and so, but not that it could not be otherwise." Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B3.

given through the senses. It is Hume, in the famous argument of 'Hume's Fork,' who is most strongly identified with this kind of skepticism.

To see the importance of metaphysical skepticism to Kant's project, it is helpful to introduce a bit of Kantian terminology. Kant often speaks of what he calls 'synthetic a priori judgments.'[14] Now, providing a precise definition of 'synthetic' as opposed to 'analytic' is famously difficult, and some commentators have even claimed that Kant himself had no clear conception of the distinction.[15] Nonetheless, a judgment that is analytic can be understood, roughly, as one wherein the predicate is a conceptual part of the subject.[16] For example, the concept <fish> contains as a part the concept <animal>, since being an animal is part of what it is to be a fish. Accordingly, whenever we think of something as a fish we must at the same time think of it as an animal; the latter concept is included in the former. An analytic judgment such as "all fish are animals" merely makes explicit this conceptual containment. The truth of an analytic judgment is thus grounded in the concepts involved, and can be verified simply by analyzing those same concepts.[17] Synthetic judgments, on the other hand, have no such grounding, and cannot be verified in this way; in them, the predicate adds something to the subject concept which is not already contained in it.[18]

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[14] This terminology is introduced very early on in the text and is used throughout. See *Critique*, A6/B10 for Kant's earliest introduction of the term and definition of it.
[15] Peter Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense*, 42-43.
[16] In describing analytic judgments in this way, I am opting for an interpretation of analyticity that takes concept-containment to be its primary feature. Rival ways of characterizing analytic judgments exist, however. Henry Allison, for example, takes analytic judgments to be better described as those which are true on the basis of the law of identity alone. See Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 89-94. Lanier Anderson, argues (I think compellingly) against Allison on this point in his book *The Poverty of Conceptual Truth*. Finally, I should mention that although I have chosen this concept-containment interpretation of analyticity, I do not believe the interpretative decision at this juncture to be of particular importance for understanding Hegel's relation to Kant.
[17] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A6/B10-A7/B11.
[18] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A6/B10-A7/B11.

For this reason, synthetic judgments cannot rely only on the concepts they contain for their truth, and so require something beyond the concepts themselves.[19] In many cases this additional element can be provided by our sensory experience, in which case we have a synthetic judgment known a posteriori. Yet not all synthetic judgments depend on sensory experiences. Thus there is a second class of synthetic judgments which Kant calls synthetic a priori judgments.[20] Included in this class are metaphysical claims such as that every alteration has a cause.[21] On the face of it, there may seem to be no way that these claims could be true, since their truth can be grounded neither in their concepts, nor in the data we receive from our senses. This is precisely the point pressed by the metaphysical skeptic when they deny our knowledge of necessary truths about the world. Reframed in Kantian terminology, then, the metaphysical skeptic can be understood as denying the legitimacy of our synthetic a priori judgments, e.g., they are denying that the concept of causation has any real application to objects.[22] Kant makes answering this form of skepticism a central issue of the *Critique*, writing in the introduction that "the real problem of pure reason is now contained in the question: how are synthetic judgments a priori possible?"[23]

Pyrrhonian skepticism, on the other hand, has its roots deeper in history than Hume, and can be traced as far back as Ancient Greece. This form of skepticism is unique in that it does not have a characteristic argument or major claim. Instead, Pyrrhonian skepticism is best understood as a method of approaching knowledge claims. When faced with an interlocutor who

[19] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A8/B11-A10/B24.
[20] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A9/B13. Tellingly, Kant goes on to raise the issue of metaphysical skepticism immediately after defining synthetic a priori judgments.
[21] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A9/B13. See also the Second Analogy (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A188/B232-A211/B256). For Kant, the concept of an alteration does not contain the concept of cause.
[22] In what sense we are to understand the word 'object' here is an issue that Kant will take up in his attempt to address this skeptical worry. I will say more about Kant's conception of objects later in this chapter and the next.
[23] A few sentences later, he goes on to say that "On the solution of this problem, or on a satisfactory proof that the possibility that it demands to have explained does not in fact exist at all, metaphysics now stands or falls." Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B19.

claims to know X, the Pyrrhonian skeptic aims to show that not-X is at least as justified as X. In other words, for each assertion, this kind of skepticism presents equally powerful arguments both for and against that assertion. The result is a suspension of judgment, where no decision can be reached in favor of one side or the other. Ancient skeptics saw this as a desirable state of equanimity, but later philosophers, including Kant, saw the presence of equal and opposite arguments on all sides as a threat to the possibility of making any real claims to knowledge.

Kant feels strongly that philosophy, and especially metaphysics, has not achieved the concrete results that the natural sciences had in his day. Instead, metaphysicians seem to him to be eternally engaged in arguing over the same points, with both sides of these debates having strong arguments in favor of their positions.[24] These seemingly irresolvable disputes only strengthen the Pyrrhonist's claim, providing concrete evidence that there is in fact no reason to prefer one side over the other. Kant wants to account for these disputes, explain why they seem intractable, and, if possible, end them. His attempt to do so comes in the Transcendental Dialectic, where he explains how a variety of metaphysical debates arise from extending the use of our concepts beyond their scope of legitimate application. As a result, philosophers engaged in these debates can make no progress; the questions they are trying to answer rest on false assumptions about our concepts and are badly formed, so that ultimately they have no answer.[25]

Although skepticism in these forms is a major target of Kant's in the *Critique*, there is another goal of his that is in some ways even more important: the defense of freedom and other articles of faith. In fact, for some of Kant's earliest readers, the defense of freedom and faith in God against determinism and atheism was seen as the *Critique*'s greatest contribution to

[24] Kant refers to the issue in both the A and B prefaces, and even goes so far as to describe metaphysics as a "battlefield of endless controversies." See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Avii-ix, Bxiii-xvi, A3/B6-A7/B11.
[25] More specifically, these philosophers deal with questions that "surpass the bounds of experience." Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Aviii. See also Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Bxiv, B146-148, A326/B382-A329/B386.

contemporary philosophy.[26] Kant aims to show that the idea of the human subject as a free moral agent can be compatible with the idea of the natural world as governed by deterministic causal laws. More generally, Kant wants to show that the moral dimension of human life, including such concepts as freedom, God, right, and wrong, can be smoothly fit in with the principles of the sciences, so that neither needs to exclude the other.[27]

In sum, then, Kant's aims are three: to answer skepticism regarding our knowledge of necessary truths, bring to an end certain philosophical debates, and to defend the possibility of faith against the natural sciences.

2 Kant's Conception of Experience: a Starting Point

To address these issues, Kant's overall strategy is to provide an account of human experience that demonstrates the possibility of our knowing necessary truths, while at the same time circumscribing our knowledge in a way that eliminates Pyrrhonian debates, and protects the possibility of our being free agents. If this strategy is to succeed, however, it is important that Kant's account of experience not deviate too far from those of his skeptical interlocutors; otherwise, he would end up simply speaking past them. Since the skeptics Kant has in mind are largely empiricists (e.g., Hume), Kant accordingly begins from a set of basic assumptions about the nature of human experience that, while its details might be disputed, would be broadly accepted by most empiricist philosophers of his time.[28]

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[26] See for example Karl Leonhard Reinhold, who's influential *Letters on the Kantian Philosophy* went a long way in making Kant's work better known. In his second letter, for example, he writes that Kant "displayed as a chimera the atheism that today more than ever haunts the moral world in the forms of fatalism, materialism, and pantheism." In general, the theme of these letters is the Kantian solution to problems of freedom, God, and immortality. See Reinhold, *Letters on on the Kantian Philosophy*, 21, 135-139.

[27] That the defense of God, freedom, and immortality are central concerns of Kant's is not as contentious an issue as is his relation to skepticism, so here I merely mark that concern and do not go into it in greater detail. See for example Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Bxxx, A333/B390-A338/B396, A829/B857.

[28] As I present them here, these assumptions are quite broad, since they are meant to be held in common by many quite different philosophers and may even apply to some philosophers not traditionally thought

We can isolate at least four key theses that together constitute the conception of experience Kant takes as his starting point. First, experience is the result of an interaction between two entities, the subject and the object, both of which exist independently of being experienced. The precise nature of their interaction Kant leaves unspecified, but he remains committed to the existence of these entities which, existing outside of experience, mutually produce experience through their interactions.[29]

Second, experience always includes some element which is given to the subject by the object. Experience is not a free-floating product of the subject's imagination, but is conditioned by the object's effects on the subject. This given element is construed as a representation immediately given to the subject through the senses.[30]

The third claim, corresponding to the one before, is that experience also includes some component contributed by the subject. In other words, experience is not restricted to the passive sensory perception of external objects, but also includes some contribution provided by the subject itself; the subject acts (usually unconsciously) on the representations it is given through the senses to spontaneously produce other representations that were not immediately given.[31] These representations, which Kant calls concepts, are paradigmatically used to organize and categorize the immediately given representations. They thus have a kind of generality in that they can be applied to multiple representations, grouping them together and producing an ordered classification of them. With these concepts, the subject goes from merely receiving representations of the world to actively thinking about the world.

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of as empirists. Kant's own more specific analysis of the nature of experience will be addressed in the following section.

[29] For example, he writes that the object can be given to us only if it "affects the mind in a certain way." See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A19/B33. That experience begins with this effect of the object on the mind seems to imply that both could exist apart from their interaction (i.e. apart from experience).

[30] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A19/B33-A20/B34.

[31] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A26/B42, A68/B93.

Fourth and last, experience is seen as being at least *prima facie* an experience of objects. Our experience does not present us with merely a chaotic blur of sensory representations, but with an ordered universe of unified spatiotemporal objects distinct from ourselves, enduring through time and behaving in lawlike ways.[32] While this feature of our experience may be illusory, its presence must nonetheless be accounted for, and much of Kant's project is aimed at showing how the raw unorganized data of our senses can be organized to produce such an apparently ordered world.

2.1 Kant's Analysis of Experience

Kant conceives of experience as including a number of different elements: sensations, intuitions, concepts, and judgments. In this section I present each of these in turn, and based on the picture of experience outlined above, describe Kant's reasons for including them in his account.

The most basic of these elements Kant calls 'sensation.' Sensations can be thought of as raw sensory data. They are a kind of representation, and are the most immediate input of the senses, the direct result of the way in which the subject is affected by the object.[33] In the case of vision, for example, the relevant sensations might be an array of colored patches, each one unique and individual. On their own, however, these colored patches do not constitute a perception of an object; they are merely a colored swirl of sensations. Their only organizing principle is that they are arranged in space and time. A perhaps helpful metaphor might be that of pixels on a screen. Pixels themselves are nothing but colored spots arranged on a screen, and it is only when someone looks at the screen and interprets the arrangement of pixels that they

[32] Kant dismisses the idea of experience that is not at least purportedly of an object, calling it "nothing but a blind play of representations, i.e., less than a dream." Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A112.
[33] "The effect of an object on the capacity for representation, insofar as we are affected by it, is sensation" Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A20/B34.

can come to represent anything in particular. Sensations, like the pixels, are only minimally related to one another through their arrangement in a space and time. And, like the pixels, they depend on our human faculties of interpretation in order to represent an object. At the level of sensations alone there is only a chaotic jumble, so that there is no reason to call one group of sensations an experience of an object as opposed to another; in fact, properly speaking, sensations do not represent objects at all.[34]

As a result, sensations alone are not sufficient to account for experience. Instead, a collection of sensations (Kant's term is 'manifold') is combined by the subject to form a new kind of representation: an intuition.[35] This act of combination occurs unconsciously in the mind of the subject.[36] It does not necessarily always occur - it is possible for the subject to have sensations that are not combined to form intuitions - but it must occur if the subject is to have any experience properly so called. For without this combination, the sensations could not be unified to form any experience of objects, and so one of the key features of experience would be left unaccounted for.

The combination, or synthesis, of sensations, is the act whereby the mind forms an intuition.[37] For example, given various sensations of silver and gray, one might unite them to form the intuition of a fish. In this case, the sensations are the matter, while the fish is the form given to them in making them an intuition. Like a sensation, an intuition is singular, but it is

[34] "the combination of the manifold [of sensation] in general can never come to us through the senses" Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B129.
[35] See for example, Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A105 and B130.
[36] Kant describes this combination as a "blind though indispensable function of the soul, without which we would have no cognition at all, but of which we are seldom conscious." Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A78/B103.
[37] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B129-130. The claim that intuitions require an act of synthesis is a relatively contentious claim, and the degree to which the mind is involved in creating intuitions, as opposed to receiving them passively, is a matter of debate in Kant scholarship. In the reading I present here, I bring Kant closer to Hegel, since Hegel too would give an active role to the mind. Alternative readings would make the distance between these philosophers greater. That said, in the context of this study, which reading one prefers will not ultimately be a salient issue.

singular in a slightly different way - it is singular in that it is a representation of a single spatiotemporal entity.[38] Moreover, an intuition can contain other intuitions within itself; an intuition of a house might include at the same time intuitions of the door, the walls, and the windows.[39]

Intuitions lack any generality; they are always an intuition of one particular object. It is an important feature of experience, however, that it includes a general component. After all, it is, Kant takes it, an essential part of our way of experiencing the world that we are not only able to take in data through the senses, but also able to *think* about this data, i.e., we are able to form general judgments that hold of multiple objects at once.[40] To do this, we need a more general representation that can be applied to more than one object. This kind of representation Kant calls a 'concept.'[41]

To form concepts, the mind unconsciously associates intuitions with other intuitions, discovering common features and abstracting these out, thereby forming general concepts. These concepts apply to many objects collectively, thus enabling us to think the objects of our experience rather than simply sense them.[42] The concept of a fish, for example, contains within its extension all the various fish we could experience, and is connected to these fish by the common features of all of the various intuitions of fish (for example, intuitions of scales, fins, and gills). Via abstraction, we move from specific intuitions which represent a single object to general concepts which represent whole classes of objects and can thus enter into logical

[38] That Kant takes singularity to be a key feature of intuitions is evident in the Transcendental Aesthetic, where he uses this fact about intuitions to show that space and time are intuitions and not concepts. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A25/B39, A32/B4.
[39] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A25/B39, A32/B4.
[40] Not all mental activity would count as thought for Kant - thought must involve concepts. "Cognition through concepts is called thought." *Kant, Lectures on Logic,* 591.
[41] Kant describes concepts as functions, and defines this as "the unity of the action of ordering different representations under a common one." Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A68/B93. See also Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A19/B33.
[42] The act of forming concepts is, like the synthesis of sensations into an intuition, is usually done unconsciously.

relationships of inclusion and exclusion that mere intuitions cannot. For example, we can say that all fish are animals, thus including the concept of fish under the concept of animal. We cannot, on the other hand, say that all of one intuition is included in another in this way - intuitions are each unique and non-repeatable, and the only kind of inclusion that is possible in their case would be a spatial or temporal inclusion, not the logical inclusion that is necessary for thought.

The relationships of inclusion and exclusion between concepts are expressed in what Kant calls 'judgments.'[43] An example of a judgment might be the claim that 'all fish are animals.' This judgement expresses a relationship of inclusion: the concept of fish is included under the concept of animals. Because each of these concepts contains within its extension a set of intuitions, this judgment also says something of the intuitions involved, namely, that any intuition of a fish must also be an intuition of an animal. Judgments are thus related to intuitions by means of the concepts employed in them, and it is at the level of judgment that we find full-fledged thought about the world.[44]

These four elements - sensation, intuition, concept, and judgment - form the fundamental pieces of Kant's account of experience. But Kant does not simply present them without argument. Instead, he argues that any experience, if it is to be experience of an object (as opposed to mere sensation, for example) must *necessarily* include these four elements. Moreover, he argues that there are certain privileged a priori concepts involved in organizing sensations into representations of objects, and that, because they are constitutive of any experience of objects, we can be assured a priori that our application of these concepts to the

[43] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A68/B92-A69/B94.
[44] "In every judgment there is a concept that holds of many, and that among this many also comprehends a given representation, which is then related immediately to the object." Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A68/B93. The 'given representation' in this quote is an intuition, which, because it is composed of sensations provided by the effect of the object on us, is related "immediately" to the object.

objects of experience is legitimate. This argument will be presented in the next sections, when we turn to the transcendental unity of apperception and its role in Kant's system.

But before turning to that argument, it's worth pausing to clarify a few points. The first of these is the sense of the term 'object' that is at issue here. The object of our experience, for Kant, has two sides to it. On one hand, it can be conceived of as it is in itself, independent of representation, in which case it is called the 'thing in itself.'[45] The thing in itself is an independent entity, existing regardless of our representations and independent of our mental powers.[46] But the same object can also be considered insofar as it appears to us - this aspect of it is the phenomenal object. Now, since all our knowledge of the object is through representations of it, it follows for Kant that we can have knowledge only of the phenomenal object, i.e. the object as it is represented by us.[47] What things are in themselves is impossible for us to know. Moreover, sensations, on their own, do not provide us with any representation of the phenomenal object, because they lack the necessary unity characteristic of an object.[48] Instead, these sensations must be unified by the activity of mind to produce a representation that can properly be called a representation of an object, and not merely a blind play of sensations. When Kant claims that experience must be experience of an object, he has in mind the phenomenal object, not the thing in itself. All experience is in some sense *of* the thing in itself, since it begins from sensations that the subject receives through the effect of its interaction with things as they are in themselves, outside of experience. But all experience worthy of the name is also experience of the phenomenal object, insofar as it involves a unity of representations that is referred to an object.

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[45] Kant uses this term first in the introduction at *Critique of Pure Reason*, Bxx. It is, however, used repeatedly throughout the text. See especially Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A235/B294-A260/B315.
[46] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A235/B294-A260/B315.
[47] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A255/B310-A256/B311.
[48] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A112.

It is worth noting, however, that in providing this reading of Kant, I am adhering to what is called a 'two-aspect' interpretation, according to which the noumenal object and the phenomenal are two aspects or ways of thinking about one and the same object of experience - we can think of it as it is independent of our representing it, and we can think of it as it is represented by us. The opposing reading, called the 'two-worlds' reading, takes the phenomenal object and the noumenal object to be numerically distinct entities. The debate between these readings is a complex one, and Kant's text is not univocal on the issue. In fact, it must be admitted that there are some passages that seem to favor the two-worlds reading, such as those at A249-253, as well as at A20/B34. Nonetheless, many of these passages were removed in Kant's second edition of the *Critique*. There are other passages, more indicative of Kant's considered view, where Kant characterizes the distinction between phenomena and noumena as a way of thinking of the objects, and claims that both of them are aspects of one and the same object. He writes, for example, that appearances have "two sides, one where the object is considered in itself … the other where the form of the intuition of the object is considered."[49] The key word here is 'considered,' which shows that for Kant the distinction is in how we think of the object, not in their being multiple distinct objects.[50]

The distinction in how we think of the objects we experience, which splits them into phenomenal objects and the things in themselves is mirrored in the distinction between a phenomenal subject and the subject as it is in itself. The subject in itself is the entity that receives representations from the object through sensibility. Like the thing it itself, its existence

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[49] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A38/B55. See also Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A254/B310.
[50] This debate over these competing interpretations is an important one in Kant scholarship, and one on which I believe I have taken the most charitable reading of Kant. For modern commentators who advocate the two-aspect reading, see Lucy Allais, *Manifest Reality*, and Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*. For a clear discussion of the debate as a whole, see Lucy Allais, "Kant's One World: Interpreting 'Transcendental Idealism'."
That said, the debate between these interpretations does not, to my mind, ultimately impact the criticisms Hegel makes of Kant, or his transformation of the transcendental unity of apperception.

is independent of its being experienced. In other words, our existence is independent of any representation we might have of ourselves.[51] On the other hand, however, we also have an inner sense by way of which we can come to know our own mental states. This inner sense, however, only gives us access to how our mental states appear to us, not how they are in themselves.[52] Accordingly, it provides us with access to a phenomenal subject, a subject as it appears, as opposed to the subject as it is in itself. As Kant brings out in the course of the *Critique*, the subject, too, cannot be known as it is in itself. Like the thing in itself, it is known only insofar as it is experienced. Thus, just as in the case of the object of our experience, the subject of experience can also be divided into these two aspects: the way it is in itself, and the way it appears.

Last but not least, it is important to clarify how one should understand all Kant's talk of mental activities. Kant does not intend the *Critique* as a contribution to empirical psychology. Indeed, if it is read in that way, then it becomes impossible for Kant to meet his stated aim of justifying our use of metaphysical concepts and defending our claims to freedom. This is for two reasons. First, empirical psychology examines how human beings think, but does not address the issue of how we *should* think. Thus, though it could show us, for example, that we do in fact conceive of ourselves as free, it could not show us that this conception of ourselves is justified.[53] Moreover, the metaphysical claims Kant is concerned with (e.g. 'every event has a cause') he takes to be intended not as contingent facts based on observations, but rather as universal and necessary truths.[54] But as such, no empirical investigation could be sufficient to justify them; Kant believes that all necessary and universal truths must be known a priori, if they are to be

[51] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B158-159.
[52] "We cognize our own subject only as appearance but not in accordance with what it is in itself." Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B156.
[53] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A84/B116-A87/B119.
[54] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Axv, A9/B13, B17-18.

known at all.[55] In sum then, the empirical sciences generally, and so empirical psychology in particular, cannot serve to answer the skeptical worries Kant deals with because (1) such an empirical psychology deals only with how we do think, not how we *should* think, and (2) empirical psychology is suited only for the investigation of *contingent* facts. The skeptical worry, however, is a worry about *justification*, and of justification for *necessary* truths.

Kant's exploration of our mental activities should be read then not as an empirical investigation, but rather as a backwards reconstruction of what must occur in the mind if experience is to have the character that it does. Kant's question could be stated as follows: given that experience is always experience of an object as represented by us, what acts must the subject perform on its representations in order for such an experience to occur? Based on his conception of experience, Kant derives certain mental operations that the subject must be engaging in. These mental acts need not be consciously or willfully performed (though they could be), nor do they need to be mapped to certain regions of the brain or any other physical correlates. Instead, the mere fact that the subject experiences an object is, for Kant, sufficient to show that these acts were performed, even if the subject is not aware of it. This means that his discussion of the structure of experience operates wholly at the level of a priori and necessary truths, since it is not based on any empirical observation, but on the nature of experience itself.

Kant's analysis of experience into sensations, intuitions, concepts, and judgments, enables him to present a picture of experience that fits the broad picture he shares with his skeptical interlocutors. His discussion of the thing in itself and the subject as it is in itself captures the belief that experience begins with an interaction between two entities whose existence does not depend on experience itself. The inclusion of sensations in his account captures the directly given element of experience, and his discussion of concepts captures the

[55] "Experience never gives its judgments true or strict but only assumed and comparative universality." Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B2-B4. See also Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A9-10.

general element. Kant's description of intuitions as unities of sensations adds a new wrinkle to the story, and one that he will exploit in addressing the skeptical challenge, but it does not contradict the basic picture of experience that he shares with his skeptical interlocutors. Finally, the phenomenal object and phenomenal subject capture the fact that experience is always experience as of objects, and not merely a blur of sensations. With an understanding of what these elements are, then, we are in a position to see how and why Kant combines them.

3 The Transcendental Unity of Apperception

The transcendental unity of apperception is discussed by Kant in the portion of the *Critique* called the Transcendental Deduction. The aim of this section is primarily to demonstrate that we are justified in our use of certain metaphysical concepts. To do this, Kant first tries to show that the steps of the progression outlined above, from sensation through intuitions and concepts and ultimately to judgments, are all necessary stages of any experience worth the name. Next Kant aims to derive, on the basis of this argument, a set of (perhaps unconscious) operations of the mind that are necessarily at work in the production of our experience of objects. Finally, a study of these operations reveals that they necessarily involve certain a priori concepts, which Kant calls the categories. This serves to justify our use of these concepts; we are justified in using them because they are necessary for any experience at all.[56] The Transcendental Deduction thus illustrates *that* experience must have the features Kant ascribes to it, *how* it comes to have them, and that it *should* have them. It is on the basis of this that Kant is able to answer the skeptical claims which were outlined at the beginning of this chapter.

[56] As noted above, it would not be enough for Kant to show simply that we do think a certain way; he must show that we are right to do so. In the *Critique* this is put in terms of the famous distinction between matters of fact (*quid facti*) and matters of justification (*quid juris*). Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A84/B117-A89/B122.

Interestingly however, Kant begins his discussion not by focusing on objects, but by focusing on the subject. He observes that for any representation, if it is to be experienced by me, it must be thinkable by me. He puts this by writing that "the I think must be able to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me that could not be thought at all, which is as much as to say that the representation would either be impossible or else at least would be nothing for me."[57] The 'I think' in this passage refers to a self-conscious representation of the self as thinking.[58] The passage points out that if a subject is able to think something, then that subject must also be able to represent itself to itself as so thinking, i.e., to accompany that representation with "the I think."[59] For example, if I have a representation of a fish, it must at the same time be possible for me to say, "I am thinking of a fish", i.e. to represent myself as thinking of the fish. Although it may sound like an odd observation at first, there is some plausibility to this; a representation could never be *mine* if it were not at least possible for me to reflectively represent it *as* mine. Without this possibility, the representation would be, as Kant puts it, "nothing for me."[60] This is true even on Kant's somewhat thick conception of thought, where to think requires the use of concepts in judgments: if a sensation was not, at least in principle, something that I could unite into an intuition, conceptualize, and form a judgment about, then it could hardly count as *mine*.[61]

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[57] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B132.
[58] 'Apperception,' though not a term much used today, refers to this self-awareness. At the same time, however, is important to note that Kant will distinguish what he calls 'empirical apperception' from the transcendental apperception which is the focus of this chapter. The former involves our representation of ourselves through the faculty of inner sense, while the latter is the pure awareness we have of ourselves as a thinking thing in general.
[59] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B131-132.
[60] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B132.
[61] It is a matter of debate the extent to which the 'I think' must actually *be* attached to the subject's representations. Here I emphasize that it must be at least *capable* of being attached. Other interpreters have argued that it must actually be attached; i.e., that the subject must accompany all of its representations with a representation of itself as representing them. This to me seems like too strong a requirement, and one that is phenomenologically inaccurate, is not justified by Kant's arguments, and not supported by the text. In the quote cited earlier in this paragraph, for example, Kant claims that the 'I think' must *be able to*, not that it actually must, accompany our representations. See Henry Allison's

The result, then, is that any representation of mine, since it must be thinkable by me, requires "a necessary relation to the I think."[62] This 'I think' constitutes an additional representation over and above the ones to which it can be attached. But the nature of this 'I think' is as yet quite obscure, and is only made more obscure when we consider that the 'I' here cannot refer to the self as it is usually conceived. That is, the 'I' cannot refer to any particular embodied existence in space and time, and by saying 'I think' (in the sense at issue here, at least) the thinking subject cannot be describing such an entity as having some mental episode. This is because the 'I think', as Kant intends it here, must be able to attach to any experience in order for it to be an experience at all; its possibility is thus prior to any particular experience, and hence to any particular experience a subject could have of itself. The subject could not represent itself in space and time, or as having particular mental episodes, without already being able to attach the 'I think' to its representations. So the 'I' at issue in the 'I think' is not the representation of any determinate empirical thinking subject; it has no height, no age, no gender, no past, and no future. While the 'I think' must be able to attach to all of the subject's representations if they are to be anything for it, precisely this fact entails that it does not refer to any particular empirical entity.[63]

Kant's Transcendental Deduction, 345-348, for a defense of this reading. Paul Guyer's *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge,* 133-140, presents a contrasting point.
This issue is of minimal importance for the reading of Hegel I will present in what follows; while Hegel discusses the use of 'I' he does not make the question of 'attaching the I think' a theme in his philosophy.

[62] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B132.

[63] Indeed, it is an open question as to what kind of representation the 'I think' is, and whether it refers to anything at all. It cannot be an intuition, since it does not refer to any empirical entity. Nor can it be a concept, since, if it were, it would be a wholly empty one without legitimate use since it lacks any corresponding intuition. Here I follow Béatrice Longuenesse in considering the 'I think' to be an expression of the unity imposed on representations by the transcendental unity of apperception. As such, it is a kind of *sui generis* representation that does not refer to anything, but merely expresses the unity among other representations. In ethical contexts, the 'I' is used differently; in those cases it seems to refer to the noumenal self. See Longuenesse, *I, Me, Mine: Back to Kant and Back Again*, 102-113.
Ultimately, although Hegel discusses the term 'I' as used by individual subjects, the way his modifies the transcendental unity of apperception leaves that use largely behind. For him (and, I think, for Kant), the most important feature of the 'I think' is that it is empty in the sense described above; other details of how we understand it here are not crucial to the overall course of this study.

Nonetheless, Kant does think we can know two important facts about the 'I think.' First, it is identical in all its occurrences.[64] This means that in reflectively representing itself through the 'I think,' the subject represents itself as identical through all the various representations it has (though, as noted above, without saying anything determinate about the subject itself). Kant describes this as the "unity of self-consciousness", i.e. the fact that the representation 'I' is identical each time it comes to consciousness.[65] This a priori identity of the 'I think' through all the various representations it can accompany means that the subject takes its representations to form a whole, unified by their connection to the ever-constant 'I think.' Indeed, because it lacks any content of its own, the 'I think' is in a sense nothing more than the expression of the unity of these representations. Consider the difference between saying "I think that this fish is a gray," as opposed to simply saying "this fish is gray." For Kant, the difference is that the former makes explicit what was already implicit in the latter - that those representations have been unified into a single whole in the thinking subject.

Second, the unity of the 'I think' is necessary, not merely contingent.[66] That the same 'I' accompanies all of the subject's representations is a necessary fact; without it, those representations would not belong to the same subject. Accordingly, in ascribing representations to myself, I must take the representations to form a necessarily unified whole belonging to one and the same subject; otherwise they would not all be *my* representations. In other words, the subject cannot represent itself as being one and the same subject in each experience if it does not simultaneously take its experiences themselves to form a necessarily unified whole. This requirement, however, presents us with a problem: representations must be unified into a whole in order to be reflectively ascribed to the subject, but sensations are not given as unified through

[64] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A107, B132-133, B138.
[65] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B132.
[66] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A108, B142.

the senses. As a result, the subject cannot simply take in sensations as they are given, but must actively unify them to form a whole so that they can be *its* representations, so that it can attach the 'I think' to them. Moreover, because the 'I think' has no content of its own, the necessary unity among representations cannot come from their relation to the 'I think' alone, but must be a result of how these representations are related to one another. The subject's representations will have to form a necessarily unified whole among themselves, where each representation fits with the rest. It will be Kant's task to show through what activities of the subject this necessary unity finally comes about.

At this point we are ready to say what exactly the transcendental unity of apperception is. Appending the 'I think' to my representations, as in the example above, makes explicit the necessary unity of the subject's representations - a unity that they must have if these representations are to be reflectively accessible, hence if they are to be anything to me at all. The transcendental unity of apperception is precisely this condition on the subject's representations; it is the requirement that they form a necessarily unified whole if they are to be anything for the subject at all.[67] The representation 'I think' is an expression of this condition in that attaching it to a representation expresses the fact that the representation in question has been incorporated into this necessary unity. And, as we saw in the last paragraph and will explore in more detail in the following sections, this requirement makes necessary certain actions on the part of the subject in order to bring about a necessary unity among its representations.[68] Based on this

[67] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A107, B132.

[68] Other interpreters of Kant have identified the transcendental unity of apperception either with the 'I think' itself, or with the activities that it makes necessary, or with understanding as the faculty that performs these activities, among other things. I have chosen to interpret it as a condition that must be met. This is in keeping with Kant's text, where at a number of points he describes the transcendental unity of apperception as a condition (see Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A106-107, B136, B138, and B150). In reality, all of these different interpretations are closely connected, and reading it as a conditions makes clear those connections: given this condition, the 'I think' is it's expression, and the existence of this condition makes necessary the activities of the faculty of the understanding that Kant will go on to describe. In this way, the condition interpretation functions as a kind of arch-interpretation that can encompass and explain other options. For other interpreters who also take the condition reading, see

condition, this necessary unity among representations, Kant derives a number of different operations that the mind must be performing on representations in order to achieve this necessary unity.[69]

Important to note, however, is that this unity is at the same time the unity of the reflective representation of the subject (the 'I think') and the unity of the subject's representations of objects (all the other representation to which the 'I think' can be attached).[70] The operations that unify our representations ensure both that the 'I think' is necessarily identical in all of its occurrences *and* that representations come to have the stable and lawlike character they must have if they are to be representations of objects. Indeed, neither of these could occur without the other: the necessary unity of the subject is established by the necessary and lawlike relationships among its various representations, and the representations in turn could not be unified without being held together as the representations of a single necessarily unified subject.

Thus one way to read Kant's argument would be as follows: since we know that there must be a single and necessarily unified representation of the subject through all our experiences (as indicated by the necessary identity of the 'I think'), we can be assured that certain mental operations are occurring, and so can be assured that we do in fact have representations of objects. Read this way, the condition of unity among our representations forms a kind of bedrock in Kant's arguments against metaphysical skepticism. But the argument

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Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense*, 26-27, 98 or Kemp Smith, *A Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 250-253. For contrasting views, see Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Deduction*, Longuenesse, *I, Me, Mine*, or Engstrom, "Unity of Apperception."
Interpreting the transcendental unity of apperception as a condition to be met will be relevant in the discussion of Hegel to follow. There, I hope to show that Hegel pushed this demand for unity beyond a condition for experience and makes it a condition for the possibility of objects in general. In this role, the requirement of unity put in place by Kant becomes, in Hegel's hands, a driving force of his dialectical method.

[69] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B132. Nice.

[70] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A109.

can also be read from the other direction: since we know we have representations of stable and lawlike objects, we can be assured that the relevant operations are occurring, and so be assured that we have a representation of ourselves as a single unified subject. Because it can be read from both angles, the actions of the understanding that Kant describes can be seen from two sides: as either conditions for the possibility of our self-consciousness, or as conditions for the possibility of experience of objects. Kant's insight was to show how the conditions for the former are at the same time the conditions for the latter.

In what follows, I will present the three distinct (but interdependent) conditions that Kant outlines in the Transcendental Deduction: the synthetic, analytic, and objective unities of apperception.[71] For each, I will outline how this particular stage contributes both to the necessary unity of the subject, as well as to the experience of an object.

3.1 Synthetic Unity of Apperception

If we are to be able to reflectively attribute representations to ourselves, if representations are to be *ours* in any real sense, then those representations must be related to others to form a necessarily unified whole of *our* experience - this requirement is the necessary unity of apperception. Yet on their own these representations are "dispersed and without relation to the identity of the subject."[72] Accordingly, the first condition that must be met for the unity of the subject is to collect these representations together "in one consciousness."[73] Thus the understanding combines the various representations to form a collection of them.[74] At this point in the synthesis their unity is not posited as a necessary one - there is simply a mass of

[71] For the most part I focus on Kant's views as presented in the B edition Transcendental Deduction.
[72] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B133. See also Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B134-135.
[73] *Critique,* B133. I interpret Kant's use of the term 'consciousness' here, and elsewhere in the Transcendental Deduction, to refer to the subject or it's mind.
[74] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B133-B139.

sensations. Nor has it been conceptualized, since we have yet to form any concepts, but have only collected our sensations. Yet this synthesis of the representations is an essential first step towards a more complete synthesis that can do full justice to the unity of apperception, since the collection of sensations here provides the basis for the later stages.

With respect to the objects of perception, the collection of sensations also forms a key first step in forming an intuition.[75] If a subject's various sensations of silver and grey are to be unified in an intuition of a fish, they must be first of all collected together in one consciousness. These sensations must be collectively attributed to one and the same subject; otherwise their unity in an intuition would be impossible.[76] To see why, imagine that various sensations occur, but in different subjects. For example, you have a sensation of heat, I have a sensation of red, and a third person has a sensation of a smoky smell. The disparate sensations of these different subjects could never be combined to form a single intuition for a single subject. But if one and the same person had all of these (at the same time, of course), then it would be at least possible for them to combine them to form an intuition of a fire. In this way, it is a presupposition of any combination of sensations, and hence any intuition, that all the included sensations belong to one and the same mind.[77]

3.2 Analytic Unity of Apperception

At this point, Kant has proven that the first step of the synthesis in experience requires the subject to combine its representations to form a whole. But the unity of this whole is merely contingent, and its various parts lack any meaningful relationship to one another aside from

[75] Again, the issue of whether an intuition is formed in this way is a contentious one in Kant scholarship.
[76] This point, however, also reveals how the synthetic unity of apperception is also dependent on those that follow it. Where they not present, there would be no unified subject to refer the sensations to.
[77] At the same time, as will be shown in what follows, the various sensations could not all be collected in a single subject if they were not referred to an object.

their ordering in space and/or time. And even this ordering is merely a contingent result of how the subject happened to receive its representations, and lacks any necessity. But, as we have seen above, the transcendental unity of apperception requires that the various representations form a *necessary* whole, and not an arbitrary collection. After all, the subject's unity is not some contingent fact about it, but a necessary feature of it. Accordingly, the subject's representations, too, must be necessarily unified, and not merely arbitrarily collected.

As things stand, however, the synthesis of sensations into a single mass does not alter that fact that these sensations lack any generality, and hence any connection to one another beyond their merely contingent relationships in space and time. As noted above, sensations alone are not sufficient to account for experience, since they lack the generality distinctive of human thought. So, in order to *think* its representations, the subject must move from individual sensations to form more general representations that can be used to classify multiple sensations at once. In other words, it needs to form concepts. Based on the prior synthesis of its representations, the subject is able to group sensations together to form intuitions. From these intuitions, it is able to abstract out common features, thereby forming empirical concepts. 'The analytic unity of apperception' is the name given to this stage. Here, thanks to the preceding synthesis, it becomes possible to abstract out empirical concepts from the various collections of sensations, and use these concepts to classify them.[78]

Since the 'I' in 'I think' lacks any empirical content, it is nothing over and above the unity of its representations. Accordingly, to come closer to establishing the necessary unity among its representations is at the same to come closer to establishing the necessary unity in the reflective representation of the subject itself. Conceptualizing our representations is a key step in

[78] Important to note, however, is that it is only because of the previous synthesis of various representations that it is possible to abstract out of them a common concept. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B133-134n.

establishing the necessary unity in the subject's representation of itself.[79] At the same time, the formation of concepts is also an important part of bringing sensations up to the level of experience of objects; without concepts, sensations would be a mere blur of color and sound, and would lack the element of generality Kant takes to be an essential part of experience.[80]

But the analytic unity of apperception, though it results in the formation of concepts, is insufficient to establish either the necessary unity of the subject or the experience of an object. This is for two reasons. First, at this stage, although concepts have been formed, they have not been employed in the actual act of ordering representations. For this, concepts need to be combined in judgments.

Second and more importantly, at this point the various representations and concepts that the subject has are combined in a purely subjective manner. They are combined as the subject sees fit and with no reference to other subjects or the object they aim to represent. Kant describes this as a "subjective unity of consciousness", to be distinguished from an "objective unity of consciousness."[81] The former is simply the subject's associations of ideas, but the latter involves a kind of normative prescription, wherein the subject asserts that this combination is a necessary one, one that should hold for all other subjects as well.[82] What is missing then, is this element of necessary unity that both objects and subjects have. Neither we, nor the objects of our experience, are merely contingently unified - the subject is necessarily one and the same in all of its experiences, and just as the object is one and the same in all our experiences of it.[83]

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[79] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A112.
[80] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A112.
[81] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B139-140.
[82] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B139-143.
[83] Interestingly, however, the necessity at work in these cases is of a subtly different sort. The the unity of the subject's experiences is a necessary condition on the possibility of there being any experience whatsoever. The necessary unity of the object, on the other hand, is the kind of normative necessity outlined above - it involves taking a unity of representations to be correct, and requiring others to unify them in a similar way. But at the same time, the act of taking any particular set of representations to be necessarily unified in that way is not itself necessary, and different subjects could unify their representations differently (within certain limits); this is why disagreement about objects is possible. This

3.3 Objective Unity of Apperception

The representation of a unity as necessary, and hence as objective, is the objective unity of apperception. Kant uses the term 'objective' here to indicate that it is at this point that the synthesis of the sensations and their conceptualization is taken as a necessary one - one that captures features of an independent object, as opposed to a merely subjective association of representations. Other subjects, presented with the same set of sensations, may not perform the same synthesis - in this sense the unity of the sensations is merely possible. But with the objective unity of apperception we get the idea that other subjects *should* unify their representations in a certain way; a particular unification is taken as necessary in the sense of being *required*, being the *correct* unification, independent of the particularities of the subjects themselves. This requirement for intersubjective agreement is constitutive of objectivity for Kant.

The key notion here is that of judgment, and indeed Kant describes judgment as "nothing other than the way to bring given cognitions to the objective unity of apperception."[84] In a judgment, a relation between concepts (and hence between concepts and the intuitions that they are drawn from) is posited as holding necessarily for all subjects.[85] Should other subjects deviate from representing things in this way, their deviation would mark an error on their part, and not simply an equally valid, but different, way of thinking. To take Kant's own example, in a judgment, I say that bodies are heavy, not simply that when I carry a body I feel a weight.[86] The former, but not the latter, posits a property (heaviness) as existing *in the object*. It does not simply collect sensations in my own experience but makes a claim about the object itself. Since

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contingently posited necessary unity in the object contrasts with the unity of the subject - taking the subject to be a necessary unity is not a contingent part of experience.

[84] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B141.

[85] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B140, B142.

[86] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B142.

the weight is posited as existing in the object, other subjects presented with the object should also judge it as having the same weight. In this way, the act of judgement takes a mere self-report and turns it into a claim about how representations must necessarily be unified in the experience of the object.

In the act of judgment, then, the subject construes the unity of its representations as a necessary one. In so doing, it establishes itself not as a merely contingent collection of representations, but as possessing the *necessary* unity proper to the identity of a subject in all of its representations. Of course, the very possibility of forming judgments depends on prior synthesis and analysis, since without these there would be no collection of representations, nor any concepts with which to form judgments. Yet at the same time, there would be no synthesis or analysis without the objective unity of apperception; both synthesis and analysis take the necessary unity of the subject as their basic assumption (without it there would be no single subject to collect representations or form concepts), and this necessary unity is only ensured by the objective unity of apperception.[87]

On the side of the object, the objective unity of apperception takes what would have been a merely contingent collection of representations (a "subjective unity") and makes into the experience of an object. By positing the unity of representations in an experience as necessary, regardless of the nature of the subject, that experience comes to be the experience of an independent entity (the phenomenal object) over and against the subject, an entity whose nature

[87] It may seem at this point that Kant's argument is somewhat circular. After all, the preliminary synthesis is required for the objective unity of apperception, but at the same time the objective unity of apperception is a requirement for the synthesis itself. The appearance of circularity here, however, is only apparent. Although Kant's presentation of his argument can only proceed in one direction, and the various mental processes are derived one after the other, the argument as a whole could be run both directions. What is most important is the necessary unity of the subject, which is a requirement established independent of the mental processes that bring it about. With this requirement in mind, one could move to the need for judgment, and hence to analysis and synthesis, or, as Kant does, from a foundation in synthesis to the further steps of analysis and judgement. The order of argument here is, at bottom, only a matter of Kant's preference in exposition, and the three stages are interdependent and inextricably linked in the production of experience.

is not decided arbitrarily by the subject's preferences.[88] In a judgement, the object forms a necessary constraint on how the subject thinks about the world. This is why, despite being produced to some extent by the activities of the mind, the world we experience is not a wild and fanciful collection of nonsensical creatures over which we exercise an omnipotent power, as might occur in a dream. The act of judgment sets up the objects of our experience as independent objects whose properties lie outside our power to manipulate at will. This referring of our representations to an independent external object is precisely what makes them into representations *of an object*, and the act of judgement is the final step in achieving this.

That said, it is important to recognize that the three unities I have outlined above thus cannot be thought of as stages in a process. Each depends on the others - without the objective unity of apperception, for example, there would be no unified self to refer our representations to in the synthetic unity of apperception. Instead temporally distinct stages in a process, one can think of these unities as three aspects of the same activity. When one rides a bike, for example, one needs to move one's feet, guide the handlebars effectively, and shift one's weight to maintain balance. No one of these things is sufficient for riding a bike, and no one of these things can happen without the others. The unities of apperception I have described are similarly unified and interdependent, and their result is the formation of experience properly speaking - a sensory, conceptually articulated experience of a world of independent objects.[89]

In sum then, the transcendental unity of apperception is what underlies our consciousness of ourselves as a necessarily unified subject through all our representations. In order for such a consciousness to be possible, the various conditions outlined above must be

[88] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B142.
[89] This reading of the connection between these three unities is not universally accepted. For a dissenting view, see for example Longuenesse, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*, 35-59. The details of how exactly these unities fit together is not of major importance to Hegel's treatment of the transcendental unity of apperception, but the reading I present here does make for an interesting analogy of the three unities to the three stages of the dialectic, which are also interdependent moments of a single activity.

met. We must collect our representations, analyze them to form concepts, and combine these concepts in judgments. In the process, we not only establish the necessary unity of the subject, but also the necessary unity of representations which makes them into representations of objects. But each of the three unities of apperception discussed above depends crucially on the others, and none could arise without the rest. Thus, far from being distinct unities, each of these is a moment of the transcendental unity of apperception itself, i.e., is the transcendental unity of apperception as seen from different perspectives, with different emphases.[90] Kant calls this unity as a whole the "transcendental" unity of apperception because it is on the basis of this unity that he is able to explain how we can have knowledge of synthetic a priori truths.[91] It is to this issue, the issue of metaphysical skepticism, that we now turn.

4 Kant's Answer to Metaphysical Skepticism

Kant's approach to answering metaphysical skepticism is to show that the mind has a set of concepts that are essential to the formation of any and all intuitions. These concepts, which he calls the 'categories' or 'the pure concepts of the understanding' are not derived from experience, but instead play a crucial role in organizing sensations and intuitions so as to produce experience itself.[92] While I leave the precise details of Kant's treatment of each metaphysical concept for another time, in this section I will nonetheless try to present an outline of Kant's general strategy, focusing in particular on the concept of causation.

Kant's first step actually comes much earlier than his discussion of the transcendental unity of apperception. He begins by isolating a set of twelve logical forms of judgment. They

[90] This is why Kant will at various points in the text refer to different unities as *the* transcendental unity; each of them is the transcendental unity but seen from different perspectives. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B132-B142.
[91] "I also call its unity the transcendental unity of self-consciousness in order to designate the possibility of a priori cognition from it." Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B132.
[92] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A79/B104-A81-B107.

include such forms as categorical judgments (e.g., all trees are plants), hypothetical judgments (e.g., if it is a tree then it is a plant), and disjunctive judgments (e.g., either it is a tree or it is not a tree).[93] Kant develops these forms of judgment out of the logic textbooks of his time, and points out that the metaphysical concepts whose use he is trying to justify seem to have a certain affinity with these forms. For example, in a hypothetical judgment, we posit one judgement as the ground of another.[94] Now if we perform this same operation in the context of spatiotemporal objects, by positing one as the ground of a change in another, (e.g., in the judgment 'if the sun shines on it, then the stone will get warm'), we get something that looks a lot like a claim about causality. In this way the logical ground/consequent relationship that exists between judgments in a hypothetical judgment is mirrored in the more concrete (Kant's term is 'real') ground/consequent relation that exists between a physical cause and its effect. This then is Kant's first clue: if he can show that these forms of judgment are somehow necessarily at work in how we form our intuitions of the physical world, then he could show that the corresponding metaphysical concepts are also necessary elements of our experience.

To achieve this, of central importance is Kant's claim that all sensations, and hence all intuitions as unities of sensations, are necessarily located in time and/or space. We cannot have an intuition of an apple, for example, without locating that apple in space and time.[95] Of course, this does not mean that we assign to the intuition a particular time on the clock, but only that all intuitions are located relative to one another in time (and, for intuition of external objects, in space). But from what was said above, we know that intuitions are not given to us complete, but must be produced by the unifying activity of the mind, in accordance with the transcendental

[93] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A70/B95.
[94] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A73/B98.
[95] This Kant proves in the Transcendental Aesthetic, where he shows that space and time are the forms of intuition. Objects of inner sense, unlike those of outer sense, are only experienced in time and not space. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A42/B60.

unity of apperception. Given that all these intuitions are necessarily spatiotemporally located, then if there were a set of rules for their spatiotemporal organization, those rules would have to appear as necessary features of all our experience. After all, they would be rules whose application would be necessary for the construction of any intuition, and hence for any experience at all. The categories are just these rules.

This is perhaps easiest to see in the case of causation. Given the manifold of sensation, we begin uniting them into a coherent whole by organizing them in space and time. In the process, we form intuitions. Yet guiding this process must be some rule that says, for example, 'put the sensation of solidity and heat before the sensation of liquidity.' Without rules of this sort, intuitions would be ordered willy-nilly, with no rhyme or reason, so that a coherent and unified experience of the world would not be produced. Causation, then, is a key way in which intuitions come to be organized in space and time. It can be seen functioning at three distinct levels. At the first, it operates to organize our sensations for us, without any conscious input on our part. At this level Kant calls it not the concept of causation, but the 'schema' of causation.[96] Later, upon reflection, we may notice that every time we experience ice and heat, this experience is followed by that of water. Conceptualizing this pattern, we could say that heat causes ice to melt, and here we are using the concept of causation proper. Finally, at the level of the logician's studies, we can focus on the ground/consequent relation we find here and discover the concept

[96] Kant calls the rule for the organization of intuitions a 'schema,' and says that the categories are concepts that "express" these rules. The role of a schema is to mediate between the concepts of the understanding and the intuitions of sensibility, so that the categories will be realized at the level of intuitions and not remain at the level of concepts alone. While an understanding of the role of the schemata is admittedly essential to a complete grasp of the *Critique*, the most salient point in this context is *that* the categories play a necessary role in constituting our experience, not *how* they play this role. The schematism is also a famously obscure section of the *Critique* (Kant himself calls it a "hidden art in the depths of the human soul") and thus might needlessly distract the reader. Finally, there is nothing in Hegel analogous to the schematism, and in fact one of the major differences between Kant and Hegel is that Hegel's system has no need for anything like Kant's schematism of the categories. For these reasons, I have omitted any more detailed discussion of the schemata from this paper. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A141/B181-A142/B182, A144/B183.

of a pure logical form: the hypothetical judgment. Importantly however, at no point in this process was was there any intuition of causation - hence the skeptic's worry. But nonetheless, causation was operative in the necessary spatiotemporal ordering of intuitions, and hence is a necessary feature of experience. So the applicability of causal concepts to our experience cannot be questioned; there would be no experience without them.

This then is Kant's answer to the metaphysical skeptic. A similar argument could be made for other metaphysical concepts, and Kant presents just such arguments in the course of the Analytic of Principles.[97] For our purposes, especially as we will ultimately be comparing Kant's strategy here with Hegel's, three principal features of this strategy are worth noting.

First, Kant bases his strategy on a particular set of logical forms of judgment. These forms are developed out of the logical tradition of his time.[98] Of course, Kant is to some degree critical of that tradition - he writes against those who would take an empirical, psychological approach to logic, for example.[99] At the same time, however, he takes his claims that all and only these are the legitimate forms of judgment to be based on a reflective examination of his own thinking. For him, the forms of our thought are transparently available to us.[100] Later critics would speak out against this move, arguing that the critical project of the *Critique* should have gone further and aimed to derive these logical forms themselves.[101] Now, it is an open question to what degree these forms of judgment are important to Kant's argument; they can be construed as mere helpful clues, or as essential elements of the overall Critical system.[102]

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[97] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A131/B169-A234/B294.
[98] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A70/B95-A83/B109.
[99] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A53/B77. Other points at which Kant deviates from the tradition include his claim that the various forms of judgement cannot be reduced to the categorical, and the addition of certain forms to his table of judgements (the individual judgement, for example, which he distinguishes from the singular).
[100] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Axiv.
[101] See for example Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 25.35-25.36.
[102] This debate has gone on to the present day. For an interesting discussion of it see Longuenesse, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*, 78-80.

Nonetheless, the forms he chose and his way of justifying his choice would become a target for later German idealists.

Second, Kant's strategy depends crucially on the assumption that intuitions are distinct from concepts. Indeed, were it not for this assumption, it would not be possible to raise the question of whether a concept like causality could apply to intuitions. Kant's distinction between schema, pure concepts, and logical forms, all depend on this distinction, since these are distinguished by their relationships to intuition.[103] And Kant's discussion of spatiotemporal order and the role of causation in that ordering and in the transcendental unity of apperception can be understood as an attempt to bridge that gap between intuition and concept. Were there no such gap to bridge, the transcendental unity of apperception would be radically different.

This leads us to the third and last feature of Kant's solution: its applicability to intuitions alone. Because Kant describes causation as a rule for uniting intuitions in the transcendental unity of apperception, the concept of causation cannot be defensibly applied to objects we have no intuition of.[104] Causation is a condition for the experience of an object, but there could be objects of which we can have no experience, such as God or the noumenal subject. With regard to these objects, the concept of causation cannot be ensured of valid application; because there is no experience of them, there are no intuitions for the schema of causation to work on. Objects such as God or the noumenal self, then, have the potential to be totally free of all causal laws.

To understand this last point more fully, and to grasp Kant's responses to the problems of freedom and Pyrrhonian skepticism, we must take a closer look at another crucial distinction Kant makes: the distinction between the understanding and reason.

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[103] Schema organize sensations to form intuitions, concepts are abstracted from intuitions, and logical forms contain no element of intuition whatsoever.

[104] "The categories consequently have no other use for cognition of things except insofar as these are taken as objects of possible experience." Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B147-148.

5 Understanding and Reason[105]

In introducing the faculty of reason in the opening pages of the Transcendental Dialectic, Kant writes that "all our cognition starts from the senses, goes from there to the understanding, and ends with reason, beyond which there is nothing higher to be found in us to work on the matter of intuition and bring it under the highest unity of thinking."[106] The understanding is the faculty responsible for performing the unifying actions that bring our representations into accord with the condition of the transcendental unity of apperception. Thus far then, we have discussed how the understanding works on what is given to us through the senses to produce experience of objects; it remains then to consider what the faculty of reason is for Kant, and how it can add to what the understanding has created.

Kant construes the human attempt to know the world as a striving for greater and greater unity among our experiences. To study the world is to build a theoretical structure that can encompass all of experience, finding a place for each and illuminating the overall rational organization of the whole. In fact, this unifying activity is a necessary condition for experience itself. As we saw in the transcendental unity of apperception, it is only because the understanding brings a rational order to our sensations, ordering them to produce a world of

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[105] In his discussion of reason and its operations in the Transcendental Dialectic, Kant largely leaves behind the concept of the transcendental unity of apperception, and mentions it only briefly in this part of the book. It may seem odd, then, to claim as I will that the transcendental unity of apperception has any role to play in Kant's discussion of reason and hence in his responses to the problems of freedom and Pyrrhonian skepticism. That said, I believe that transcendental unity of apperception makes possible Kant's responses to these problems precisely by its absence. In what follows, I hope to show that Kant's approach to these issues depends crucially on his restricting the transcendental unity of apperception to a condition on the possibility of our experience of objects, as opposed to a condition on objects in general. This restriction allows Kant to distinguish between the unity of the understanding, which is necessary for experience, and the unity of reason, which is merely desirable. The same restriction also allows Kant to claim that while the categories employed by the understanding in constituting experience have legitimate application to objects of experience (because they are necessary for the possibility of experience itself), they have no such legitimacy when applied to objects outside of experience (because the transcendental unity of apperception is not applied to that sphere). So while the transcendental unity of apperception is not an explicit part of Kant's argumentation in the Dialectic, it's absence is precisely what makes the Transcendental Dialectic possible.

[106] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A298/B355.

stable objects behaving in lawlike ways, that we can have experience of objects at all. But while the transcendental unity of apperception is a condition for the possibility of experience, so that all experience of objects is in accord with it, Kant also acknowledges a desire for unity that goes beyond simply ordering our sensations. The human mind seeks not only unity among sensations, but unity among its judgments as well. Recall that the result of the understanding' operations is a judgment that brings one concept under another, and thereby establishes a relationship between the objects that fall within the extensions of those concepts. But thought does not stop there. Where the understanding is the faculty of judgements, reason is the faculty of inference; it takes the judgments of the understanding and unites them in an inference.[107]

For example, the understanding might provide us with the judgments "all humans are mortal" and "all scholars are human." In such a case, it is the faculty of reason that infers the conclusion that "all scholars are mortal."[108] In this way, reason organizes and enhances the judgments of the understanding, bringing them into relation with one another to form a more unified and coherent system (hence Kant's comment that reason brings intuition "under the highest unity of thinking" in the quote above).[109] One could say that just as the understanding unifies sensations to form intuitions and unifies intuitions and concepts to form judgments, reason unifies these judgments to create a complete theory of the world. Reason performs this unifying function by subordinating some judgments under others through inference. In doing so, it brings otherwise disconnected judgments into the overall system.[110]

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[107] "Reason … is the faculty of inferring." Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A330/B386. See also Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A298/B355-A303/B359.
[108] This example taken roughly from Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A303/B360-A304/B360.
[109] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A298/B355.
[110] "Reason, in inferring, seeks to bring the greatest manifold of cognition of the understanding to the smallest number of principles (universal conditions), and thereby to effect the highest unity of that manifold." Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A305/B361.

From this characterization of reason, two important features of its use follow. First, the activities of reason are not necessary conditions for for the possibility of experience.[111] The necessary unity of representations generated by the understanding is a necessary component of all experience, since without it there would be no object of experience at all. Reason, however, already begins from experience of objects. The unity it provides is thus not a necessary feature of experience, but rather a goal or ideal, set up as a standard to be met. We strive for a perfectly coherent and complete body of knowledge, we aim to organize all our judgements systematically via inference, but we can experience objects without having any such completed system of knowledge. This means that for Kant, while the unifying activity of the mind is operative in both understanding and reason, that unity is only a condition for the possibility of experience in the former, and in the latter is only a goal to be met. The necessary unity of the subject and object of experience is sufficiently secured by judgement alone, so that the unity provided by reason's inference is a felt desire, not a condition of experience itself.

Second, because it operates with judgements, reason is importantly detached from sensation. By combining the judgements that experience provides to us, or by applying the categories outside of experience, reason can make inferences about entities that have not or even cannot be experienced. After all, one can form judgements and inferences using concepts that have no basis in experience: concepts like the concept of God or the free and immortal soul, for example. In this way, reason is able to go beyond experience to form concepts of things that lie wholly outside of experience. Kant calls these concepts 'ideas of reason,' and they are a key element in his answers to the problems of freedom and Pyrrhonian skepticism.

[111] While this is the standard interpretation, and the one that makes the most sense of Kant's conclusions, Kant's text sometimes seems to imply otherwise. In reading Kant as I have here, I distance him from Hegel, since for Hegel reason's needs are not merely regulative. This helps sharpen the contrast, but it is worth noting that Hegel can, on this point, be seen as drawing out something already hinted at by Kant.

5.1 The Ideas of Reason

The ideas of reason are the result of reason's inferential activity, so to see how they are produced we must look more closely at that inferential activity itself. Kant thinks of reason's inferences as syllogisms, and sees them as operating according to the three canonical syllogistic forms: categorical, hypothetical, and disjunctive syllogisms.[112] To see how the transcendental ideas of reason are formed, we need to understand how reason uses these syllogistic forms to develop a systematic and coherent theory of the world. The key to that puzzle can be found in the phrase 'reason always seeks the unconditioned.'[113] Let's see how this works.

For our purposes, the most important of the three kinds of syllogisms will be the hypothetical syllogism. In this syllogism, we start with a premises of the form 'if A then B' and another of the form 'A' and on the basis of these we conclude 'B.' Kant thinks of these premises as providing conditions. In other words, the premise 'if A then B' makes A a condition of B. The syllogism as a whole, then, states a condition, then asserts that the condition is fulfilled, so that we can conclude that the conditioned claim (B) is true.

But reason cannot rest content with this simple conclusion - it strives to create a total and systematic theory, and this inference merely draws a connection between three judgments. So naturally its next move is to ask: what are the conditions for A? This is what is meant by the phrase 'reason always seeks the unconditioned': reason always seeks to discover the conditions for that part of the syllogism whose conditions are not a part of the syllogism. For a more concrete example, think of the activity of a natural scientist. Upon understanding a certain part of a causal chain, they will naturally turn to investigate the beginning of that chain, trying to understand how it all got started. Of course, when an answer to this question is found, e.g. if we

[112] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A323/B379.
[113] "The proper principle 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." Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A307/B364.

discover that Z is the condition of A, the next question will ask for the conditions of this new condition, i.e., what are the conditions for Z? In this way, reason constantly strives to grasp the conditions for what it sees as conditioned. In doing so, however, it naturally falls into a regress of conditions.

If we turn to reflect on this process, we find ourselves faced with a dilemma. Either we accept that there are an infinite series of conditions, or we claim that there is some point at which the series must end.[114] If we take the second horn of this dilemma, we end up positing some unconditioned entity or force that can begin the chain from nothing. This, for Kant, is how our reason leads us naturally to the ideas of a free agent and of God as a necessary being, among others. Kant calls these ideas the 'Transcendental Ideas of Reason.'[115] God is posited as the necessarily existing entity whose necessity grounds the chain of contingent existences.[116] A free act is posited as the unconditioned beginning of a causal chain.[117] However, in both cases, it remains possible to imagine that the chain of contingent existences or causes could simply continue on into infinity, with no God or free act to terminate the chain.

It would be easy to resolve this dilemma if our experience of the world could somehow mediate the dispute. If we had an experience of God or of a free agent, then all would be well and we could decide the issue once and for all. Unfortunately, however, such an experience is impossible. To see why, recall that, through the transcendental unity of apperception, the category of causation plays a constitutive role in all of our experiences - if a thing is experienced,

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[114] The presence of a dilemma or, as Kant calls it, an antinomy, is unique to the ideas of reason as produced by the hypothetical syllogism. Since the antinomies are the most directly relevant parts of Kant's project here, I restrict my attention to them, but I feel I should note that the other forms of syllogism do not yield antinomies. They do, however, yield dialectical and illusory inferences.
[115] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A334/B392-A336/B394.
[116] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A452/B480. In this context, when it posits existing entities, we have what Kant calls the 'real' use of reason, as opposed to its logical use in drawing inferences. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A299/B355.
[117] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A444/B472.

it is experienced as part of a causal chain. Thus God and free agents, since they lie outside the influence of cause and effect, must lie forever beyond our ability to experience.

The dilemma faced by reason is thus insoluble. Kant calls this situation an 'antinomy', and presents us with a set of four antinomies in the course of the Transcendental Dialectic.[118] In each, we are presented with a pair of persuasive but mutually exclusive arguments. On the one hand, reason has solid grounds for positing some ending point for an infinite series of conditions. For example, a series of causes needs something uncaused to begin the series. Yet on the other hand, reason seeks to extend the series of conditions backwards into infinity. In the case of freedom, we find that reason operates at all times under the assumption that the natural world is subject to causal laws, and that the understanding organizes all experience in accord with these same causal laws. Thus, the positing of a free agent violates that basic assumption of reason and runs contrary to all experience.[119] Yet at the same time, some uncaused cause is needed to begin the chain of causation. The question cannot be decided by argumentation, since there are equally powerful arguments on both sides. It thus presents us with a pair of contradictory beliefs, both of which are plausible, but which cannot both be true at the same time and in the same way.

5.2 Kant's Solution to the Problem of Freedom

At this point we find ourselves with a set of problems. On the one hand, reason seems pushed to posit a free agent as the unconditioned condition for a causal chain. On the other hand, such a posit violates reason's basic assumption that the natural world is causally ordered. This antinomy teaches us at least two things. First, it shows that a belief in free agency is a natural one, springing from the ordinary operations of reason as it seeks to form a coherent

[118] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A405/B432-A566/B594.
[119] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A451/B479.

system of the beliefs about the world.[120] Second, it shows that the idea of a free agent is not in itself contradictory or self-defeating.[121] It may contradict our thoughts and experiences of the world, but it is at least internally consistent.

Faced with this antinomy, we may naturally seek to resolve the issue by trying to see if we can find any free agents in the world. The problem with this strategy, as noted above, is that all our experience is conditioned by the categories of the understanding. Among these is the category of causality, which entails that all our experiences of the world will be organized into causal chains; causality is an essential feature of the understanding's unifying activity, and hence a condition for the possibility of any experience of objects. As a result, we can never experience anything as free, since to be experienced is to be a part of a causal chain.

This might seem to be the end of the debate - if nothing can be experienced as free, what sense can there be in talking of free agents? To stop here, however, is to overlook a crucial distinction. Unlike the understanding, reason is not restricted to dealing with what is given to us through sensibility. It is therefore possible for it to posit the existence of things outside of sensibility, whose existence cannot be verified by the senses, but can be known on the basis of inference. In other words, because the transcendental unity of apperception is only the condition for the *experience* of objects, it is only a condition for objects *as they are experienced*, i.e. as they appear to us. But it does not condition these objects as they are outside of experience. So although the understanding might present our actions and the actions of others as if they were causally conditioned, reason is able to go beyond this and claim that these same actions might yet be free actions as they are in themselves, independent of the understanding's organizational

[120] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A305/B361, A307/B364, A331/B388-A333/B390.
[121] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Bxxviii.

activity. It is thus possible both that all our experience is of the world as causally organized, *and* that we are, independent of that experience, nonetheless wholly free agents.[122]

This, then, is Kant's way out of his own antinomy. Because the transcendental unity of apperception is only a condition for the possibility of experience, and not of thought or things in general, the categories it uses only condition things *as they appear to us*. Accordingly, there is room for reason to go beyond this appearance and in its inferential activity posit entities that lie outside of experience. In later works, Kant presents other, practically motivated grounds for believing that we are in fact free, but already here in the first *Critique* we find him laying the groundwork for that later position by arguing that both freedom and complete causal determinacy can be consistent with one another.[123]

For our purposes, a point worth noting here is the crucial restriction of the transcendental unity of apperception to the representations, especially representations given to us through the senses. It is a result of this restriction that the unity it requires is a condition only of objects as they appear, and not of objects as they are in themselves. There is thus room for reason to go beyond this restriction, and, via inference, posit the existence of objects outside of experience whose features are directly contrary to the features of objects as we experience them. Without this restriction of the transcendental unity of apperception, Kant's solution to the problem of freedom would never have gotten off the ground, since causality would have been not merely a condition for the possibility of experience of objects, but a condition for the possibility of objects in themselves.

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[122] "Thus freedom and [causally conditioned] nature, each in its full significance, would both be found in the same actions, simultaneously and without any contradiction, according to whether one compares them with their intelligible [noumenal] or their sensible cause." Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A532/B560-A541/B569.

[123] The practical grounds for our belief in ourselves as free agents Kant presents in the second Critique, the *Critique of Practical Reason*, and in the Canon of Pure Reason. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A795/B823-A831/B859.

5.3 The Ideas of Reason and Pyrrhonian Skepticism

At this point, I hope to have shown how Kant achieves at least two of the three major goals I outlined at the start of this chapter. He addresses metaphysical skepticism by showing how the categories work to condition all experience, and he addresses doubts about freedom by showing how, despite the fact that everything is experienced as causally determined, human beings could yet be free in themselves. I turn now to the last of Kant's bugbears: the issue of Pyrrhonian skepticism.

Recall that a Pyrrhonian skeptic is one who, for any claim presented to him, argues for the opposite. The goal of this procedure is to show that for any assertion, there is equal weight both for and against it, so that ultimately we simply have to suspend judgment. Kant, in the antinomies, seems to be doing the skeptic's work for him by presenting precisely such a pair of opposite and equal arguments. Yet a closer look at the matter reveals that here Kant is, in a sense, losing the battle in order to win the war. He concedes to the Pyrrhonian skeptic that this kind of mutually balancing argument does exist. But at the same time, he presents a theory for why these pairs of arguments arise. On the basis of this theory, he thinks he can show that they will *not* arise elsewhere.

In the Transcendental Dialectic, Kant shows that there are certain cases where human reason tends to push beyond experience in its pursuit of a total theory. Most importantly, it ends up positing free agents, immortal souls, and an all-encompassing creator God.[124] These subjects represent the most hotly debated metaphysical issues of Kant's time, and are the topics over which so much ink has been meaninglessly spilled over the centuries. Yet we can have no direct experience in these areas because these entities are excluded from experience by the way the understanding organizes intuitions. For example, all intuitions are causally organized in the

[124] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A333/B390-A338/B396.

transcendental unity of apperception, so that we can never experience a free agent as free. Nonetheless, reason's pursuit of the unconditioned leads to our going beyond these conditions of experience and positing the existence of free agents.

Now, as we saw above, the mere fact that we cannot experience agents as free does not necessarily mean that there are no such free agents. After all, the casual conditioning of experience required by the transcendental unity of apperception only extends to things as they are experienced, and what they are outside of experience we have no access to. Similar points could be made in the case of God and the soul - it is impossible to experience these, but that does not rule out their existence outside of experience.[125] In the cases of these extra- experiential entities, then, we find that the understanding is powerless to prove either their existence or non-existence. Their extra-experiential status puts them squarely beyond the possibility of proof via the normal techniques of natural sciences. If there is to be an answer to the question of whether God exists, that answer must come from reason alone.

Yet the inferential unity of reason, unlike the transcendental unity of apperception, is not a necessary condition on experience. As a result it can never do more than provide guidelines for how to organize our judgments. These guidelines cannot reach the level of facts, but at best show us how the world would be organized if it were wholly rational. So reason, too, cannot establish the existence of free agents or God with any certainty (at least not in it's purely theoretical capacity). It must treat them at best as useful theoretical posits, at worst as mere possibilities. And in the case of the antinomies, we find that reason itself produces mutually opposed pairs of equally convincing arguments.

[125] God and the immortal soul are treated, respectively, in the Transcendental Ideal and the Paralogism sections of the Transcendental Dialectic. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A341/B344-A404/B432, A567/B645-A642/B670.

This then, is Kant's diagnosis of why Pyrrhonian skepticism might seem like an attractive position. In the context of these important metaphysical debates, the human faculties of sensibility, reason, and understanding are simply powerless to decide the issue, because these entities, if they exist, must lie outside the realm of possible experience. As a result, we go back and forth, from argument to argument, without ever being able to decide the matter. Pyrrhonian skepticism is, it turns out, the proper attitude towards these debates.[126]

At the same time, however, by providing us with a diagnosis of why these debates arise, Kant also gives us reason to believe that they will not arise elsewhere. These issues arise in the cases of God, freedom, and the immortal soul because these entities are the transcendental ideas of reason, and as such lie entirely outside the scope of possible experience. It is this fact that makes debate about them so fruitless. Moreover, Kant takes himself to have shown that debate will occur only in the case of these ideas. This is because the transcendental ideas arise from the three basic forms of inference. Having named the ideas derived from each form, we can be assured that there will be no others, and that other disciplines will be safe from the problems that beset reason in those contexts.

Accordingly, if we turn to other disciplines, disciplines that study objects that are in fact possible objects of experience, we can expect that no such skepticism should arise. If a Pyrrhonian skeptic were to try and produce equally convincing reasons both for and against the claim that there are fish in the world, for example, we could easily answer such an attempt by an appeal to our sensory experiences. We see fish directly, so there can be little doubt that there are such things, no matter what arguments the Pyrrhonian draws up.

[126] This is true at least from the perspective of theoretical reason. In later books, Kant will aim to show that there are practical grounds on which we can justifiably believe in the existence of God, freedom, and immortality.

Kant's strategy in effect circumscribes the field of objects as they are outside of possible experience and cedes it to the Pyrrhonian skeptic. Within this field, theoretical arguments will be interminable as to the existence of God or free agents. Yet by setting this field of debate aside, Kant preserves the rest of our knowledge against the Pyrrhonian skeptic's arguments. In cases where we deal with objects of possible experience, no such skepticism should be able to arise. Here, too, the key point is the restriction of the transcendental unity of apperception to a condition on the possibility of experience, as opposed to a condition on the possibility of objects in themselves. This restriction makes it possible for reason to go beyond the conditions put in place by the transcendental unity of apperception and make unverifiable claims about what lies outside the possibility of experience. In the case of reason, then, but not in the case of the understanding, there is no necessary connection between our judgements and experience itself, so that the mind can find itself trapped in debates with no way of resolving them.

6 Conclusion

Before drawing this chapter to a close and moving on to examine Hegel's responses to Kant on these points, it may be useful to briefly summarize the most salient points of Kant's system as it has been presented here. To begin with, we have his central goals of addressing metaphysical and Pyrrhonian skepticism, as well as leaving room for our beliefs in freedom, God, and the immortal soul. Kant's approach to these problems in each case relies crucially on the transcendental unity of apperception - a set of conditions for all possible experience, out of which emerges both a necessarily unified subject and a necessarily unified (phenomenal) object of experience. As a condition for the possibility of experience, the transcendental unity of apperception, because it requires the use of categories such as causality, necessarily applies causal concepts to all objects of experience, thus vindicating our use of these concepts against

the metaphysical skeptic. By restricting the understanding to the objects of experience, Kant leaves room for reason to infer beyond what is experienced so that it can safely posit God and a free agent outside of experience. And by showing how the antinomies arise only in reference to the extra-experiential entities posited by reason, and not to experience as it is organized to meet the demands of the transcendental unity of apperception, Kant is able to limit the scope of Pyrrhonian skepticism to a relatively small area that he is happy to cede.

But this crucial restriction of the transcendental unity of apperception and its results is precisely the point in Kant's philosophy that Hegel takes issue with. Drawing on the picture of experience he takes over from his skeptical interlocutors and focused on the epistemic issues it raises, Kant is committed to the idea that the transcendental unity of apperception is a condition on our representations alone. It makes necessary the operations that take the raw materials of sensations and work it into the experience of a unified and lawlike world of objects, but the transcendental unity of apperception never transcends the representational character of its origins. But this restriction of the unity of apperception to representations is the root of Hegel's attack on Kant, creating a number of different, subsidiary, points of disagreement between the two philosophers. These potentially problematic consequences of Kant's restriction of the transcendental unity of apperception are the topic of the next chapter.

At this point, then, I hope to have provided an outline of the most important points of Kant's theoretical philosophy, and a more detailed account specifically of the role of the transcendental unity of apperception in it. In the next chapter, I explore Hegel's view of the problematic consequences springing from Kant's restriction of the transcendental unity of apperception to experience.

CHAPTER 2

Hegel's Criticism of Kant

After the publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, it was not long before Kant's philosophy gained admirers. But while these post-Kantian philosophers often expressed a deep debt to Kant's basic insights, they also aimed to improve on a number of shortcomings they detected in Kant's work. Reinhold, for example, found Kant's philosophy insufficiently systematic because it relied on too many fundamental definitions.[127] Fichte emphasized the need for a single foundation as well, and sought to find it in self-consciousness.[128] Schelling, for his part, considered Kant's system to be excessively focused on the subject, and aimed to focus on the object instead.[129] Hegel marks the last in this series of prominent German Idealists. His criticism of Kant is informed by those of his predecessors, and in many ways incorporates them.

In this chapter, I present a reading of Hegel's criticism of Kant that focuses on the Kantian restriction of the transcendental unity of apperception to representations. In other words, I emphasize Hegel's disagreement with Kant's claim that the transcendental unity of apperception is to be a condition on representations alone as opposed to a condition on things in general. Hegel makes this criticism explicitly at a number of points.[130] Still, it cannot be denied that Hegel also raises a number of other concerns against Kant, and some of these are more often repeated and forcefully emphasized than the issue of the transcendental unity of apperception. Nonetheless, I do think there are strong reasons to believe that many of these other objections are in fact rooted in issues surrounding the transcendental unity of

[127] Reinhold, "The Foundation of Philosophical Knowledge," 67.
[128] Fichte, "Science of Knowledge: First Introduction," 47-48.
[129] Schelling, "Introduction to the Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature," 376.
[130] See, for example, Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 42, addition 2.

apperception, and I present those reasons in this chapter. That said, I will not be arguing that Hegel himself saw any particular issue as central - it seems to me that in Hegel's own mind his various objections were not given any particularly stable order of priority.[131] My aim is somewhat more modest. Given the overall goal of this dissertation - to present a reading of the transition from Kant to Hegel that focuses on the modification of the transcendental unity of apperception - this chapter is intended at once to motivate that project and move it forward. I do this by examining Kant's representational conception of the transcendental unity of apperception and showing how, once we focus our attention on it, we can see that it is at the root of a surprising number of different objections Hegel brings against his predecessor.[132]

To that end, I break this chapter into four major stages. First, I briefly examine the history of German Idealism leading up to Hegel. Although hidden behind some shifts in terminology, the transcendental unity of apperception was arguably the central topic of concern for German idealists prior to Hegel, and this fact makes it plausible that it would play a major role in Hegel's thinking about Kant as well. Having established the central role of this concept, I next move on to specify more precisely what objecting to the restriction of the transcendental unity of apperception means and to demonstrate that Hegel does in fact make this objection and gives it a prominent place both in his early writings and his later texts. Third, I turn to a number of the other objections Hegel brings against Kant and show how they can be read as consequences of the restriction on the transcendental unity of apperception. Finally, I compare this reading against other positions in the literature in a similar way, defending it against possible objections and demonstrating that other popular readings of Hegel's position on Kant

[131] Indeed, given the overall holism of Hegel's philosophy, there may be systematic reasons for him *not* to name a single issue as primary.
[132] It is worth noting that this thesis is independent of the additional question about whether or not Hegel's objections to Kant on this count are actually warranted.

are also consequences of Kant's failure to give the transcendental unity of apperception its proper scope.

1 The Transcendental Unity of Apperception in the German Idealist Tradition

Shortly after Kant's first *Critique* was published, philosophers in Germany recognized its groundbreaking nature. Yet few were content to simply accept and preach the Kantian gospel. Instead, most attempted to make revisions to Kant's project. In this section, I give a brief (and therefore unfortunately incomplete) history of some of these revisions in an attempt to show how the transcendental unity of apperception was taken up as a major Kantian breakthrough and reworked by Kant's successors.[133] Doing so, while it may not shed light on the particular nature of Hegel's views on the transcendental unity of apperception, should nonetheless demonstrate that the transcendental unity of apperception was considered to be of the highest importance by Hegel's contemporaries and major influences. It thus motivates a study of that concept as it appears in Hegel's thought, and gives us reason to believe that issues surrounding it could be important to understanding his relation to Kant.

[133] In this section, I focus on three philosophers in particular: Reinhold, Fichte, and Schelling. Fichte and Schelling, in particular, were direct influences of Hegel's. Fichte was his colleague at Jena and the subject of much of his early writing. Schelling shared those features with Fichte and was, in addition, a longtime friend of Hegel's until a philosophical disagreement ended their friendship in 1806. Reinhold I include because, thanks to his general influence in popularizing Kant's philosophy, he was responsible for setting the tone for how Kant would be read by the German idealists that followed. Moreover, he is mentioned explicitly by Fichte in the "Review of Aenesidemus" and is also mentioned by Hegel, though not taken up as seriously as Fichte and Schelling. Overall, these three, and especially the second two, can all claim to be important influences on Hegel's philosophy. That their work focuses on modifications to the transcendental unity of apperception, then, gives us reason to believe that studying Hegel's philosophy through that lens would also be fruitful.
For examples of Hegel's relation to Fichte and Schelling see *Faith and Knowledge,* where he discusses Fichte in relation to Kant, and *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, where he puts his two predecessors in dialogue. There is also the preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in reaction to which Schelling famously terminated his friendship with Hegel.

One of Kant's earliest readers and the one who is perhaps most responsible for popularizing the Critical philosophy was K. L. Reinhold.[134] But Reinhold he was also one of Kant's first critics. In what would become a theme among Kant's critics, Reinhold believed that Kant did not take his own critical project far enough.[135] While Kant did an excellent job of explaining how synthetic a priori judgements were possible, his explanation itself rested on a number of assumptions about how the mind operated, in particular Kant's division of faculties (sensibility, understanding, and reason) and the corresponding division of representations (intuitions, concepts, ideas).[136] In other words, Kant did not adequately describe the general nature of representationality itself, and explain why it should be divided into these three categories.[137] Reinhold aimed to correct these oversights and saw himself as developing a science not, as Kant did, of how different representations relate to one another, but of representations in general. This is "the science of the a priori form of representing through sensibility, understanding, and reason; on this form depends the form of knowledge, as well as that of desire. In a word, it would be the science of the *entire faculty of representation as such*."[138]

To this end, Reinhold proposed a single first principle that would serve to define what a representation is and set the stage for further analysis. This admittedly somewhat esoterically-formulated principle is as follows: "In consciousness, representation is distinguished through

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[134] Reinhold's series of letters, which reviewed and presented Kant's ideas for a general public and were first published in 1786, were of great importance in spreading Kant's ideas. Prior to these letters, the *Critique of Pure Reason* had received only some lukewarm attention and little real engagement in the philosophical community.
[135] "Philosophical reason must press forward yet another step in its analysis past the point attained in the Critique of Reason." Reinhold, "The Foundation of Philosophical Knowledge," 68.
[136] Reinhold, "The Foundation of Philosophical Knowledge," 67.
[137] Kant does have some theory of what a representation is but for Reinhold that theory is insufficiently determinate and inadequate as a basis for a systematic philosophy. Some modern scholars have agreed with Reinhold on this point. A. C. Dickerson, for example, writes that "despite the crucial role it plays in his arguments, Kant pays little attention directly to the abstract notion of representation in general." Dickerson, *Kant on Representation and Objectivity,* 4.
[138] Reinhold, "The Foundation of Philosophical Knowledge," 67.

the subject from both subject and object and is referred to both."[139] Although perhaps obscure in its language, a closer examination of this principle shows that, in effect, it simply generalizes the transcendental unity of apperception by making it a definitional feature of all representation, as opposed to a condition of experience. To make this connection clearer, let's break down the principle into its component parts.

First, Reinhold qualifies his discussion by using the phrase 'in consciousness.' This tells us that he has in mind mental representations only, not other representational objects like drawings or written words. Next, Reinhold claims that the representation is distinguished from the subject and the object. In other words, the representation is taken, in consciousness, to neither be the conscious subject nor the object represented. Yet at the same time, a representation is also "referred" to the subject and the object. What Reinhold has in mind here is the fact that the representation is taken to *belong* to the subject - it is 'my' representation and in that sense is referred to me. And it is also a representation *of* the object, and in that sense is referred to the object. A representation, then, occupies this middle ground of being neither identical too, nor wholly separate from, the subject and the object.

All this would amount to a rather trivial and everyday description of what a mental representation is, except for the fact that Reinhold describes all of this as happening "through the subject."[140] In including this clause, Reinhold makes clear that he sees the distinguishing and referring not simply as given, but as resulting from the activity of the subject. Kant, however, has a similar idea of the subject's role in distinguishing representations from itself while simultaneously referring them to an object and a subject. In fact, this is exactly the kind of activity demanded by the transcendental unity of apperception. In the act of judgement, the subject's representations are referred to an object by being taken as a necessary unity. And the

[139] Reinhold, "The Foundation of Philosophical Knowledge," 70.
[140] Reinhold, "The Foundation of Philosophical Knowledge," 70.

entirety of this unifying activity is designed to fulfill the transcendental unity of apperception's condition that representations must be *mine*, must be referred to the (necessarily unified) subject that is having them. In this way, the principle that Reinhold extracts to play the foundational role in his philosophy is close kin to the transcendental unity of apperception, and plays a similar role. Reinhold's innovation is to take it as a definitional feature of representations in general, where Kant saw it as a condition on cognition only. In this way, we can see that even starting as early as Reinhold, there is a trend toward widening and expanding the scope of the transcendental unity of apperception beyond the parameters Kant kept it to.[141]

This trend continues with the philosophy of Fichte. Fichte is not content with Reinhold's presentation of what is intended to function as a fundamental principle of representation. As the foundational element of Reinhold's philosophy, this principle is meant to be beyond doubt and not dependent upon anything else for its content; the terms within it are to be defined through the principle itself.[142] That is, the terms in the principle are to be thought of as have no meaning outside their relation to the other terms also contained therein. Yet this would be unworkable, as Reinhold's critics were quick to point out. In fact, the principle relies on any number of additional concepts, such as those of 'subject,' 'object,' 'referring,' and 'differentiation.' Fichte himself makes this point in his "Review of Aenesidemus," where he writes that "the concept of distinguishing and referring only allows of being determined by means of the concepts of identity and opposition."[143] In other words, Reinhold's principle is not fully self-contained and

[141] It is not clear that Reinhold himself made this connection to the transcendental unity of apperception; nonetheless I hope to have illustrated how the connection could be drawn.
[142] The principle is "determined through itself" and "excludes any characteristic not contained in the principle." Reinhold, "The Foundation of Philosophical Knowledge," 72.
[143] Fichte, "Review of Aenesidemus," 139. *Aenesidemus* was a book written in response to Reinhold in which the author attacked Reinhold's philosophy and the Kantian system in general. Fichte's review of the book finds him defending Kant's essential conclusions, while granting various objections to details of Reinhold's system.

independent; his attempt to start his philosophy with a self-determining principle ends in failure.

Instead of a principle that could be captured in words, where it would always be forced to rely on some other terms for its content, Fichte proposes a basic and fundamental *action*: self-consciousness. He begins his famous *Science of Knowledge* (or *Wissenschaftslehre*) by asking the reader to "attend to yourself: turn your attention away from everything that surrounds you and towards your inner life; this is the first demand that philosophy makes of its disciple."[144] For Fichte, self-consciousness was the fundamental act out of which one can reconstruct the structure of empirical life. In self-consciousness, I am at once the subject of consciousness and the object of that consciousness; the mere thought of the self guarantees the existence of the self. The representation of the self is thus radically different from all other representations, since when one represents any other object, it always remains possible that the object of which one is thinking does not actually exist. The representation of the self, then has this built-in certainty, in that any thought of the self can be sure to have an object.[145]

But self-consciousness would be nothing, Fichte believes, if it did not also include a relation between the self and something external to it, something which was non-self. Thus it is a condition for the existence of the 'I' (as Fichte often calls the self in these contexts) that it be related to a 'non-I.' The non-I is Fichte's way of describing the external, empirically understood and objectively determined world. Yet this non-I remains *within* consciousness, as part of the way in which we necessarily conceive of the self.[146] We are conscious of ourselves as necessarily conditioned by a world of forces outside ourselves. Thus the I and the non-I mutually condition

[144] Fichte, "Science of Knowledge: First Introduction," 44.
[145] "The proposition 'I am I' is unconditionally and absolutely valid, since … it is valid not merely in form but also in content. In it the I is posited, not conditionally, but absolutely, with the predicate of equivalence to itself; hence it really *is* posited, and the proposition can also be expressed as *I am*." Fichte, *Science of Knowledge*, 96.
[146] "Opposition is possible only on the assumption of a unity of consciousness between the self that posits and the self that opposes." Fichte, *Science of Knowledge*, 104.

one another within consciousness. To bring this to a more everyday level, one might say that we are always aware of ourselves, but also always aware of ourselves as related to and defined by things that are not ourselves.

So for Fichte there is a kind of three-part layering to how consciousness works. There is the fundamentally free self-consciousness of the self, but this always requires the positing of something opposed to itself, which then reflects back and conditions the originally free self. As an example of how this works, take any act of self reflection. Suppose that Clarissa thinks of herself as a short person. Her thought of herself as short is, initially, a spontaneously generated thought, conditioned by nothing but her own free consciousness. Yet once made, it puts her in relation to things beyond her own control, namely, her physical body and its limitations. And this in turn conditions her further thoughts about herself - she is no longer free to think of herself as easily reaching high objects, for example.[147] Fichte takes this basic structure and develops it further, showing how certain forms of self-constraining self-consciousness are necessary, and these ultimately form the structure of the moral and physical universe we would recognize from everyday experience.[148] But the key idea is always the self-generating, and self-constraining, action of self-consciousness.

Yet this self-consciousness is, of course, nothing more than the transcendental unity of apperception, here again ascending to new heights of power, but fundamentally recognizable in

[147] This example, of course, is a bit flawed in that it begins with a concrete person at its center, and thus with any number of constraints already in place, such that her thoughts about her height may not seem genuinely spontaneous or free. Fichte's self-constrainting self-consciousness would not begin with any such constraints and thus would be wholly free to define itself in any way it chooses. Yet no matter how it defines itself, it thereby constrains its conception of itself, just as Clarissa constrains her conception of herself when she thinks of herself as short.

[148] One of Fichte's innovations, which the theoretical focus of my project puts forces me to leave to one side, is that he unified practical and theoretical philosophy in his conception of the I. The self-constraining activity of the I generates the overall structure of our experience *and* the structure of moral action.

outline.[149] Fichte places more emphasis on the self-consciousness element of Kant's central idea than Reinhold did, but we once again find a self-consciousness that, out of its own activity and according to its own essential laws, structures the empirical world. Like the transcendental unity of apperception, Fichte's conception of the 'I' forms the foundation of his theory of the mind. Like the transcendental unity of apperception, the 'I' is understood as a kind of free activity of self-consciousness.[150] Like the transcendental unity of apperception, it is limited by something it takes to be external to itself (in Kant's case the transcendental object, in Fichte's the not-I). And like the transcendental unity of apperception, Fichte's 'I' is responsible for differentiating subjective from objective representations, and for giving structure to the world of experience.[151] While there are important differences between Fichte's thought and Kant's, one can clearly see the transcendental unity of apperception as a thread that binds them together; each philosopher agrees that there is some kind of unifying self-consciousness whose principles account for important features of empirical reality, but disagrees on exactly how to understand it.

Schelling is the last major German Idealist we will consider here, and he is no exception to the trend of taking the transcendental unity of apperception as a foundational starting point for systematic philosophizing. In fact, one of his early texts is titled 'Of the I as the Principle of Philosophy,' and there he writes that "the perfect system of [philosophical] science proceeds

[149] The language of the 'I,' is also found in Kant, and Fichte even claims that his "system is nothing other than the Kantian." It seems reasonable to suppose that he was aware of this connection. Fichte, *Science of Knowledge*, 4. Dieter Henrich, in his paper "Fichte's Original Insight," confirms this by arguing that Fichte's philosophy can be understood as, at its heart, a criticism of and improvement on the Kantian conception of self-consciousness.

[150] Kant is careful to distinguish free activity from spontaneous activity - the former is the subject of moral philosophy, while the latter is characteristic of mental functions other than sensibility. The transcendental unity of apperception, then, is not free, but spontaneous. This corresponds to a strict division, in Kant, between practical and theoretical philosophy. Fichte, in expanding Kant's conception, overturns this distinction - his conception of the 'I' sees it as both free and spontaneous, with both the moral and the theoretical spheres being derived from its self-constraining activity.

[151] Indeed, Fichte' frames his whole philosophy as an attempt to answer the question of why some representations appear to be under the subject's control and others seem to be independent of it. See Fichte, "Science of Knowledge: First Introduction," 45.

from the absolute I, excluding everything that stands in contrast to it."[152] This absolute I, as we have already seen, is the term used by Fichte for his modified version of Kant's transcendental unity of apperception. Here, then, Schelling essentially asserts that the transcendental unity of apperception, in the modified form in which he employs it, is the basis from which the correct system of philosophy would proceed. In short, the transcendental unity of apperception continues to play as pivotal role in Schelling as it did in Fichte and Reinhold.

Schelling distinguishes himself from Fichte, however, in that he takes the first steps towards removing the 'I' from consciousness and from the subject. He writes, for example, that "any system that takes its start from the subject, that is, from the I which is thinkable only in respect to an object … is like dogmatism in that it contradicts itself in its own principle."[153] The I, thus, should not be thought of as a subjective consciousness. In what follows, Schelling goes on to list other features of the I, such as that it is utterly unconditioned, a simple unity, and "contains all being, all reality."[154] In later works, Schelling will leave behind the terminology of the I and make this principle into a force governing nature, where he describes it as an "absolute productivity" or "infinite becoming."[155] In point of fact, however, the later developments of Schelling's philosophy are not of great importance here, since it was during his earlier period that Schelling and Hegel were comrades, and Hegel would soon distance himself from Schelling's more naturalistic interpretation of the creative unifying power of the 'I.'[156] What is of

[152] Schelling, "Of the I as the Principle of Philosophy," 73.
[153] Schelling, "Of the I as the Principle of Philosophy," 70. Dogmatism contradicts itself in that it attempts to explain the subjective world of experience through an account of the relations between things-in-themselves, while simultaneously claiming that these things-in-themselves are all that truly exist. A philosophy starting from the subject would have a similar problem if it claimed to know the object as something external to the subject while simultaneously claiming that all knowledge was only of what can be experienced.
[154] Schelling, "Of the I as the Principle of Philosophy," 80.
[155] Schelling, "Introduction to the Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature," 376.
[156] This can be seen to some extent in the *Difference* essay, but most decisively in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. After being asked to read the preface to the latter, Schelling was insulted enough by Hegel's criticism that he terminated their friendship.

real importance is the fact that the transcendental unity of apperception continued to be of central importance through all the major thinkers in the German idealist tradition, from Reinhold on through Schelling.[157]

In sum then, it is no exaggeration to say that the transcendental unity of apperception reigned undisputed as the crowning principle of philosophy from Kant through Reinhold, Fichte, and Schelling. In all of these philosophers one can recognize an emphasis on a creative self-consciousness that works to determine the objective and subjective world of everyday experience. In all of them, this element of their philosophy is given pride of place as a fundamental principle, foundational activity, or absolute ground. And it is also worth noting that as German idealism developed, the originally restricted transcendental unity of apperception was given greater and greater power, first expanding to encompass all representations, then coming to generate the structuring principles of the empirical world, and finally expanding beyond consciousness to become a principle of the natural world in itself. It makes sense, then, to look for the a part of Hegel's thought that could play the same role as the transcendental unity of apperception plays in Kant, and it would be reasonable to expect that the Kantian restriction of that unity would be a key flaw, from Hegel's perspective, in the Kantian system.

2 The Restriction of the Transcendental Unity of Apperception

In order to see how important the restriction of the transcendental unity of apperception is to Hegel's understanding of Kant, it is important to first of all understand what this restriction amounts to. The transcendental unity of apperception is, for Kant, a condition on all of a subject's representations; it is the requirement that these representations be synthesized in such a way as to form a unified whole. But Kant does not extend that condition to things that are not

[157] Schelling, like Reinhold, did not himself make the connection to Kant's concept explicit. His use of the term 'I' is borrowed largely from Fichte.

representations. Things as they are in themselves, for example, are under no such obligation to be unified in this way.[158] It is only the subject's representations that are required to form a whole in this way, so that ordering representations in the appropriate manner is seen as the act of a human subject, not something occurring in the world as it is in itself.

For Hegel, this conception of the transcendental unity of apperception marks the great tragedy of the Kantian philosophy. On Hegel's reading, the transcendental unity of apperception was Kant's central insight into something that, unfortunately, he was unable to see clearly. The unity of apperception marks the point at which subject and object were unified, a neutral point out of which both subject and object are generated. The proper understanding of this matter would lead one to develop a form of idealism, sometimes described as 'absolute idealism,' that could avoid all of the other issues that plague Kant.[159] But Kant, despite discovering this pivotal point of unity, failed to treat this insight adequately. Hegel makes this explicit in the *Science of Logic*:

> "His [Kant's] original synthesis of apperception is one of the most profound principles for speculative development; it contains the beginning of a true apprehension of the nature of the concept and is fully opposed to any empty identity or abstract universality which is not internally a synthesis. The further development, however, did not live up to this beginning. The term itself, "synthesis," easily conjures up again the picture of an external unity, of a mere combination of terms that are intrinsically separate. Then, again, the Kantian philosophy has never got over the psychological reflex of the concept and has once more reverted to the claim that the concept is permanently conditioned by the manifold of intuition. It has declared the content of the cognitions of the understanding, and of experience, to be phenomenal, not because of the finitude of the categories as such but, on the ground of a psychological idealism, because they are only determinations derived from self-consciousness."[160]

[158] Things in themselves may have some form of unity, but it will not be the kind of unity imposed by the transcendental unity of apperception. The degree to which things in themselves might be unified is a controversial issue in Kant scholarship, but one on which we can remain neutral.
[159] See Ameriks, "Hegel's Critique of Kant's Theoretical Philosophy," 7.
[160] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 12.22-23.

This discussion comes in the context of Hegel's discussion of the Concept, one of the later stages in the dialectic he presents in the *Science of Logic*. So when he uses the word 'concept' here, he does not have in mind concepts precisely as Kant understood them - in fact, he is criticizing Kant's understanding of concepts, and especially his understanding of the categories. For us, however, the key portions of the passage are where Hegel writes that the "original synthesis of apperception is one of the most profound principles for speculative development," but in the next sentence qualifies this by saying that "further development, however, did not live up to this beginning."[161] Hegel also explains why this was the case: Kant indulged in a "psychological reflex" and "declared the content of cognitions of the understanding, and of experience, to be phenomenal … on the ground of a psychological idealism," that is, on the basis of an assumption that they were merely the result of an operation of the mind.[162] In other words, Kant went back on his crucial insight by conceiving of the unity of apperception as something restricted to the the subject's psychology, to their mental faculties.

This same criticism of Kant's transcendental unity of apperception is made elsewhere as well. Perhaps the most forceful such claim comes in the *Encyclopedia Logic*, where Hegel writes that "Kant, meanwhile, designates that unity of self-consciousness [i.e. the transcendental unity of apperception] merely as *transcendental*, and by this he means that it is only subjective and does not also belong to objects as they are in themselves."[163] Here we have Hegel directly

[161] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 12.22-23.
[162] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 12.22. 'Psychological idealism,' like the other term 'subjective idealism,' that Hegel uses to describe Kant's philosophy, is an idealism that restricts its scope to the subject's representations and experiences alone. Also worth noting is that the term 'content' has a different sense here than it does in Kant. The 'content of cognitions' refers to appearances, which we cognize in experience.
[163] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 42, addition 2. Here Hegel is distinguishing the transcendental from the transcendent. The former has to do with the conditions for the possibility of experience, the latter would be something existing or having its nature independently of experience in general. Kant conceives of the transcendental unity of apperception as *transcendental*, Hegel remarks, but should have thought of it as *transcendent*.

criticizing Kant for treating the transcendental unity of apperception as something subjective and restricted to experience, not to objects as they are independently of experience.

Similar statements are also made in the *Science of Logic*. There, Hegel describes Kant's project by saying that "his principal idea is to vindicate the categories for self-consciousness understood as the *subjective 'I.'* Because of this determination, his point of view remains confined within consciousness and its opposition, and, besides the empirical element of feelings, is left with something else not posited or determined by thinking self-consciousness, a *thing-in-itself.*"[164] Recalling the use of the term 'I' among earlier German idealists, it should be clear that Hegel has the transcendental unity of apperception in mind here when he refers to the 'subjective 'I." He then immediately goes on to point out how this initial mistake keeps Kant "confined within consciousness" and forces him to grapple with the thing-in-itself. So here too, we see Hegel describing the unity of apperception as the centerpiece of Kant's philosophy, and pointing to its subjective, restricted character as the central flaw of the same. He will go on to repeat this point a few pages later when he says that, in order to develop and adequate form of philosophical cognition, "the finite determinateness in which that form is as 'I,' as consciousness, must be shed."[165] Here, too, we find Hegel attacking the idea that unity of apperception should be restricted to a subject's mind, to consciousness.

The recurring theme in these passages is that in them Hegel derides the representational and subjective conception of the transcendental unity of apperception Kant puts forth. There is thus no shortage of textual support for the idea that this objection is an important one, and could be a thread helpful in understanding the connection between the two philosophers. For

[164] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.47.
[165] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.48. Hegel's use of 'finite' is slightly idiosyncratic and will be discussed at greater length in the following chapter. In brief, by describing the form of the 'I' as finite, he is pointing to the fact that it is defined by what lies outside it. Consciousness is a prime example of finitude in that consciousness is always consciousness *of* something; consciousness is thus defined in terms of a relation to something external to consciousness.

Hegel, Kant takes the unity of subject and object that occurs in the unity of apperception and renders it something subjective, something restricted to operating with the subject's representations. In so doing, Kant undermines his own major insight and recreates for himself all of the various problems that have faced dualisms of subject and object prior to him. For this reason, Hegel views the transcendental unity of apperception as Kant's great missed opportunity, the mishandling of which his system never adequately recovers from, and which leads to various other problems throughout.[166]

This being the case, one might still wonder why, if the transcendental unity of apperception really does occupy such a central role in the transition from Kant to Hegel, has it received relatively little explicit or detailed treatment by most commentators? The fact is that while Hegel does make frequent references to the restriction of the transcendental unity of apperception, these references are often opaque or made parenthetically and he does not often explicitly single it out as the single central issue in his discussion of Kant.[167] He does, however, consistently point to what could be described as Kant's subjectivism and formalism. In the next section, I argue that these are best understood as objections to the subjective and formal treatment of the transcendental unity of apperception in particular, and that to describe it as

[166] Longuenesse summarizes this elegantly when she writes that "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 … For Hegel, the unity of apperception is much more than this. … it is the source not only of the form but also." Unfortunately, her discussion occupies only the brief culmination point of her article. Longuenesse, "Point of View of Man or Knowledge of God," 187.
See Karl Ameriks, "Hegel's Critique of Kant's Theoretical Philosophy," 7, and Sally Sedgwick, *Hegel's Critique of Kant*, 11, for other presentations of this point in the literature. Sedgwick, while she points to Hegel's claim about Kant's mistreatment of the transcendental unity of apperception, takes Hegel's points about the intuitive intellect to be a deeper issue. I deal with hers and Amerik's points in a later section of this chapter.

[167] To be clear, however, Hegel is generally just not in the business of identifying a single major objection - one will not find any other objection consistently labelled as primary either.

'subjective' or 'formal' is to say precisely that it is a condition on representations alone, as opposed to operating on all things in general.

2.1 The Transcendental Unity of Apperception, Subjectivity & Formalism

In the representational conception of the transcendental unity of apperception one can distinguish two major elements, corresponding to the two poles of a representation in general. On the one hand, a representation is something possessed by a subject. Seen in this light, by conceiving of the unity of apperception as operating on representations, Kant is conceiving it as something restricted to the subject and the subject's mind. In this sense, it is appropriate to describe it as 'subjective.' On the other hand, a representation is something that, at least in the ideal veridical cases, is related to an object. Thus by conceiving of the unity of apperception as operating on representations, Kant makes it dependent on some link to the object, which for Kant comes through the material furnished to us through intuition. In this sense, one could describe the unity of apperception as 'formal' in that it molds this sensory material into a certain form, but does not produce that material itself.

The charges of subjectivism and formalism are a frequent sight in Hegel's texts, though they are not always clearly connected to the transcendental unity of apperception. In this section I look more closely at these two in turn and show how what might appear to be general objections are better understood as specific objections to Kant's handling of the transcendental unity of apperception. In so doing, I further establish the unity of apperception as a central point of contention between the two philosophers by broadening the base of its textual support.

That Hegel repeatedly charges Kant with being subjective, or with providing only a subjective idealism, is well established.[168] And as we have seen above, Hegel often makes this charge of subjectivity specifically with respect to the transcendental unity of apperception. In the previous section, I provided some examples of precisely this. But just as an additional example, take the passage of the *Encyclopedia Logic* where he writes, that "even the Kantian objectivity of thinking itself is in turn only subjective insofar as thoughts, despite being universal and necessary determinations, are, according to Kant, *merely our* thoughts and distinguished from what the thing is *in itself* by an insurmountable gulf."[169] By the phrase 'objectivity of thinking,' Hegel refers to the results of the transcendental unity of apperception; recall that it is only through that unity that thought becomes thought of an object, properly speaking. Here Hegel is attacking Kant for making this objectivity a merely subjective one, occurring in our thoughts alone and having no real relation to things as they are in themselves.

But it is important to note that various broader claims about subjectivity will also take their starting point from the subjectivity of the transcendental unity of apperception. The transcendental unity of apperception is, for Kant, the condition that structures our experience of the empirical world. If it is conceived of as conditioning the activity *of a subject only*, then the empirical world can be nothing more than the result of a subject's activity. The general subjectivity with which Kant is charged, namely that he makes the entirety of the empirical world into mere appearance, thus finds its source in the subjective conception of the

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[168] Hegel writes, for example, that "Critical philosophy did indeed already turn metaphysics into logic but, like the subsequent idealism, it gave to the logical determinations an essentially subjective significance out of fear of the object, as we said earlier." Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.35.
Commentators frequently make this point. Sedgwick devotes a chapter of her book *Hegel's Critique of Kant* to it (see Sedgwick, *Hegel's Critique of Kant*, 70-97). See also Houlgate, "Hegel's Critique of Kant," 26; Smith, "Hegel's Critique of Kant," 447; Guyer, "Thought and Being: Hegel's Critique of Kant's Theoretical Philosophy," 171.
[169] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 41, addition 1.

transcendental unity of apperception.[170] When we read Hegel attacking Kant as a "subjective idealist" or claiming that Kant's philosophy remains a mere "subjective idealism," these broad claims may seem quite separate from issues surrounding the transcendental unity of apperception.[171] But in fact, since the transcendental unity of apperception is the basic principle for Kant's theory mind, it is the specific subjectivity of that principle that renders the rest of Kant's system similarly subjective.

In this sense of the term 'subjective,' to describe Kant's system as 'subjective' is to say that it takes the empirical world to be merely the experience of a subject. This is Hegel's primary charge of subjectivity. Yet at the same time, Hegel also charges Kant with being excessively subjective in that his philosophy focuses entirely on the subject, and does not deal with the object except through insofar as it is related to the subject. This kind of criticism is made, for example, when he writes that "the Kantian philosophy declares this finite cognition to be all that is possible. … In so doing, it falls back into absolute finitude and subjectivity, and the whole task and content of this philosophy is, not the cognition of the Absolute, but the cognition of this subjectivity. In other words, it is a critique of the cognitive faculties."[172] Here Hegel is objecting to the Kant's mistaken choice of topic - Kant saw his project as one of exploring the mind alone,

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[170] I say this because without the theory of the transcendental unity of apperception, Kant would have no account of the empirical world as a world of appearances. There are, of course, other arguments, aside from those surrounding the transcendental unity of apperception, that Kant puts forth in defense of his claim that experience is merely of appearances, or subjective in the sense here at issue. These arguments are put forth in the Transcendental Aesthetic and the Transcendental Dialectic, and I deal with them in greater detail in sections 3.1 and 3.3. of this chapter. Here, however, I will just note that without the subjective conception of the transcendental unity of apperception in particular, Kant's other arguments would lose much of their plausibility, because Kant would then lack any account of everyday experience.

[171] "Now, although the categories (e. g., unity, cause and effect, etc.) pertain to thinking as such, it does not at all follow from this that they must therefore be merely something of ours, and not also determinations of objects themselves. But, according to Kant's view, this is what is supposed to be the case, and his philosophy is subjective idealism." Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 42, addition 3. See also Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 45, addition, and Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.180.

[172] *Faith and Knowledge*, 68. See also, *Faith and Knowledge*, 76. 'Finite cognition' here means cognition of what is given in intuition. The issue of Kant's excessive focus on the subject is particularly important in relation to Kant's failure to derive the categories; I deal with it in more detail in that section.

and restricted himself to that where he should have seen the deeper implications of his discoveries.

Like the previous charge of subjectivity, this one too is rooted in the representational conception of the transcendental unity of apperception, and for reasons similar to the ones presented above. Kant's major contribution in his study of the cognitive faculties was his discovery of the transcendental unity of apperception. Had he not, upon discovering this, restricted it to a condition on representations alone, he could have seen the consequences of this discovery for philosophy broadly speaking. Instead, because he saw it as a condition on the mental faculties of subjects, he continued to focus entirely on the subject's mind, despite what, to Hegel, are the obvious broader implications of this discovery.[173]

The second side to the restriction of the transcendental unity of apperception is Kant's conception of it as merely formal, as a merely formal condition. Kant makes this explicit when he describes the 'I' as "a form of representation in general,"[174] and writes that "the logical form of all judgments consists in the objective unity of the apperception."[175] Kant goes on to describe the categories, insofar as they are not connected to intuition, as "mere forms of thought."[176] This latter point gives us a clue as to how to understand what of what describing the transcendental unity of apperception as formal amounts to for Kant in this context. That the categories are

[173] To be sure, there is a kind of loop here. Kant set out to study our faculties of cognition and discovered the transcendental unity of apperception in the process of doing so. The narrow focus of his original project could thus be construed as the cause of his restriction of the unity of apperception - his project was already focused only on the mind, so that whatever he discovered appeared to him to be a structure of the mind alone. Yet at the same time, the transcendental unity of apperception gave Kant the opportunity and the impetus to expand the scope of his project, but he chose not to because of his representational conception of it. In other words, the initial framing of Kant's project caused him to misunderstand his discovery, and that misunderstanding forced him to keep that initial, subjective, framing in place. I have focused on the last step of this loop, but would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the first.
[174] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A346/B404. Kant also writes that "the proposition I think (taken problematically) contains the form of every judgment of understanding whatever and accompanies all categories as their vehicle." Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A348/B406.
[175] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B140.
[176] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B150.

'mere forms' and that the transcendental unity of apperception is "a form of representation" amount to the fact that they are, in and of themselves, mere elements of the subject's mind which cannot yield any cognition of objects; they are always dependent upon some matter given to them through intuition.

This formalism is, at bottom, rooted in a representational conception of the transcendental unity of apperception and the categories it employs. Representations are fundamentally incomplete - they always require, if they are to be veridical or have any determinate content, some other thing that they represent. Thus to be real experience and not simply fantastical thinking, our representations must have some connection to the object.[177] This connection to the object which elevates mere thinking into experience of determinate objects is provided, according to Kant, through intuition. In this way, by conceiving of it as a condition on representations, Kant ensures that the transcendental unity of apperception will be dependent on intuition. If the transcendental unity of apperception were not, and gave all of its content to itself, it would be for Kant a meaningless mental game, not a way of knowing or experiencing the world properly speaking.[178]

In this way, to understand the transcendental unity of apperception as a condition on representations is to understand it as always requiring some material given to it externally, through intuition. Representations would not count as experience of an object, for Kant, without a connection to something external that they represent. Since this connection is provided by intuition, the transcendental unity of apperception must be dependent upon intuition.

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[177] Indeed, the problem of this connection is arguably the central issue of Kant's first *Critique*. Kant rejects as dogmatic the rationalist accounts of this link that came prior to him. See Gardner, *Kant and the Critique of Pure Reason*, 27-37.

[178] There is a certain sense in which the transcendental unity of apperception *does* give content to itself - in the act of judgement it employs certain forms, and these forms of judgement ultimately end up conditioning the nature of our experiences. Yet Kant insists that these forms of judgement are useless if they are not given some content to make judgements *of*, and that latter content is given through intuition. Hegel would have Kant focus more directly on the content of the categories as opposed to their relation to objects through intuition.

Built into this conception of the transcendental unity of apperception is a kind of duality between the material given to it and the way in which it structures that material. It imposes its unity on our intuitions through concepts, thereby giving them the appropriate form to be part of a full-fledged experience, as opposed to the raw chaos of sensation. It is in this sense that the transcendental unity of apperception can be understood as a formal condition, a form opposed to the matter of intuition.[179] By restricting the transcendental unity of apperception to representations, Kant makes it into merely the *form* of thought, dependent for its material on things external.

Hegel objects firmly to this point, and insists that thought can and indeed must give itself its own content - the process of thought's doing so is embodied in the dialectic.[180] The opening pages of the *Science of Logic* contain long meditations on the formal conception of logic and thought and Hegel is adamant that thought not be understood as something merely formal.[181] There, Hegel discusses philosophical cognition, writing that "in order to arrive at this cognition, the finite determinateness in which that form is as "I," as consciousness, must be shed. The form, when thought out in its purity, will then have within itself the capacity to determine itself, that is, to give itself a content, and to give it as a necessary content – as a system of thought-determinations."[182] The first sentence of this quote was given before, since there we see Hegel explicitly attacking the idea of the transcendental unity of apperception as merely a feature of consciousness. But in the second sentence we find him claiming that once that restriction is dropped, that same form of unity will no longer be dependent, but will be able to give a necessary content to itself. The idea of self-generating content is key to Hegel, and he sees

[179] Of course, Kant also believes intuitions to have their own form, that of space and time, prior to any unifying activity. This, however, is the form of sensibility, not the form of thought, and it is with the latter that Hegel is predominantly concerned.
[180] This arises especially in relation to the doctrine of determinate negation, of which more in the following chapter. See Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.38.
[181] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.28-21.32.
[182] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.48.

Kant's transcendental unity of apperception as a step in the right direction on this front in that it generates the categories out of itself.[183] But Kant's formal conception of it means that he does not focus on this element of the transcendental unity of apperception as much as Hegel might like, instead focusing on its status as parts of the subject's mental faculties and the issue of how it might be related to objects.[184]

This issue of formalism is closely related to another commonly-discussed point of contention between Kant and Hegel: the relation between concepts and intuitions. For Kant, thought without intuitions is, famously, empty. In other words, concepts depend on intuitions for their relation to the world. Concepts, in this context, correspond to the form - they are used to order and structure the raw material of intuition. That concepts should be dependent on intuition in this way, is, as I have tried to show, a product of Kant's representational conception of the transcendental unity of apperception.[185] Because Kant sees the transcendental unity of apperception as operating on representations, he makes it dependent upon a link to the object - a link that is provided by intuition.

Hegel cites the idea that concepts depend on intuitions as a mistake, for example describing it in the quote given above as a result of a "psychological reflex."[186] Immediately following that passage, Hegel writes: "Here accordingly we have again the supposition that apart

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[183] See the *Encyclopedia Logic*, where Hegel writes that "to assert of the categories that, with respect to themselves, they are empty is unjustified insofar as they possess in any case content through the fact that they are *determinate*." Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 43.
[184] Hegel, putting this issue in terms of a Kantian over-emphasis on the questions of subjectivity and objectivity, complains that "nothing at all, therefore, depends on that difference between subjectivity and objectivity. Instead, it is the content on which everything depends, and this is equally subjective and objective." Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 42.
[185] It could be argued that the implication runs the other way - that Kant's claim that concepts are dependent upon intuitions brought him to claim that the transcendental unity of apperception was similarly dependent. I believe that the two theses stand or fall together. The concept/intuition dependence, however, would have been more or less a theoretical dead end were it not for the transcendental unity of apperception, since it would have not have successfully achieved Kant's theoretical aims. The same cannot be said of the unity of apperception, as Kant's successor's make clear.
[186] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 12.22

from the manifoldness of intuition the concept is without content, empty, despite the fact that the concept is said to be a synthesis a priori; as such, it surely contains determinateness and differentiation within itself."[187] As mentioned in the previous paragraph, Hegel points out that concepts (here the categories in particular) *do* have a content independent of intuition. It is this content that allows us to distinguish the concept of causation from that of substance, for example. While Kant acknowledges this fact, he sets it to the side and emphasizes not this content but the fact that these concepts are representations and thus require intuition for their relation to objects. Had Kant not been trapped in a representational conception of the transcendental unity of apperception's operation, he would not have problematized that relation - indeed that relation would not have been an issue at all. He would then have been able to focus on the content of the pure concepts of the understanding (i.e, the categories) instead of their relation to objects.

In this sense, then, the dependence of concepts on intuition is but another facet of Kant's formalism, and one that is derived from the formal, representational conception of the transcendental unity of apperception.[188] In this case, the formalism is more broad: concepts in general (and the categories more specifically) are understood as forms of thought and the intuitions constitute the content of thought.[189] Hegel's critique is that in giving pride of place to intuition, Kant misses the important content that concepts have in and of themselves - for him, thought without intuition is anything but empty.[190] That the formalism of the transcendental

[187] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 12.23

[188] The charge of formalism here is intended to describe the dependence between concepts and intuitions alone. That Kant distinguishes between concepts and intuitions, and various other features of that distinction, such as that one is universal and the other particular, one is spontaneous and the other forced, one is mediated and the other immediate, etc., are not necessarily implicated in this formalism and may be independently motivated.

[189] See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A51/B75, where Kant implicitly identifies intuition with the content of thought.

[190] If this argument is correct, then the general objection to Kant that he makes cognition dependent on intuition is rooted in the restriction of the transcendental unity of apperception to representations. This objection is all but omnipresent in the literature; what I have done here is connect it more directly to

unity of apperception should have consequences in Kant's general theory of concepts (namely, that they too are forms dependent upon intuition) should not be surprising, since he transcendental unity of apperception is the fundamental principle of human cognition for Kant; broad claims about Kant's formalism with regard to cognition can easily be understood as springing from his formal conception of that fundamental principle.

Indeed, in a somewhat paradoxical turn of events, it is precisely the fundamentality of the transcendental unity of apperception that can obscure its importance in the transition from Kant to Hegel. The Kantian system is organized around answering the question of how we can know synthetic a priori truths. The transcendental unity of apperception is, in essence, Kant's answer to that question - we can know synthetic a priori truths because of the forms inherent in the unifying activity that makes experience of objects and ourselves possible.[191] With this answer in place, the rest of Kant's philosophy can be understood as organized around it. Accordingly, Kant's conception of the transcendental unity of apperception - that he locates it in the subject, that he makes it dependent upon sensations, that it results in a judgement - shapes every other element of his system. Thus when Hegel presents various criticisms of Kant he is, in many cases, talking about the transcendental unity of apperception, though without doing so explicitly. In the next section, I try to show how this is the case by examining three commonly stated Hegelian

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Kant's conception of the transcendental unity of apperception.
See Longuenesse, *Hegel's Critique of Metaphysics*, 23; Guyer, "Thought and Being: Hegel's Critique of Kant," 189; Sedgwick, *Hegel's Critique of Kant*, 70-91.

[191] Without the transcendental unity of apperception, no synthetic a priori judgements would be possible, since Kant would have no theory of judgement in general. The Analytic thus answers the central Kantian question in a more direct way that the Aesthetic and Dialectic do not. The Aesthetic, while it grounds our knowledge of synthetic a priori truths in mathematics, does not provide the necessary theory of judgement to make our mathematical claims comprehensible. The Dialectic does not address the issue at all, and if anything denies us knowledge of what would have seemed to be synthetic a priori claims prior to Kant's discussion. This being the case, it would make sense to imagine that the central concept of the Analytic - the transcendental unity of apperception - would be the more important element in Kant's arguments for transcendental idealism. And indeed, transcendental idealism itself would not answer Kant's central question were it not for the addition of the transcendental unity of apperception.

objections and tracing their connection to Kant's representational conception of the transcendental unity of apperception.

3.1 Three Other Hegelian Objections - The Thing In Itself

Though the charges of subjectivism and formalism I presented above are often repeated objections Hegel brings against Kant, they are far from the only objections he brings against his predecessor. Here I focus on three other major problems that Hegel brings up in his writing: Kant's failure to grant us knowledge of things in themselves, his failure to adequately derive the categories, and his failure to understand the true nature of dialectical reasoning.[192] Of course, in attempting to understand Hegel's criticism of his predecessor, one could simply take all of these up in a list, not taking any of them to be primary or privileged. But a deeper understanding of the connection between these philosophers, and of how Hegel aims to build on Kant, requires us to see the connections between these problems, and, if possible, trace them to a common source. My contention in this section is that these three criticisms do have such a common source: they are all features of Kant's philosophy that result from his restriction of the transcendental unity of apperception. This in turn further establishes the value of a study of Hegel that takes his connection to the transcendental unity of apperception as its starting point.

On a first reading of Kant or Hegel, it is the idea of the thing-in-itself that might appear as most immediately problematic. Kant famously denies that we have any theoretical knowledge of things as they are in themselves, independent of our experience of them. With regard to these entities, we can have faith and perhaps some practical knowledge, but we cannot truly know

[192] There are, to be sure, other criticisms Hegel makes of Kant. And other readers have presented other criticisms as primary. In these three sections, my primary aim is to unify these three most explicitly repeated criticisms by showing them to be results of Kant's restriction of the transcendental unity of apperception to representations. In the sections that follow, I consider other attempts to distinguish in Hegel a single primary objection to the Kantian philosophy.

them in the way we know the natural world. To Kant, this result was of paramount importance in that it allowed him to preserve the belief in God and freedom against the contrary evidence provided by the natural sciences. By denying us knowledge of things in themselves, Kant makes it possible to have faith that among these entities there may be immortal souls, free agents, and benevolent authors of the natural world.

Yet at the same time, many readers of Kant find the idea that we cannot know the world as it is in itself deeply unsatisfying. They are not alone - many philosophers in the German idealist tradition, including Hegel himself, felt the same way. This objection to Kant's philosophy is raised repeatedly by Hegel throughout his writings.[193] In his early essay *Faith and Knowledge*, for example, Hegel charges Kant with concluding that "things in themselves and the sensations are without objective determinateness."[194] The *Encyclopedia Logic* finds Hegel describing Kant's critical philosophy as one that "shares with empiricism the supposition that experience is the *sole* basis of knowledge, except that it lets that knowledge count, not for truths, but only for knowledge of appearances."[195] He takes a similar line in the *Science of Logic*, where he writes that "the *critique of the forms of the understanding* has arrived precisely at this result, namely that such forms do *not apply to things in themselves*. - This can only mean that they are in

[193] In the literature, many scholars have noted the objection as well. John Smith, for example, writes that "that Hegel was opposed to Kant's doctrine of the thing-in itself and his consequent limitation of human knowledge to the sphere of *Erscheinung* [appearances] is well known and has often been repeated." Smith, "Hegel's Critique of Kant," 448-449. See also Longuenesse, *Hegel's Critique of Metaphysics*, 18-24; Guyer, "Thought and Being: Hegel's Critique of Kant's Theoretical Philosophy," 171-173; Stern, "Hegel's Idealism," 146-147; Houlgate, "Hegel's Critique of Kant," 26.
Some, like Guyer, consider the objection to be a question-begging one based on a weak understanding of Kant. Others, like Longuenesse, see the objection as rooted in deeper issues such as the nature of truth. Yet others, like Houlgate, see the objection as a strong one based on Kant's own stated critical aims. The strength of the objection depends on how one understands Hegel's argument for it. Here, however, that particular issue is not so relevant as the fact that in each case, the denial of our knowledge of things in themselves arises from a restriction of the transcendental unity of apperception.
[194] Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge*, 74.
[195] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 40.

themselves something untrue."[196] In each of these cases, we find Hegel objecting to the Kantian view that restricts knowledge to appearances, describing it as rendering our knowledge untrue and indeterminate.

For Hegel, there is a clear cause for this Kantian conclusion: the formal nature of the categories, i.e., the fact that they require material given to them through sensation. He writes that "the categories are therefore incapable of being determinations of … something that is not given in a perception, and, for that reason, the understanding or knowledge by means of the categories is unable to know *things in themselves*."[197] Because the categories cannot be legitimately applied except to appearances, they can provide us knowledge only of those appearances. The categories can let us know, for example, that these appearances are necessarily correlated, but they cannot assure us of anything that lies beyond them.

A similar connection between the dependence on sensation and our inability to know things in themselves is made in the *Science of Logic*:

> "knowledge flees … to sensuous existence, believing that there it will find stability and accord. On the other hand, since this cognition is self-admittedly a cognition only of appearances, the unsatisfactoriness of the latter is admitted but at the same time presupposed: as much as to say that although we do not have cognition of things in themselves, nevertheless, within the sphere of appearance we do have correct cognition … this is like attributing right insight to someone, with the stipulation, however, that he is not fit to see what is true but only what is false. Absurd as this might be, no less absurd would be a cognition which is true but does not know its subject matter as it is in itself."[198]

[196] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.30. By 'critique of the forms of the understanding' Hegel means Kant's theory of the categories. The categories are described as 'untrue' here because, by Kant's own admission, they do not accurately capture the nature of things in themselves.
[197] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 44. In the section immediately prior, Hegel takes issue with Kant's claim that "with respect to themselves, the categories are empty, having application and use only in experience." Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 43.
[198] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.30.

Here we find Hegel again connecting the dependence on sensation to the fact that cognition is, for Kant, merely cognition of appearances. The argument here is, like most of such arguments in Hegel's criticism of Kant, somewhat condensed. We can, however, attempt to dissect it here. The first charge is that for Kant, cognition depends on something given to us through the senses - intuition. This is the thesis that we have described above as Kant's formalism. Next, we have the idea that through the senses we receive representations of objects, not the objects themselves - in the language of the quote just given, one could put this by saying that cognition of sensuous existence is cognition of appearances. Again, Kant would happily agree to this point. After all, it is this fact that that allows him to present a theory of the a priori form of intuition; were intuitions not representations, then the subject's faculties would not have any particularly important relation to their form.

To these, now, we must add a premise that is largely suppressed in Hegel's text, but which would have been one that could easily be taken for granted in Hegel's time and in relation to Kant's philosophy as well. This is the claim that there is no intrinsic link between representations - appearances - and things as they are in themselves. In other words, knowing one does not entail knowing the other. This claim essentially amounts to a denial of any dogmatically established link between appearances and things in themselves. Kant's critical philosophy begins from this kind of attack on dogma - if it did not, there would already be any number of easy answers to the question of how synthetic a priori judgements were possible.[199] This is what Hegel is getting at when he says that "unsatisfactoriness of [sensuous existence] is admitted."[200] Kant himself would claim that knowledge of intuitions only gives us knowledge of

[199] Such answers could take the form of Descartes' claims regarding God's benevolence, or perhaps Leibniz's pre-established harmony. There could also be simply the assertion that the subject's faculties of perception are transparent, such that features of objects are represented faithfully in all cases - such an assumption might underlie certain versions of empiricism. This reading of Kant's project is also presented by Gardner in his book *Kant and the Critique of Pure Reason*, p27-37.
[200] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.30.

appearances, though he would disagree with Hegel that this is unsatisfactory, since for Kant having knowledge of appearances alone is a perfectly acceptable, indeed desirable, consequence of his system.

If we bring these three claims together, we see that since intuitions are a kind of representation, there will always be skepticism about whether they accurately represent things in themselves. And since the categories are functions for unifying intuitions, any knowledge of them would be knowledge of representations only - the categories too are unfit to provide us with real knowledge of things in themselves. They can tell us about the necessary connections between our representations, but not anything about the world as it is in itself. In this way, the formal nature of the categories, i.e., their dependence upon intuition, is the root cause of Kant's denial of our knowledge of things in themselves.[201]

But to say that the categories require intuition to have any relation to objects is, in effect, simply another way of saying that the transcendental unity of apperception is similarly restricted. After all, the categories are the forms of unity required by the transcendental unity of apperception in unifying intuitions to generate experience. And as we saw above, the demand that there be some sensory material given prior to this unifying activity is itself part and parcel with the representational, formal way in which Kant thinks of the transcendental unity of apperception. If it were not conceived of as a condition on a subject's representations, then it would not require a connection to an external thing in itself that could be represented. In other words, it would not require intuitions, since these are posited by Kant as precisely the immediate connectors between the mind and things in themselves.

[201] Note that in his inaugural dissertation, Kant has a kind of concept/intuition distinction, but does not see concepts as dependent upon intuition. For this reason, he does not draw the transcendental idealist conclusion that knowledge is of appearances alone. It is only in the *Critique*, where the dependence of concepts on intuition is made a major theme, that Kant puts forth his claims about the restriction of knowledge. This further supports the idea that the dependence here is a key element in Kant's argument.

We can summarize this line of reasoning as follows. The transcendental unity of apperception is a condition on the subject's representations. Representations cannot constitute genuine experience of an object unless connected to something external that they represent. That connection is established by intuition. The transcendental unity of apperception, then, must be dependent upon intuition, in that it imposes a formal condition on material given to it through the senses. And since it deals with intuition, the transcendental unity of apperception cannot give us knowledge of things in themselves, but only of how intuitions (i.e., representations) are ordered. In this way, Kant's restriction of the transcendental unity of apperception leads to his denying that we can know things as they are in themselves. Hegel's criticism of this point goes farther to show precisely why this is unsatisfactory, but for our purposes the essential point is here - it is the restriction of the transcendental unity of apperception that is at the root of Kant's restriction of our knowledge.

The passages cited above, and others in Hegel's texts, show that, at least to Hegel's mind, it was the formal nature of the categories, i.e. of the transcendental unity of apperception, that was at the root of Kant's claim that we cannot have knowledge of things in themselves.[202] This is sufficient, at least, to show that Hegel saw a direct link on this count, and thus to justify the attempt to understand Hegel's positive philosophy by looking at how he would correct the flaws he saw in the transcendental unity of apperception. But it is another matter whether Hegel's claims about the link here are faithful to Kant's texts and whether Kant's argument for his restriction of knowledge did in fact crucially depend on his understanding of the transcendental unity of apperception. Kant did, after all, provided a number of arguments for his claim that our knowledge is of appearances only. The *Critique of Pure Reason* is divided into three major sections, each of which presents what seems like a relatively independent argument for the

[202] See also Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 12.22, where Hegel again makes this connection.

claim, and his discussion of the transcendental unity of apperception is only obviously central in one of those arguments. There are two others that Kant presents: one given in the Transcendental Aesthetic and based on space and time, and one in the Transcendental Dialectic and based on addressing transcendental illusions. Before moving on to other Hegelian criticisms, I want to briefly address Kant's argument from the Transcendental Aesthetic to show how it, too, is related to Kant's overall subjective and representational approach.[203]

The argument in the Transcendental Aesthetic depends on Kant's claim that unless space and time are understood as a priori forms of intuition, we cannot account for our knowledge of a priori truths about space and time. We clearly have such knowledge, as in the discipline of geometry, for example. Kant contends that to make sense of this we must think of our intuitions as appearances conditioned by a general form of intuition. With this assumption in place, we can be assured that our knowledge of geometrical truths is in fact a body of necessary truths. Space is one of the conditions under which we intuit objects, so that all objects of intuition must necessarily be spatial, and hence must be governed by the laws of geometry. Were space a property of things in themselves, and not a form of our intuition, then we could not explain the necessity that attaches to geometrical truths. By making space a form of intuition, one that necessarily conditions all appearances, Kant can show why geometric truths have the necessity they are commonly understood to possess. In this way, the claim that experience is always of appearances, and not of things in themselves, is seen as the only way to explain our knowledge of a priori truths about geometry. This provides Kant with an argument for his restriction of knowledge that seems to be independent of any issues related to the transcendental unity of apperception.

[203] I address Kant's argument in the Transcendental Dialectic in section 3.3.

Now, the key point that distinguishes this argument from the argument in the Transcendental Analytic is that it deals with the form of intuition, where the latter deals with concepts. The transcendental unity of apperception, for Kant, conditions our concepts, while space and time are the forms of our intuitions. But, as we noted above, this dependence of concepts on intuitions is itself a result of Kant's representational, subjective conception of his project. Because Kant sees himself as studying the nature of the subject's representations, he has to give some account of how these representations are connected to their objects; this account is given in terms of intuitions. So the fact that Kant has two separate arguments, one based on the form of intuition and one based on the transcendental unity of apperception, is a result of his generally subjective approach to the project of establishing our knowledge of synthetic a priori truths.

But while all this shows that Kant's subjective approach is crucial to his distinguishing the two arguments, it does not in itself establish the primacy of the transcendental unity of apperception in this context. It does, however, show that there is a common thread between them - Kant's assumption that he is studying the subject's mind led him to restrict our knowledge of things in themselves in both cases. In a sense, this assumption that Kant starts with, and his general ontological picture of the world as populated by subjects and objects that are fundamentally opposed to one another, is the key point of disagreement between him and Hegel.

Kant's theory of space and time is clearly a case where that disagreement leads to problematic results, i.e., to the restriction of our knowledge to appearances. But it is not the most interesting or most important such case. Rather, the transcendental unity of apperception marks the point at which, both for Hegel and for the modern reader aiming to reconstruct his philosophy, Kant comes closest realizing a genuine alternative the ontological assumptions he

starts with. It also promises to leave something behind in the absence of those assumptions: a unifying activity that would work on things in themselves and not just representations. So while there are other Kantian arguments for denying that we have knowledge of things in themselves, these arguments rest on the same kind of subjective approach that plagues his treatment of the transcendental unity of apperception, and they do not provide any truly instructive guides for understanding Hegel. Focusing on the transcendental unity of apperception, then, stays truer to Hegel's own reading of Kant and provides a more meaningful narrative of the shift between the two philosophers.

3.2 Three Other Hegelian Objections - the Derivation of the Categories

At this point, a second issue comes to the fore. A common objection to Kant raised by many German idealists was not just that the categories were restricted in their application, but that the precise nature of the categories themselves was never adequately demonstrated.[204] Kant outlines twelve categories, which he connects with forms of judgement and inference in formal logic. But why these twelve should take priority, or why forms of judgement in general should be of primary importance here, is something later philosophers would take issue with.

There are two related issues here. First, why should forms of judgement be favored at all? Second, why should Kant's specific 12 forms of judgement be favored? For Hegel, Kant focused on the forms of judgement, and was largely satisfied with the forms handed down to him by history and introspection, for the same reason: because he conceived of the transcendental unity of apperception as a mental condition on representations.

Hegel traces this reasoning himself in the *Encyclopedia Logic*:

[204] Hegel, while making this point himself, attributes it to Fichte - "It remains the Fichtean philosophy's profound contribution to have reminded us that the *thought-determinations* [i.e., the categories] must be exhibited in their *necessity* and that it is essential that they be *derived*." Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 42.

> "It is well known that the Kantian philosophy made it very easy for itself in *locating* the categories. The I, the unity of self-consciousness, is quite abstract and entirely indeterminate. How is one then to arrive at the *determinations* of the I, the categories? Fortunately, the *various forms of judgement* are already listed empirically in ordinary logic. Now to judge is to *think* a determinate object. The various forms of judgement that had already been enumerated thus provide the various *determinations of thought*."[205]

In this passage, Hegel connects the premise that "to judge is to think a determinate object" with the idea that the forms of judgement can be happily taken from ordinary logic. It is because of Kant's focus on what it means to *think* a determinate object that he isolates the act of judgement, and hence the forms of judgement, as of particular importance.

But this Kantian emphasis on *thought* is nothing other than the restriction of the transcendental unity of apperception to the sphere of representations, the sphere of thought. Because Kant focuses on the mind, he looks to a mental operation in looking to discover the source of objectivity. That mental operation is the act of judgement, and Kant names judgement as the fundamental act of thinking. It is in a judgement that we finally assert something determinate of the world, something that could be true or false. The understanding is accordingly conceived of as the faculty of judgement, and experience itself is seen as a kind of judgement. We experience things, properly speaking, when we form judgements about them. The transcendental unity of apperception is just this condition on representations that requires them to be made into judgements. But the most important thing to note here is that it is because that unity is conceived of as mental and representational that judgement seems like the plausible example of that unity. Kant's representational conception of the transcendental unity of apperception as the unity of a single subject leads him to take judgement as the best example

[205] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 42.

of that unity, and hence to consider the forms of judgement as guides to the nature of the categories.

But the focus on representations, Kant's treatment of the transcendental unity of apperception as merely subjective and formal, also let him accept the forms of logic on an empirical and psychological basis, without adequate derivation. The connection here is not one of strict logical entailment; Kant could have done more to derive the categories, even if he conceived of them as merely subjective.[206] But because of his subjective starting point, the forms of logic seemed natural and appropriate, and Kant did not look further. Hegel hints at this point in the passage quoted above, and also when he writes that "this critique, however, does not address the *content* and the specific relationship that these thought-determinations [the categories] have vis-a-vis each other. Instead, it examines them with a view to the opposition of *subjectivity* and *objectivity* in general."[207] In other words, Kant focuses not on the nature of the categories, but on how they might be connected with objectivity.

The connection is made direct in the *Science of Logic* where Hegel writes that "because the interest of the Kantian philosophy was directed to the so-called *transcendental* nature of the categories, the treatment itself of such categories came up empty. What they are in themselves apart from their abstract relation to the 'I,' a relation which is the same for all, how they are determined and related to each other, this was not made a subject of consideration, and therefore knowledge of their nature was not in the least advanced by this philosophy."[208] By the phrase 'transcendental nature of the categories' Hegel means the way in which the categories are employed by the mind in making experience possible. According to Hegel, since Kant focuses on

[206] Hegel praises Fichte, for example, for noticing that the categories must be derived, but also charges Fichte with remaining excessively subjective in that he derives the categories for the subject only, without showing their necessary relation to an object (understood as a thing in itself). See Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 42, and Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge*, 62-63, 153.
[207] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 41.
[208] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.48.

this, on their role in the subject's experience, he does not attend appropriately the character of the categories themselves, and remains satisfied with what Hegel describes as their 'empirical' presentation in ordinary logic.

Other commentators, too, have pointed to the derivation of the categories as a point at which Hegel takes issue with Kant. Among these is Stephen Houlgate, who writes that "Kant's 'empirical' approach to thought, judgements, and the categories falls short of what is demanded in a science of logic, Hegel believes, because it does not demonstrate that … the categories thus have to be taken from the various kinds of judgement, but it simply assumes the primacy of judgment. Furthermore, Kant does not show that the specific kinds of judgment that he takes to underlie the categories inhere in thought necessarily."[209] But this gap in Kant's reasoning, according to Houlgate, is seen by Hegel as a part of a larger problem. Hegel in general holds Kant to a higher epistemic criteria than Kant held himself. Houlgate sees Hegel's criticisms of Kant as rooted in a "desire to be utterly *self-critical*."[210] Where Kant was willing to take as starting points various common assumptions of his time - the accepted functions of judgment, our dependence on sensations, and the distinction between subjects and objects among them - Hegel questions these. In so doing, Hegel sees himself not as importing new standards to Kant's philosophy, but as carrying on Kant's own critical enterprise of searching into the foundations of our knowledge; a search that must be fundamentally presupposition*less*.[211]

I agree with Houlgate's interpretation on this point: Hegel did indeed seek to create a philosophical system that was presuppositionless, and this goal could be seen as an extension of Kant's, though perhaps only in a broad sense.[212] But as a general strategy of interpreting Hegel,

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[209] Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic*, 15.
[210] Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic*, 25.
[211] "Hegel thus interprets his own critique of Kant as an immanent critique insofar as he sees his own philosophy as fulfilling the demand for radical self-criticism implicit in Kant's critical philosophy better than Kant himself." Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic*, 27.
[212] It is not clear that Kant had the goal of presuppositionless philosophy specifically in mind when he set out to write the first *Critique*. An important element of Kant's work was an attempt to examine our

this reading falls short in two ways. First, it does not do full justice to the details of the text. While it captures the fact that Hegel objects to the absence of a clear derivation for the categories, it obscures Hegel's other comments on this point. As I point out in the passages above, Hegel connects this Kantian failure with Kant's excessive focus on the subjective conditions of experience, i.e. on his conception of the transcendental unity of apperception as merely subjective. Taking that unity to be merely representational is, for Hegel, one of Kant's uncritical assumptions, but describing the connections between these assumptions is an important part of the interpretative project. This task can be overlooked if we simply content ourselves with the general charge of insufficient self-criticism.

Second, taking the demand for criticism as Hegel's primary objection to Kant is too broad an objection. Under that aegis fall any number of disconnected assumptions that Kant may have made, and seeing them merely as so many failures of self-criticism does little to connect them in a meaningful way. One of the advantages of focusing on the transcendental unity of apperception is that it provides a single focal point that can systematically connect various other problems Hegel raises for Kant. In fact, it is particularly helpful because it takes broad and often-repeated criticisms like charges of subjectivism or of a problematic dependence on intuitions and locates a central point through which to understand these charges. In this way, while Houlgate is right to note the demand Hegel makes for stronger, more radical self-criticism, his point can be refined if we focus more precisely on specific Kantian assumptions and their interconnections. I have tried to do that in this chapter by focusing on

faculties of knowledge, and it could be thought that such an attempt must be itself presuppositionless. But if we focus more narrowly on the question of synthetic a priori judgements, it isn't as obvious that Kant must be committed to questioning all of his presuppositions in the way Hegel might have wanted. Ultimately, then, whether we take Hegel's criticism on this point to be an immanent one or rather simply an expression of Hegel's own philosophical agenda will depend on how we characterize Kant's goals.

Kant's assumption that the transcendental unity of apperception is a condition on the subject's representations alone, and showing how it relates to other objections found in Hegel's texts.

3.3 Three Other Hegelian Objections - Misunderstanding the Dialectic

In this way, at least two of the most commonly cited criticisms made by Hegel of Kant can be traced to Kant's restriction of the transcendental unity of apperception. I turn now to a third common objection, one which is found in Hegel's early writings as well as in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the *Science of Logic*,[213] and the *Encyclopedia Logic*.[214] This objection charges Kant with misunderstanding the true nature of the dialectic. Recall that Kant does devote a good portion of his book to discussing what he calls the 'transcendental dialectic.' There, Kant explores the question of whether and how reason can produce knowledge independently of sensation. The general conclusion of this section of the text is that while reason can produce helpful ideas that can guide our thinking, it cannot provide theoretical knowledge of the world.[215] Reason, for Kant, leads us astray when it goes beyond a description of what is given in experience, and as evidence for this he presents a number of cases where the operation of reason leads to conflicting, contradictory claims that cannot be reconciled. For Kant, these dialectical contradictions indicate that reason should not go beyond what is given in experience, and that we can know things only as they appear to us and not as they are in themselves.[216]

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[213] "But if one stays fixed at the abstract negative aspect of dialectics, the result is only the commonplace that reason is incapable of knowing the infinite - a peculiar result indeed, for it says that, since the infinite is what is rational, reason is not capable of cognizing the rational." Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.40.

[214] "Kant stopped short at the merely negative result of the unknowability of the in-itself of things and did not press on to the true and positive significance of the antinomies." Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 48, addition.

[215] This understanding of reason is not an unusual one, but it is by no means uncontroversial. Moreover, Kant does take reason to play an important role in moral philosophy - a role which I largely ignore in this section in order to focus on issues in Kant's theoretical philosophy.

[216] Kant uses this distinction between things in themselves and things as experienced to resolve the contradictions presented in the transcendental dialectic, thereby providing what might be a considered an argument for making this distinction. If restricting our knowledge to things as they appear allows us to resolve these contradictions, this provides a certain level of motivation for accepting that restriction. In

Hegel, as we have seen, disagrees with Kant on this point. For him, these contradictions are of paramount importance not, as Kant would have it, because they demonstrate that we can know things only as they appear, but because they provide the motive force for the further development of thought. I will have more to say about Hegel's positive theory of the dialectic in the next chapter; here I focus on the problems he discovers with Kant's view.

Despite charging Kant with mishandling the dialectic, Hegel does consider the discovery of these contradictions to be a great achievement. He writes:

> "This thought that the contradiction posited in the realm of reason by the determinations of the understanding [i.e., the categories] is *essential* and *necessary* must be regarded as one of the most important and profound advances in the philosophy of recent times. The [Kantian] resolution is as trivial as the view is profound. It [the resolution] consists merely in a tenderness for worldly things. It is not supposed to be the worldly essence that bears the blemish of contradiction, but it is supposed to fall to thinking reason *alone*, the *essence of spirit*. … But now if the worldly *essence* is compared with the spiritual *essence*, one can marvel at the naivete with which the humble claim has been put forth and repeated that it is not the worldly essence, but instead the thinking essence, i.e. reason, that is in itself contradictory."[217]

In this passage, Hegel first praises Kant for his discovery of the dialectical contradictions based in the application of the categories. Immediately following this, however, he dismisses Kant's solution as trivial. Kant's solution depends crucially on the claim that the contradiction is merely in our thinking and not in things themselves. This being the case, he is able to disambiguate the apparently contradictory pairs of claims found in the dialectic by showing how, for example, one is true of appearances and the other is true of things in themselves. This solution would not be possible if the contradictory claims were thought of as both describing the

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section 3.1 I mentioned alternative arguments for denying our knowledge of things in themselves and addressed one of them; this is the second such alternative argument.
In this section, I show how Hegel attacks Kant's solution to the antinomies and how that solution, and thus Kant's argument for the restriction of our knowledge to appearances, depends on the representational conception of the transcendental unity of apperception.

[217] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect 48.

nature of things in themselves; Kant's solution depends crucially on his claim that the contradiction occurs in the mind, so that it can be disambiguated in the way he presents.

But to Hegel, this is no solution at all, and merely shifts the problem. If one moves the problem to the mind, the result will be that our thinking is inherently riddled with contradictions; but this is just as unacceptable as a contradictory theory of things in themselves. Hegel makes this point when he writes that "the determinations of finite and infinite run into the same conflict, whether they are applied to time and space, to the world, or are determinations internal to the spirit."[218] The contrast between finite and infinite is at the root of the antinomies Kant discusses in the dialectic. Here Hegel makes the point that these contradictions demand resolution regardless of whether they are internal to the mind or contained in the world itself.[219] Again, "if our representation of the world is dissolved when we carry over to it the determinations of the infinite and finite, still more is spirit itself, which contains both determinations within itself, something inwardly self-contradictory, self-dissolving."[220] Here Hegel again makes the point that by placing the contradictions in the mind, Kant only succeeds in characterizing the our thinking as self-contradictory.

For Hegel, Kant was *right* in so characterizing our thinking. Thought, and indeed reality as a whole, *does* tend toward contradiction, but that contradiction is not something merely negative. Instead, the correct understanding of the dialectic would take the contradictory pairs and synthesize them, thereby forming new concepts. Kant, however, was unable to appreciate this, because he saw the contradictions as arising in the mind alone. Thus, instead of taking these contradictions for what they were - the driving force of dialectical inquiry - he took them

[218] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.31. Recall that 'spirit' here translates the German '*Geist*,' a word which could also be translated as 'mind.'
[219] To be sure, Kant does attempt to resolve them by disambiguating them and referring one claim to things in themselves and the other to appearances.
[220] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.31.

as problems to be solved, and tried to solve them by restricting our knowledge to things as they appear. Thus it is that Hegel writes: "Kant stopped short at the merely negative result of the unknowability of the in-itself of things and did not press on to the true and positive significance of the antinomies."[221]

Kant's solution here, however, is only an option if one takes the contradictions he discovers to be merely mental. For this reason, Kant's attempt to resolve the antinomies by describing them as transcendental illusions, mistakes in reasoning that the mind cannot help but make, is rooted in his conception of the transcendental unity of apperception as a merely mental activity working with representations and dependent upon sensation. To see why, note that the transcendental unity of apperception is considered to be, according to Kant, a condition for the possibility of experience. In other words, there could be no experience if there were not the kind of unity demanded by the transcendental unity of apperception. But this condition on experience does not extend to all of our thinking - in particular, the faculty of reason is not governed, according to Kant, by the transcendental unity of apperception. Reason does impose a kind of unity on experiences, but the unity it demands is merely desirable and normative, whereas the unity provided by the transcendental unity of apperception is necessary and constitutive.[222]

This distinction, while it may seem unimportant, is the reason that Kant is able to provide the solution he does to the contradictions he discovers in the transcendental dialectic. If the unity demanded by reason were conceived of as a condition for the possibility of experience, as the transcendental unity of apperception was, then the contradictions Kant discovers in reason could not be so easily dismissed. It would not be possible to accommodate these

[221] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 48, addition.
[222] Again, there are passages of Kant's work that seem to hint at a more constitutive role for reason. Insofar as we take those passage seriously, Kant seems closer to Hegel than he is presented as being here.

contradictions by explaining them as human errors in reasoning. If reason's unity was a condition on experience, and that same unity generated contradictions, then that unity, and hence experience itself, would be an impossibility. Thus it is only because Kant distinguishes the unity of reason as a normative requirement from the unity of apperception as a constitutive need that he is able to answer the antinomies by accepting that reason does in fact necessarily lead to contradiction.

This distinction, however, rests crucially on the assumption that the transcendental unity of apperception and the faculty of reason are both mental phenomena. Because human cognition can be incomplete, it is possible to conceive of the wholly unified system of our representations as an unattainable goal; Kant conceives of the unity of reason in this way. But the actual objects we represent, the things in themselves, cannot be incomplete in this way. There cannot be gaps in reality in the same way that there can be gaps in our knowledge. There is no room among things in themselves for a distinction between a constitutive unity and a merely normative one. Thus the very idea that there could be a distinction between the transcendental unity of apperception and the unity of reason depends on taking them both as merely representational unities. If this basic assumption is dropped, then constitutive unity is the only unity that remains, and the unity of reason becomes constitutive as well. The transcendental unity of apperception would expand, then, to include the contradictions that Kant discovers, and so would demand a resolution that takes these contradictions seriously, instead of dismissing them as mental illusions. This is, in effect, what Hegel does in his own positive philosophy. The important point here, however, is that the distinction between the unity of the understanding, which is conditioned by the transcendental unity of apperception, and the

unity of reason, which is merely normative, depends upon Kant's belief that both unities are unities of mental phenomena only.[223]

I hope now to have shown how these three objections, arguably the three most frequently made objections that Hegel brings against Kant, are, at bottom, consequences of Kant's representational conception of the transcendental unity of apperception. This conception grounds the restriction of our knowledge to things in themselves, since it makes the transcendental unity of apperception dependent upon intuition for its tenuous link to objects. It leads Kant to lift the categories from the traditional forms of judgement because it makes the mental operation of judgement appear a good candidate for the source of objectivity. And it makes possible the distinction between reason and the understanding, which Kant uses to give his problematic solution to the antinomies in the transcendental dialectic. If these arguments are successful, then I will have shown that not only does Hegel explicitly identify the transcendental unity of apperception as a central insight that Kant mistreats, but that that mistreatment is at the root of the other objections that make up the textual bulk of his attacks on Kant. This provides a solid motivation for considering the transcendental unity of apperception as Hegel's key point of departure from the Kantian philosophy, and for interpreting Hegel's positive philosophy through that lens.

Of course, there are other ways of approaching the criticisms Hegel makes of Kant. In the following section I present first a possible problem for my unity of apperception-centric reading here, and then outline two alternative readings of Hegel on Kant.

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[223] Accordingly, the distinction between Kant's argument for the restriction of our knowledge in the Transcendental Dialectic, and his argument for the same on the basis of the transcendental unity of apperception, is itself a distinction based on Kant's assumption that he is dealing with subjective, mental phenomena alone. If we strip Kant of this assumption, the constitutive unity of apperception would subsume the unity of reason; for this reason it is the transcendental unity of apperception that is of greater importance in tracing the transition from Kant to Hegel.

4.1 Karl Ameriks - Hegel's Criticism as Question-Begging

Given the centrality of the transcendental unity of apperception as I have depicted it here, it remains a curious fact that in the literature on Hegel's critique of Kant that issue is not often made the explicit subject of extended treatment. One exception is Karl Ameriks, who, in his paper "Hegel's Critique of Kant's Theoretical Philosophy," does make the issue one of Hegel's primary charges against Kant.[224] There, after showing how Hegel sees the transcendental unity of apperception as a missed chance, Ameriks argues that Hegel's argument on this point actually begs the question against Kant.[225] For Ameriks, Hegel's claim amounts essentially to claiming that Kant did not do what Hegel would have with the idea of the transcendental unity of apperception. But the fact that Kant did not employ the concept in an argument for absolute idealism, and did not use it to eliminate the idea of things in themselves, is not a flaw in Kant's philosophy, at least not according to Kant himself. For Ameriks, it is only because of Hegel's own philosophical agenda that he sees Kant's representational conception of the transcendental unity of apperception as a mistake.[226]

The primary goal of this chapter is to present and motivate a study of the transcendental unity of apperception as a key player in the connection between Kant and Hegel. On the fact that it is does play a key role, Ameriks and I are agreed. And to a certain degree, in establishing that point it is immaterial whether Hegel's claims on this count constitute legitimate objections to the Kantian system. It is enough that Hegel makes these criticisms and can be understood as building his own philosophy out of the weaknesses he finds in Kant on this point. Nonetheless, if Hegel's arguments were merely question-begging, that would weaken the importance of the

[224] He describes it as "one of three major weaknesses that Hegel finds in Kant's deduction." Ameriks, "Hegel's Critique of Kant's Theoretical Philosophy," 5.
[225] "As far as I can see, it is only with a question-begging assumption of absolute idealism that Hegel can force on Kant the kind of all encompassing "productive" representation of the I that he does." Ameriks, "Hegel's Critique of Kant's Theoretical Philosophy," 8.
[226] Ameriks, "Hegel's Critique of Kant's Theoretical Philosophy," 8.

connection here and make it harder to justify a reading focused on that connection. So I want to take a moment to address these charges against Hegel's reading of Kant.

Whether a criticism of another philosopher is question-begging depends on the philosophical goals of the criticized philosopher. So to understand whether Hegel is in error on this count, we need to understand Kant's goals. Kant's primary stated goal in the first *Critique* is to explain how synthetic a priori judgments are possible - he describes this issue as the "the real problem of pure reason."[227] But this question about synthetic a priori judgments is a more precise and philosophically determined way of a framing a more basic question: how can we know substantive necessary truths about the world? This same question has plagued many philosophers prior to Kant, including thinkers like Plato and Hume, virtually none of whom thought of it as a question that was primarily concerned with appearances alone.[228] Although they did not always make a strong distinction between appearances and things in themselves, if pressed, it seems unlikely that Plato, Hume, or even any everyday person, would think of the question as primarily focused on how we experience the world. If anything, they would be more likely to instinctively conceive of the question as an issue concerning things in themselves, and not mere appearances.[229]

Bearing this in mind, note that Kant's representational conception of the transcendental unity of apperception can serve as an answer this question only insofar as the synthetic a priori

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[227] A few sentences later, he goes on to say that "On the solution of this problem, or on a satisfactory proof that the possibility that it demands to have explained does not in fact exist at all, metaphysics now stands or falls." Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B19.

[228] The Platonic theory of forms could be read as an answer to this question, and Hume's skepticism about causality is based on his claim that we cannot have any such knowledge of necessary truths.

[229] Hume, for example, was not a self-avowed skeptic about causality because he thought we did not *experience* causality. He would agree that we experience certain connections as causally necessary. He would deny, however, that there is any such necessity even in our experience, since what we describe as causal necessitation is simply the product of repeated habituation. Moreover, even the (illusory) experience of such necessary causal connections is not, for him, a necessary one but merely a contingently existing habit of the human mind.
Plato, too, would be deeply dissatisfied if the only way of establishing the existence of the forms was to make them necessary features of human cognition.

judgments in question are construed as being judgements about objects understood as *appearances*. Indeed, that is Kant's key innovation; the theory of transcendental idealism, by taking the objects of experiences to be appearances and not things in themselves, is able to demonstrate the possibility of synthetic a priori judgements. This shift from things in themselves to appearances, and the corresponding shift from a study of the nature of the object to the nature of the subject, is key to the answer Kant wants to give to his question.[230] In other words, Kant is able to resolve the matter, but only by re-defining the objects about which we form judgments, taking them not to be things in themselves, but appearances only.

This is a major advance on prior thinkers, who merely dogmatically assumed that such judgements were possible. But it also marks a subtle shifting of the goalposts. The original question was, if not directly about things in themselves, at least neutral as to whether it was them or appearances that we were concerned with. Kant answers it, but by restricting our knowledge to appearances only; in doing so he is answering a slightly different question than the one originally posed.

So in charging Kant with misunderstanding the transcendental unity of apperception, Hegel is not begging the question. Instead, in effect, he is saying that a better answer to the question can be given, one that does not rely on narrowing its scope and thus restricting our knowledge to appearances. To put it more forcefully, Hegel is arguing that Kant does not in fact succeed in addressing the problem he raises for himself, insofar as he redefines central elements of that problem to make it more tractable. If Hegel can answer this question in the way it is originally framed, without restricting it to appearances, then his solution would be preferable to Kant's. Understood in this way, the charge that Kant mishandles the transcendental unity of

[230] That Kant describes this shift as a "Copernican *Revolution*" indicates that even for him it represents a major shift, a revolution, in how we would normally understand the question. See Kant, *Critique of Pure reason*, Bxvi-xvii.

apperception is not a question-begging objection based on Hegel's own philosophical agenda, but a demand that Kant take his own question seriously and on its own terms - it should be understood as a question about how we can have synthetic a priori knowledge not simply of appearances, but of things as they are outside of the subject as well. If we take the transcendental unity of apperception as a subjective condition on representations, it is useless in answering this latter question.[231] Hegel's insight, however, is to see that if we liberate the transcendental unity of apperception from its subjective, representational role, it could hold the key to a more satisfying solution to our problem. In that, he aims to develop Kant's basic insight, pushing it past the restrictions Kant places on it so that it can give a more complete answer to the question Kant himself posed.

4.2 Sally Sedgwick - Intuitive Understanding

Sally Sedgwick, in her book *Hegel's Critique of Kant: From Dichotomy to Identity*, provides an alternative understanding of Hegel's approach to Kant's philosophy. For her, the central issue is the Kantian distinction between concepts and intuitions. For Kant, this distinction is a central issue, and much of the *Critique* is aimed at showing how these two kinds of representations must be combined if one is to cognize the world. Yet even when combined, they remain two distinct and heterogeneous elements, formed through two distinct faculties. It is to this strict division that Sedgwick sees Hegel objecting. She writes that Hegel "charges that, although Kant to some extent acknowledges the intimate relation of these two components of cognition, he fails to fully appreciate the respect in which the two components are identical

[231] It is possible that Ameriks sees Hegel's position as more problematically question-begging because he reads Hegel's idealism as an attempt to reduce the world to mental phenomena. On such a reading, Hegel's solution would be no better than Kant's, since it, too, would have nothing to say about things in themselves. See Ameriks, "Hegel's Critique of Kant's Theoretical Philosophy," 5.

rather than absolutely opposed or heterogeneous."[232] This dichotomy colors his system, and Kant fails to achieve a true unification of these elements, fails to identify their common root.

Sedgwick's way of describing this point is to say that Kant remains committed to the idea of human cognition as merely *discursive*, and denies the existence of any intuitive understanding (sometimes also called an 'intuitive intellect' or 'intellectual intuition'). A discursive understanding is one that relies on sensations for its content, and is unable to generate content freely out of itself.[233] It is restricted to working with what is given to it. The understanding, as a mere faculty of concepts, is restricted to ordering and arranging the material given to it through sensation. An intuitive understanding, by contrast, is one that is "capable of generating the matter of cognition merely by exercising its cognitive powers."[234] Such an understanding creates the objects of its thought through the simple act of thinking them. One might look to God's creative power for an example of this kind of intuitive understanding. For Kant, an intuitive understanding is beyond our capacity to comprehend, and is restricted to beings such as God himself.

According to Sedgwick, Hegel takes a deep interest in the idea of an intuitive understanding, and sees it as a kind of organic unity that is prior to the distinction between concept and sensation that Kant takes as his starting point.[235] Kant's mistake, on this reading, is in not seeing this original unity of concept and sensation. This original mistake then cascades with powerful consequences for the rest of his system, some of which I have outlined above. For example, the dependence on sensation leads Kant to deny our knowledge of things in themselves, and to deny the capacity of Reason to attain knowledge outside the confines of

[232] Sedgwick, *Hegel's Critique of Kant*, 10.
[233] "As discursive, our understanding is a dependent mode of cognition in the following respect: in our efforts to know nature, we must rely on a matter or content that is given in sensible intuition." Sedgwick, *Hegel's Critique of Kant*, 14.
[234] Sedgwick, *Hegel's Critique of Kant*, 14.
[235] "The intuitive intellect is of interest to Hegel precisely because it suggests a model of cognition in which the heterogeneity of concepts and intuitions is overcome." Sedgwick, *Hegel's Critique of Kant*, 46.

sensory experience. What Sedgwick is proposing, then, is that, for Hegel, sensation and concept are unified, and the Kantian distinction between faculties of intuition, understanding, and reason, collapses.[236] The result is that we can know things in themselves and can use our reason to attain real knowledge of reality beyond sensory experience, among other things.

This reading of Hegel accurately portrays central issues in his treatment of Kant. The primary difference between Sedgwick and I is one of emphasis - where she focuses on Hegel's theory of human cognition, and how he uses the idea of an intuitive understanding to reimagine the relation between concepts and intuitions in the human mind, I focus more on Hegel's transformation of the transcendental unity of apperception. There are, however, reasons to prefer this focus. First, Hegel's mature writings rarely make mention of the intuitive understanding, and, when they do, they do not treat it well. In the *Encyclopedia Knowledge*, for example, Hegel gives an extended and critical treatment of what he calls "the standpoint of immediate knowing."[237] 'Immediate knowing,' in this sense, is a kind of knowledge that is meant to be beyond concepts yet also beyond the sensory world.[238] It is thus reasonable to read this section of the *Encyclopedia* as an attack on the idea of an intuitive understanding that was in vogue at the time, especially in the philosophy of Schelling. Aside from this section attacking the idea, the intuitive intellect does not make any appearance in the text.

The essential problem with an intuitive understanding is, for Hegel, that it does not provide a real epistemic foundation for a systematic philosophy. As Kenneth Westphal notes, after his early essays and prior to writing the *Phenomenology*, Hegel became increasingly

[236] It is important to note that Sedgwick does not take Hegel to be attributing an intuitive understanding to human beings. Rather, the intuitive understanding is understood as a common root that grounds the connections between concepts and sensations that human beings make, and allows us a greater certainty in operating beyond the confines of sensation. Sedgwick, *Hegel's Critique of Kant*, 57.
[237] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 61-78.
[238] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 68.

interested in the skeptical Problem of the Criteria.[239] Indeed, the *Phenomenology* can be read as Hegel's answer to that problem.[240] If one attributes to human beings an intuitive intellect, one is, in effect, attributing to them a kind of direct and unquestionable access to reality. But there are no criteria in place for measuring when that access is present, and no standards that would decide between two rival assertions that both claim to be based on the intuitive intellect. Hegel describes this situation in the *Encyclopedia Logic*: "because the *fact of consciousness* rather than the *nature of the content* is set up as criterion of truth, the basis for what is alleged to be true is *subjective* knowing and the *assurance* that I find a certain content in *my* consciousness. What I find in *my* consciousness is thereby inflated to mean what is found in *everyone's* consciousness and alleged to be the *nature* of consciousness itself."[241] For Hegel, the intuitive understanding cannot really function as the foundation of a philosophical system, because claims based on it are amount to mere special pleading, to claiming that one has a privileged insight into reality that others lack. While such an intuitive understanding may exist, its existence cannot be taken as up as the starting point of a philosophical study.

Second and perhaps more importantly, even if one focuses, as Sedgwick's Hegel does, on the dependence of concepts on intuitions, this distinction is a result of Kant's representational treatment of the transcendental unity of apperception. If Kant were not focused on mental representations, he would not see the transcendental unity of apperception and the concepts it employs as dependent upon intuitions for their relation to objects. Sedgwick herself sees Hegel

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[239] Westphal, "Kant, Hegel, and the Fate of 'the' Intuitive Intellect," 290. The problem of the criteria is the skeptical problem that one faces when deciding on a standard to use in making knowledge claims. Of any standard, one can ask why it is an appropriate standard. This forces one either into the circular position of using the standard to justify claims about the standard or into a regress of different standards.
[240] Westphal, "Kant, Hegel, and the Fate of 'the' Intuitive Intellect," 290. The same point is echoed by Michael Forster in his book *Hegel and Skepticism*. One way of understanding the difference in Hegel and Kant's approach to philosophy is in the different forms of skepticism they took as primarily problematic. Hegel concerned himself above all with the Problem of the Criteria, while Kant was more focused on what Forster calls 'metaphysical skepticism,' as described in the previous chapter.
[241] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 71.

as making this point. She writes that for Hegel, Kant's strict division between concept and intuition, and the problems that come from it are a result of the fact that Kant's idealism "suffers from 'subjectivity.'"[242] In other words, Kant's problem here is that he sees experience as ultimately representational, the result of some activity of the subject. The dependence of concepts on intuitions is one of the major claims that are based in this position.[243] But if this is so, then it is ultimately the Kantian *metaphysics* that is the sticking point between Kant and Hegel. Had Kant not insisted on a strict division between subject and object, and restricted himself to studying the nature of the subject's mind, the problems Sedgwick raises for the intuitive understanding would not have come up.

Ultimately, however, Sedgwick's focus on the issue of intuitive understanding is in fact quite strongly aligned with our own project. As Sedgwick herself points out, Hegel thinks of the transcendental unity of apperception as the high point of Kant's philosophy. It has this status, however, precisely because it is with the idea of the transcendental unity of apperception that Kant most closely approximates the idea of an intuitive understanding. The transcendental unity of apperception is a wholly spontaneous activity that generates the objects of experience. Kant's pivotal mistake was to conceive of it as representational and thus restrict it by making it dependent upon material given to it from outside. Had he not made this mistake, the transcendental unity of apperception would be, in fact, nothing other than the intuitive understanding itself.[244] This being the case, in tracing the development and transformation of

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[242] Sedgwick, *Hegel's Critique of Kant*, 70.

[243] "For Hegel, systems committed to the metaphysic of subjectivity embrace the thesis of absolute opposition. Hegel is therefore convinced that, for all their differences, Kantians and empiricists share assumptions about the respective contributions, in cognition, of sensible content and subjective form." Sedgwick, *Hegel's Critique of Kant*, 93.

[244] Sedgwick seems to actually make this point herself: "In the Transcendental Deduction, Kant introduces the idea of a faculty whose thought-forms or concepts are not "absolutely opposed" or "external" to intuitions. Kant, in other words, seems to acknowledge that human cognition ultimately depends on acts of synthesis performed by a faculty that is neither a pure faculty of intuitions nor a pure faculty of concepts. But although he introduces the idea of a faculty that on his own description is an 'original synthetic unity,' he remains true in the end to his commitment to dichotomy or heterogeneity. As Hegel

the transcendental unity of apperception from Kant to Hegel, we are, in effect, tracing Kant's closest approximation of the intuitive understanding and seeing how Hegel develops it in his own philosophy. This project, I hope, would be one that Sedgwick would approve of.

4.3 Béatrice Longuenesse - The Nature of Truth

Béatrice Longuenesse, too, presents a different picture of the pivotal disagreement between Kant and Hegel. For Longuenesse, however, the key issue is one concerning the proper definition of truth. She writes, for example, that "behind the false 'problem of the thing in itself' lurks another: the problem of how to define truth."[245] In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant seems quite happy to take as given the traditional correspondence theory of truth. On such a view, truth is "the agreement of cognition with its object."[246] In other words, a judgement about some object is true if and only if that object corresponds appropriately with that judgement.

The problem, however, is that if Kant is right and we know only things as they appear to us, then this criteria of truth is never met. The object of our cognitions is an appearance provided through sensation, but the cognition itself is not an appearance - it is a linking of concepts. According to Longuenesse's Hegel, there can be no agreement between these two entirely heterogeneous elements: "in this case, cognition is the concept, and its object is the appearance, the "undetermined object of a sensible intuition." Obviously they do not agree: how could a concept and a sensible image agree?"[247] Instead, agreement can only arise *within* thought itself, where both object and concept are taken up as parts of thought itself. One must,

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points out, Kant claims that all combination or synthesis is an act of spontaneity performed by our faculty of concepts (the "understanding"). The faculty he [Kant] identifies as an original synthetic unity, then, turns out not to be a genuine synthetic unity after all." In other words, it is in the unity of apperception that Kant comes close to overcoming the dichotomy Sedgwick points out, and while Kant came close, he ultimately fails to take this insight far enough, because he continues to conceive of it as a product of "our faculty of concepts." Sedgwick, *Hegel's Critique of Kant*, 11.

[245] Longuenesse, *Hegel's Critique of Metaphysics*, 24.

[246] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A58/B82.

[247] Longuenesse, *Hegel's Critique of Metaphysics*, 24.

accordingly, conceive of both the object and the conceptual representation of it as arising within thought.[248]

Understood this way, one ceases to ask how one can know the thing in itself - such a question no longer make sense, since both the object of our cognition and that cognition itself occur within thought, and there is nothing outside thought, no thing in itself standing externally opposed to thought. Hegel thus reframes the discussion of the thing in itself as a discussion about truth; the thing in itself, insofar as it exists, is the standard against which we measure the truth of our claims, but that standard is internal to thought itself - it is a standard *we set up for ourselves*. Where for Kant the thing in itself was an external and unknowable entity, for Hegel it is understood as something internal to thought, playing a specific role in our thinking.[249] Reconceptualizing truth as thought's agreement with itself changes the thing-in-itself into a part of thought, not some "absolute beyond" as it was in Kant.[250]

Now, it cannot be denied that Hegel does indeed take this stance on the thing-in-itself, claiming that it is in fact a product of thought, and that Kant fell into error by conceiving of it as an entity in its own right, independent of the mind.[251] Hegel also often frames truth in terms of an agreement of thought with itself, and scorns rationalist and empiricist philosophers (among whom he places Kant), for not understanding the nature of truth aright.[252]

But one might wonder why Kant so willingly accepts the standard correspondence theory of truth. One clear contributing factor was his representational conception of the transcendental unity of apperception, and of his project in general. Kant saw himself from the beginning as

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[248] "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." Longuenesse, *Hegel's Critique of Metaphysics*, p25.
[249] "It is easy to see that such an abstract entity as the thing-in-itself is itself only the product of thought, and of merely abstractive thought at that." Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.47.
[250] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 60, addition.
[251] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.47.
[252] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 26.

outlining the mental faculties of human subjects. His study was an a priori one based on rational, not empirical, methods, but it nonetheless remained at all times concerned with the representational faculties of subjects. This perspective begins from the opposition between subjects and objects and tries to makes sense of the possibility of a connection between them. A philosophy that is focused on connecting subject with object will naturally take truth to be a correspondence of the mental representation with the objects, be they understood as appearances or as things in themselves. Kant's problematic theory of truth, then, rests most fundamentally on his problematically representational theory of judgements, since it is after all only judgements that can be true or false. As representational, these judgements always referred to something beyond themselves, and that beyond served as the basis for their truth or falsity. But judgements are the results of the transcendental unity of apperception's unifying activity; to take them to be representational is to take the transcendental unity of apperception to be representational. Bringing all this together, we can see that if Kant did not already conceive of the transcendental unity of apperception as a condition on representations alone, then the correspondence theory of truth would have been unworkable. It is thus this representational treatment of the transcendental unity of apperception that underlies Kant's flawed conception of truth and the objections Longuenesse's Hegel brings against it.

5 Conclusion - The History of Philosophy

If this chapter has been successful, then the reader should be persuaded that the transcendental unity of apperception plays a central role in understanding Hegel's criticism of Kant. In a way, such a conclusion was already obvious - the transcendental unity of apperception is central to Kant's philosophy, so it should surprise no one that it is central to Hegel's criticism of the same. But more specifically, Hegel takes issue with Kant's representational conception of

this central element, with his restriction of it to a subject and its dependence on sensations. From this crucial mistake, any number of other Kantian failings follow, from his denial of our knowledge of things in themselves, to his failure to derive the categories or the dialectic of reason.

In the next chapter, I show how Hegel transforms this subjective unity of apperception, and how that transformation can be used to understand the Hegelian system as a whole. But before moving on, I want to pause briefly to consider how Hegel must have seen himself in relation to Kant, not simply as a critic of the latter, but as a philosopher in his own right. It is well known that Hegel saw the history of philosophy as not merely a collection of ideas conditioned by contingent socio-economic forces, but as a real development towards a greater, more consistent and comprehensive understanding of the world. Philosophical systems of the past, for Hegel, were each and all attempts to know the world, and each of them contained within them some truth, though glimpsed incompletely and thus presented inconsistently.

For Hegel, the key element of truth contained in the Kantian system was the transcendental unity of apperception. As we noted above, time and again Hegel would return to Kant's discovery of it as the central Kantian insight. It was here that Kant discovered the fundamental unity of subject and object, the neutral starting point that, through its own activity, differentiated them from one another and generated the whole of our experienced universe. But Kant, like every philosopher prior to Hegel, saw this truth only, as it were, through a glass darkly. He thought of it as a mere operation of the mind, and was blind to its truly neutral ontological status.

Given his dialectical view of history, Hegel likely would have seen himself as extracting the germ of truth from the Kantian system and developing it fully in his own work. But the point I want to make here is that, given his conception of the history of philosophy, the mere fact that

Hegel praises the transcendental unity of apperception so highly is sufficient to entail that he sees the mishandling of it as the crucial error of the Kantian system. Philosophies go wrong when the light of their truth is clouded by the dogma and assumptions of their time period. For Hegel, that happened to Kant's conception transcendental unity of apperception; it was clouded by the empiricism and formal thinking of Kant's time. In our reading of Hegel on Kant, it is important that we focus on this central truth that Kant could not see clearly - it is there that we will find Hegel's most important objections and his most stunning innovations.

CHAPTER 3

Hegel's Thought and the Transcendental Unity of Apperception

In the previous chapter, I presented Hegel's criticisms of the Kantian project. Those criticisms, I hope to have shown, were rooted in Kant's way of conceiving the transcendental unity of apperception as a condition on representations alone. From this point followed a number of separate objections Hegel brought against Kant, including the restrictions Kant placed on our knowledge, his insufficiently critical derivation of the categories, and his failure to appreciate the true nature of the dialectic. In this chapter, I focus on Hegel's own positive philosophy, and especially the way he aims to correct the failings he sees in Kant. I will argue that the fundamental shift that allows Hegel to succeed where he sees Kant as failing is the transition from the Kantian subject that acts to unify representations in the transcendental unity of apperception to the Hegelian conception of a unifying entity that is neither subject nor object. The name Hegel gives to this entity is 'Thought.'[253]

This interpretation emphasizes the ontological difference between the Kantian and Hegelian systems of philosophy and takes seriously Hegel's frequent claims to be doing logic and metaphysics simultaneously.[254] In doing so, the interpretation given here differs from many in the current literature. Most recent interpretations read Hegel as exploring the necessary structure of the mind, as giving a new version of the derivation of categories: a project quite similar to Kant's, though different in it's execution.[255] On my reading, however, although Hegel

[253] Because 'thought' is a common term and Hegel has a unique understanding of it, I use a capitalized 'Thought' to name Hegel's concept and distinguish it from the everyday conception.
[254] See for example Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.48-49. In stressing the metaphysical dimension of Hegel, I am explicitly opposed to readers like Robert Pippin, who "defend a nonmetaphysical interpretation of Hegel." Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, 6.
[255] In this connection Stephen Houlgate writes that "Hegel sees it as the task of the *Logic* to provide in a rigorous and disciplined manner a proper understanding of the familiar categories of thought." Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic*, 13. Sebastian Rödl also sees Hegel's project as one of deriving categories

did study the mind, this study forms only a small part of his overall project. To ignore the metaphysical dimension of his thought would be to ignore that part of Hegel that marks his most radical departure from his predecessors and which holds the key to understanding how he can feel justified in his claim to have resolved their problems, and indeed, all the problems of philosophy, once and for all.

The chapter that follows is divided into five major sections. In the first, I briefly outline again the issues Hegel finds problematic in Kant. In the second and third, I present the Hegelian conception of Thought and show how Hegel uses it, through the dialectical method, to address these issues. By going through the dialectic and understanding its process, we can come to an understanding of exactly how Hegel transforms the transcendental unity of apperception to solve the problems he finds in the Kantian position. Section four then is concerned with a more sustained comparison of the Kantian transcendental unity of apperception and Hegel's modification of it in order to demonstrate that Hegel is modifying something present in Kant, and not building a completely new system from scratch. Finally, in section five I conclude by turning to a more focused defense of my reading against alternatives, specifically those readings that focus on the social dimension of Hegel's philosophy and the category-theory style readings described briefly above.

1 Criticisms of Kant

In the previous chapter, I discussed Hegel's criticisms of Kant's transcendental unity of apperception. Before going into more detail with regard to Hegel's own positive philosophy, it

analogous to Kant's - see Rödl, "Eliminating Externality," 186. As a last example, John Burbridge, too, argues that Hegel is concerned with the categories that "structure our thinking of the world." Burbridge, "Hegel's Conception of Logic," 92. For my part, I do not deny that there is an analogy there, but deny that as categories of thought, they should be understood as the mental objects Rödl and Houlgate take them to be.

may be worthwhile to briefly summarize the main points Hegel makes against the Kantian theory.

As we noted in the first chapter, Kant's use of the transcendental unity of apperception is aimed at three main results. First, Kant wants to defend our knowledge of theoretical truths against metaphysical skepticism - skepticism about our knowledge of necessary truths. Second, he is concerned to address Pyrrhonian skepticism. And finally, Kant wants to defend our belief in God and free agency against a naturalistic conception of the world that would seem to overturn them. The transcendental unity of apperception is key to achieving all three of these goals, as I have described in my first chapter.

But while the Kantian project may be successful in these aims, this remains, for Hegel, only a partial victory. Kant's use of the transcendental unity of apperception sees it in every case as a condition on representations, on mental items. Since in this chapter our major concern is with the contrasting metaphysics of these philosophers, it may be useful to frame this objection more clearly in terms of that contrast. One way to get at this issue from the perspective of Kant's metaphysics is to say that although Kant distinguishes the subjective from the objective *within* experience, he is able to do so only by dogmatically assuming another, more fundamental distinction between subject and object. This is the metaphysical distinction between the subject as receiver of representations and the object as the mind-independent source of representations. From Hegel's perspective, Kant in the *Critique* simply assumes that the subject receives sensations from some external influence. Based on this assumption, Kant is then able to describe how the sensations received by the subject are unified, and in this way derive the subjective/objective distinction within the subject's own experience. In that context, the distinction appears as the distinction between those representations that are unique to the subject and under its free power (subjective) as opposed to those that are intersubjectively

agreed upon and forced upon us (objective). But the more basic subject/object distinction is left untouched and unexplained - why would the world be divided into subjects forming representations and mind-independent objects being represented? Kant assumes this distinction and occupies himself with the subject side of it. But while Hegel agrees that such a distinction is present, he takes Kant to have given an inadequate explanation of why. Because the Kantian transcendental unity of apperception is seen as a condition on representations, it begins by assuming a distinction between representations and what they represent, and cannot be used to derive this more fundamental distinction between subject and object.[256]

This in turn leaves Kant unable to attain his philosophical aims in a way that Hegel would find satisfactory. The requirement that *representations* be unified says nothing about what things would be like outside of their being represented. For this reason, Kant's achievement always remains at the level of representation. This restriction, for Kant, is important and beneficial, since it eliminates all possibility for theoretical knowledge about the nature of things as they are in themselves, outside our representations of them. This means, in turn, that we are free to believe in the existence of God or the freedom of the will, since these would be features of things in themselves. But for Hegel, the restriction of the transcendental unity of apperception to representations alone creates at least three key weaknesses in the Kantian position.

First, Kant's restriction of the transcendental unity of apperception leaves us unable to have theoretical knowledge about God, freedom, or things as they are in themselves.[257] While Kant is able to preserve the possibility of God's existence against the attacks of atheists, he is powerless to prove definitively that God exists. Perhaps even more problematic is the fact that

[256] As we shall see, one of Hegel's aims will be to derive this distinction more clearly.
[257] One should note here that Kant does not deny *all* knowledge of God, freedom, or immortality. He seems to admit that we can have some knowledge of these things on the basis of practical reason.

we cannot know how things are in themselves, and only ever know our own representations of them.[258] While Kant did not see these restrictions as drawbacks, Hegel in finds it unacceptable that we could not know things as they are in themselves. This, too, was a direct result of restricting the transcendental unity of apperception to representations; so restricted, it can only be used to structure the objective world of our experience, not the objective world itself.

Second, the restriction of the transcendental unity of apperception to representations weakens Kant's derivation of the categories, the specific a priori concepts he sees as necessary features of experience. By restricting the action of the transcendental unity in this way, he makes it dependent on representations given to the subject from an external influence: sensations. The subject's role, then, cannot be in creating experience wholesale, but in collecting and ordering this raw data through the act of judgement. In this way, the act of judgement gives a certain conceptual form to our experience. As a result, the forms of judgement are given a privileged position, and it would seem natural to proceed as Kant does and use the 12 forms of judgement he identifies as the starting point to derive the categories.

For Hegel, however, this way of proceeding ultimately leaves unexplained why judgement takes on those 12 forms and no others. What Hegel would require is that the various specific forms of judgement themselves be shown to be necessary and the system of them shown to be complete. Kant fails to achieve this, in part because he restricts the transcendental unity of apperception to acting on sensations. This restriction amounts to restricting the transcendental unity of apperception to producing only the subjective form of experience. The corresponding emphasis on subjective form makes it appear as if the categories are merely mental entities, and could be discovered through a study of one's own thought processes.[259] This leaves Kant content

[258] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, section 41, addition 2.
[259] Kant implies as much when he claims that the completeness of logic in his day results from its being concerned only with the form of thought, which is immediately available to us at all times, as opposed to the objects of experience. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Bix.

to describe the forms of judgement on the basis of introspection and the historically accepted logic of his time, though of course with some modifications. Kant thus gives no philosophically systematic derivation of these logical forms, and hence no clear derivation of the categories. For Hegel, this is a major oversight - Kant's reliance on rational introspection in his study of logic obscures the deeper question of what exactly the logical forms should be, and if they should be thought of as mere forms at all.[260]

Last, Kant is unable to fully appreciate the character of the dialectic. Although he is the first to make the major discovery that reason contradicts itself in its natural operation, he shies away from addressing this fact head-on. Instead, because he sees reason as operating with merely normative requirements, rather than the constitutive conditions on representation characteristic of the transcendental unity of apperception, Kant comes to see the contradictions in reason as a matter of mental overreach. Reason is led to these errors by its ideas, but had it remained within the realm of appearances, no such error would have arisen. Hegel sees this as a kind of false humility that misses the important role contradiction has to play in our thinking and in reality at large.

2 Hegel's Solution - Thought

Hegel shares many of Kant's basic goals. He too wants to address skepticism and give an account of why the world seems to divide itself into mental and non-mental, subjective and objective. He also wants to explain why the world has the necessary and universal features it has, and how we can know these features. Finally, and here Hegel is perhaps even more invested

[260] "Kant's examination of the thought-determinations suffers essentially from the defect that they are not being considered in and for themselves but only from the viewpoint of whether they are *subjective* or *objective*." Hgel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, section 41, addition 2. Here Hegel points out that Kant places undue emphasis on the question of whether the categories ("thought-determinations") are applicable to objects, and does not examine the nature of the categories themselves. See also Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.35.

than Kant, Hegel wants to justify our belief in God, freedom and moral truths. So, with these goals in mind, Hegel can see himself as carrying on the Kantian project, though, as we shall see, in a radically altered form.

The key problem with the Kantian project, as we have seen, was that it located the drive to unity, the transcendental unity of apperception, in the *subject*, as a demand for unity among the subject's *representations*. In locating the transcendental unity of apperception in the subject, Kant effectively begins by assuming a distinction between the subject as receiver of representations and the object as the source of them, and then turning to see how the subject must handle the representations it has received. But by focusing on the subject's side of this assumed distinction, Kant makes it impossible for him to derive this distinction itself, as well as impossible for him to provide any solutions to his problems that could go beyond the subject's own faculties and address things as they are in themselves. Hegel, observing this flaw in the Kantian project, realizes that the drive toward unity cannot be located in the subject; it cannot be a transcendental unity of *apperception*, but must be a different kind of unity.

At the same time, however, it would not be effective to locate the demand for unity in the object as the source of representations. This approach to the question suffers from the same problem that faced Kant - by beginning from one side of the subject/object distinction and aiming to construct the other, it fails to explain the origin of the distinction itself, and would incapable of explaining how things stood with the other side.[261] What is required, then, is some third element, that would be neither subject nor object, but instead serve as a neutral origin from which the distinction between perceiver and perceived, representor and represented, subject and object, could be derived.

[261] Fichte elaborates on this point at length, arguing that the object-side could never explain the nature of subjectivity. Hegel, having worked with Fichte and written criticisms of his work, would have been familiar with these points. See Fichte, "Science of Knowledge: First Introduction," 48-53.

This neutral element Hegel calls 'Thought.' The fundamental shift that allows Hegel to succeed where he sees Kant as failing is the ontological shift from Kant's subjective conception of the transcendental unity of apperception to Hegel's subject/object-neutral conception of Thought. Arguing for this claim will be the task of the remainder of this chapter, but I begin that argument simply by pointing out the crucial role Thought plays in Hegel's philosophy.

In Hegel's own estimation, his most important published text is the *Science of Logic*, which was first published in 1812 but updated throughout Hegel's lifetime. After his death, and in today's scholarship, another Hegelian text, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* came to be a major focus of Hegel's readers. But the *Phenomenology* in fact plays only a preliminary role in the Hegelian system. Hegel describes this role in the introduction to the *Science of Logic*, where he writes that "the concept of pure science and its deduction is therefore presupposed in the present work in so far as the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is nothing other than that deduction."[262] The *Phenomenology* is aimed at an examination of the epistemological positions and their internal inconsistencies. This study leads, ultimately, to the standpoint of what Hegel here calls 'pure science,' and the *Science of Logic* is that pure science.[263] The *Phenomenology* is thus primarily a tool to help readers enter into the Hegelian way of approaching philosophy.

This approach to philosophy is embodied in the book Hegel wrote immediately after the *Phenomenology*, and to which he devoted over 4 years of his life: the *Science of Logic*.[264] Hegel's life after the *Phenomenology* was spent developing and revising the *Logic*, and his writings and lectures all take it, not the *Phenomenology* as their starting point. In fact, Hegel never lectured

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[262] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.33. See also Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.54. The deduction of a concept, which Hegel discusses here, means a demonstration that the concept has valid application. In this case, the *Phenomenology* demonstrates that there is a pure science, and what that science would be.
[263] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.33.
[264] This 4 year estimate is highly conservative, and tracks only the years from the publication of the first volume in 1812 to the last in 1816. In fact, Hegel was working on early drafts of the *Logic* even before he wrote the *Phenomenology*. By comparison, the *Phenomenology* occupied Hegel only for 2-3 years, from about 1805-1806 to it's publication in 1807. See Pinkard's *Hegel: A Biography*, for a description of Hegel's development in these years.

on the *Phenomenology* at all during his 13 years at the University of Berlin, and even came to reject it as even an 'introduction' to his system in 1825.[265] Moreover, in later texts, Hegel often aims to restate the conclusions of the *Science of Logic* in more approachable language or to develop them further and apply them in new areas.[266] As an example, the first book of the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, the *Encyclopedia Logic*, is essentially a summarization of the *Science of Logic* itself. The *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* is also presented as a further development of that system. Many of these later texts explicitly mirror the structure of the *Science of Logic*, using its original dialectic as a model for the development of a philosophy of nature, for example.[267] For Hegel, there are systematic reasons for this mirroring, but the crucial point here is that it is the *Science of Logic* that serves as a foundation for these later texts. So while the *Phenomenology* serves as a kind of entry-point, a guide to bring everyday people into the Hegelian way of thinking, its usefulness ends once that goal is achieved, and Hegel's developed system of philosophy is found in the *Science of Logic* and the texts that followed it.

Now, if the *Science of Logic* is Hegel's major text, our next question must be - what is the *Science of Logic* about? Hegel makes clear that the *Science of Logic* is occupied with nothing other than Thought: "thinking [*Denken*] is thus the content of pure science" and logic is "defined as the science of pure thought [*reinen Denkens*]."[268] Thought, then, is the basic subject matter of Hegel's most important works, and it would behoove us to understand fully what Hegel means by that term.

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[265] Pinkard, "Hegel's *Phenomenology* and *Logic*: an overview."
[266] These aims occupy the *Encyclopedia Logic*, and the *Philosophy of Nature* and *Philosophy of Spirit*, respectively, as well as other works.
[267] These connections are common in the later texts. See for example Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, sect. 249, 252, and 254.
[268] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.34 and 21.45. See also the *Encyclopedia Logic*, where Hegel writes that "logic is the science of thinking" and that "everyone is in agreement that thinking is the object of logic.". Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 19 and sect. 19, addition 2. The significance of the term 'pure' in the passage quoted above will be considered in the following section.

2.1 What is Thought? A Puzzle

'Thought' is a common word in everyday conversations. In everyday life, one might say that they are thinking about lunch, having second thoughts about their decisions, etc. Thinking in this context is generally understood as a kind of mental work with representations, where we form inferences and perhaps produce new concepts. Logic, on this way of understanding, would be the study of the rules we use (or should use) in inference and in employing concepts. If we understand thought in this way, then Hegel's emphasis on thought as the major topic of the *Science of Logic* will make it appear as if he is emphasizing the importance of studying these laws and placing that study at the center of his system. That many readers of Hegel walk away with this impression, or one along these lines, is thus unsurprising, given the way the word 'thought' is used in our everyday life.[269]

But Hegel's conception of Thought is radically different from this. Indeed, it has to be - given the criticisms of Kant presented above, the everyday use of the word 'thought' must appear to Hegel as overly subjective and restricted to the sphere of the representations. In this section, then, I want to provide a few passages that present Hegel's positive claims about what Thought is. These should serve on the one hand to demonstrate that Hegel's Thought really is something quite different than the everyday understanding of thought, and on the other hand to give us a concrete textual basis from which to develop an understanding of this central Hegelian concept.

Consider the following passages:

> "Logic was defined as the science of pure thought - the science that has *pure knowledge* for its principle and is a unity which is not abstract but living and concrete, so that the opposition of consciousness between *a being subjectively existing for itself*, and another but objectively *existing such being*, has been overcome in it, and being is known to be in itself a pure concept and the pure concept to be true being."[270]

[269] I have in mind here readers such as Pippin, who aim to present a nonmetaphysical reading of Hegel, and those who see him as producing a kind of neo-Kantian category theory. See Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, and Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic*.
[270] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.45.

"Pure science thus presupposes the liberation from the opposition of consciousness. It contains *thought in so far as this thought is equally the fact as it is in itself;* or the *fact in itself* in so far as this *is equally pure thought*. As science, truth is pure self-consciousness as it develops itself and has the shape of the self, so that that which exists in and for itself is the known concept and the concept as such is that which exists in and for itself.

[...]

Accordingly, logic is to be understood as the system of pure reason, as the realm of pure thought. *This realm is truth unveiled, truth as it is in and for itself*. It can therefore be said that this content is *the exposition of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and of finite spirit*."[271]

"In general, from what has been said so far, the logical dimension is to be sought as a system of thought-determinations for which the opposition of the subjective and the objective (in its ordinary sense) falls away. This meaning of thinking and its determinations is expressed more directly by the ancients when they say that *nous* governs the world - or when we say that reason exists in the world and mean by it that reason is the soul of the world, residing in it, immanent in it as its ownmost, innermost nature, its universal. To take a more particular example, when we talk about some specific animal we say that it is an *animal*. The *animal as such* cannot be shown, only a specific animal can. *The* animal does not exist concretely but is instead the universal nature of individual animals, and each concretely existing animal is much more concretely specific, something particularized. But to be an animal, i.e. the genus that is the universal, belongs to the specific animal and constitutes its specific essentiality. Take what it is to be an animal away from a dog, and we would be at a loss to say what it is. In general, things have an abiding inner nature as well as an external existence. They live and die, come to be and pass away. The genus is their essentiality, their universality, and it is not to be construed merely as a some common feature.

Just as thinking makes up the substance of external things, so it is also the universal substance of all things spiritual. [...] thinking is the universal in all representations, memories, and generally in every spiritual activity, in all willing, wishing, and so forth. The latter are one and all merely further specifications of thinking. When we construe thinking in this way, it appears in a different context from when we merely say that among and alongside other faculties such as perception, representations, willing, and so on we also possess the faculty of thinking. When we consider thinking as the true universal in everything natural and everything spiritual as well, then it extends over all of this and is the

[271] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.34.

> foundation of everything. [...] We can say that 'I' and thought are the same; or more specifically, 'I' is the thinking as someone thinking."[272]

> "[Kant's] principle idea is to vindicate the *categories* for self-consciousness understood as the *subjective 'I'*. Because of this determination, his point of view remains confined within consciousness and its opposition, and, besides the empirical element of feeling and intuition, is left with something else not posited or determined by thinking self-consciousness, a *thing-in-itself*, something alien and external to thinking - although it is easy to see that such an abstract entity as the *thing-in-itself* is itself only the product of thought, and of merely abstractive thought at that. - If other Kantians have expanded on the determining of the *intended object* by the 'I' by saying that the objectifying of the 'I' is to be regarded as an original and necessary deed of consciousness, so that in this original deed there is not yet the representation of the 'I' ... then this objectifying deed, liberated from the opposition of consciousness, is closer to what may be called simply *thinking* as such. But this deed should no longer be called consciousness; for consciousness holds within itself the opposition of the 'I' and its intended object which is not to be found in that original deed. The name 'consciousness' gives it more of a semblance of subjectivity than does the term '*thought*,' which here, however, is to be taken in the absolute sense of *infinite thought*, not as encumbered by the finitude of consciousness; in short, *thought as such*."[273]

Hegel also often speaks of other terms that are typically associated with minds and mental operations as if they are to be considered in this same neutral sense, as not restricted to mental operations. Terms like 'concept,' 'idea,' and 'judgement,' which name late stages of the dialectic are good examples of this:

> "In logic at the level of the understanding the concept is usually considered as a mere form of thinking and, more precisely, as a universal representation. The claim, so often repeated from the side of sentiment and the heart, that concepts as such are something dead, empty, and abstract, refers to this low-level construal of the concept. Meanwhile, just the opposite holds and the concept is instead the principle of all life and thereby, at the same time, something absolutely concrete."[274]

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[272] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 24, addition 1.
[273] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.47-48.
[274] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 160, addition.

> "The idea can be grasped as *reason* (this is the genuine philosophical meaning of *reason*), further as *subject-object*, as the *unity of the ideal and the real, of the finite and the infinite, of soul and the body,* as the *possibility that has its actuality in itself*, as that the *nature* of which *can only be conceived as existing,* and so forth because in it all relationships of the understanding are contained, but in their *infinite* return and identity in themselves."[275]

> "Judgement is usually taken in the *subjective* sense as an *operation* and form that surfaces merely in *self-conscious* thinking. This difference, however, is not yet on hand in the logical [sphere, where] judgement is supposed to be taken in the completely universal sense: *all things are a judgement*."[276]

From these passages, it is clear that Hegel does not use the word 'thought,' or other apparently mental terms, in the everyday way we might be accustomed to using them. Thought is seen as the "foundation of everything," as "infinite" and "unencumbered by the finitude of consciousness," and as "equally the fact in itself." The concept is "the principle of all life" and he specifically distinguishes his understanding of judgement from the typical one, writing that "all things are a judgement." Making sense of these claims will be the work of the next sections of this chapter. In doing so, we will come to a fuller understanding of what it might mean for Thought to be the neutral element I've been describing, and come closer to a reading of Hegel that can do justice to these difficult parts of his texts. I focus on two major claims: that Thought is "unencumbered by the finitude of consciousness," and that Thought is the substance of things both external and spiritual.

[275] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 214.
[276] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 167.

2.2 Thought and the Finitude of Consciousness

In the passages cited above, there is frequent reference to the "opposition of consciousness" and the "finitude of consciousness." These phrases do not have any immediately clear interpretation. My claim is that these two phrases are synonymous, and that they both point to the fact that consciousness is essentially dependent upon a dualism of subject and object. For Thought to be "liberated from" or "unencumbered by" this opposition, then, would be precisely for it to be neutral, neither subject nor object. But before all this can be argued for, it is essential first to understand Hegel's use of the two key terms 'finite' and 'consciousness.'

To begin with, note that Hegel does not use the word 'finite' in a mathematical sense, though his use is related to the mathematical use. Instead, for something to be finite, as Hegel uses the word, is for it to be essentially defined through relation to something external to itself. He gives a relatively succinct definition of it in these terms in the *Encyclopedia Logic*: "To put it formally, that which comes to an end, that which [merely] *is*, is called finite, and it ceases where it is connected to its other and is thus limited by the latter. The finite therefore consists in its relation to its other which is its negation, and presents itself as its boundary."[277] A thing's finitude, then, consists in its relation to something which is its negation, which is not it. This other, this negation, limits and constrains the nature of the first, but in a way that is necessary for both of them to be what they are.

As an example of finitude, take efficient causation. There would be no causes without effects, so that causation is defined in terms of its relation to something else, its other. Effect, in turn, is defined by its relation to causation; it is what is caused. Each of these negates the other in that each is defined by its opposition to the other. A cause cannot simultaneously be its own

[277] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 28, addition. See also Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.105 and 21.116. Hegel's language in the *Science of Logic* is more obscure, but it communicates essentially the same point: "the something, posited with its immanent limit as the contradiction of itself by virtue of which it is directed and driven out and beyond itself, is the *finite*." Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.116.

effect, and an effect cannot be its own cause. Thus effect is a kind of limit on causation, and causation a limit on effect, with each excluding the other.

By contrast, freedom, as Hegel understands it, is an example of infinity. At first glance it might seem as if freedom might be defined by its opposition to causation, as if freedom were simply the absence of causation. But in fact freedom is a kind of self-determination in which the cause and effect are identical; the free agent causes their own actions. In this case then, freedom does not rely on anything external to it for its nature, and is not defined by its opposition to something external. In this sense, because freedom contains within itself its own defining features (cause and effect), it is infinite.[278] Efficient causation, which is defined by its opposition to its negation, effect, is finite. Understood this way, it is clear that whether Hegel speaks of the 'opposition' of consciousness or the 'finitude' of consciousness, he is making the same point: consciousness is essentially defined by something external to it to which it is opposed, and which restricts it.

This brings us to the issue of how to understand consciousness in Hegel's work. Consciousness here means our awareness of the world around us. It includes our sensory awareness and our awareness of our own thinking. Hegel also agrees with Kant that consciousness always contains the capacity for self-consciousness.[279] But the most important feature of consciousness is that it is by definition relational - consciousness is always related to something external to it. "Consciousness constitutes the stage of the mind's reflexion or relationship," Hegel writes in the *Philosophy of Spirit*.[280] Indeed, we find this fact captured in

[278] This is not strictly speaking true. Every stage of the Hegelian dialectic is finite in some sense, and there is only one truly infinite thing - the Absolute Idea. Indeed, this finitude is what drives the dialectic forward. That said, freedom is hopefully an instructive example of the kind of infinity Hegel has in mind, and Hegel does not hesitate to describe freedom (and other parts of the dialectic) as infinite, though their infinity can only be relative. See for example Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 11.364.
[279] "All consciousness of another object is self-consciousness; I am aware of the object as mine (it is my representation), thus in it I am aware of me." Hegel, *Philosophy of Spirit*, sect. 424.
[280] Hegel, *Philosophy of Spirit*, sect. 413. "Reflexion" in general refers to a definitional relatedness, as in the relation of cause and effect described above. See Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 11.249, 11.407-408. Note also

the common-place truism that consciousness is always consciousness *of* something. The relation between a conscious subject and the object of which it is conscious is constitutive of consciousness.

But the object of consciousness always lies *outside* of consciousness, external to it. In consciousness, the object is appears as a representation, but not as it is in itself. The object, the thing-in-itself, is a the negation, the limiting boundary of consciousness. In this way, consciousness is defined by its relation to something external to it; it is finite. To the extent that thought is understood as a something dependent upon consciousness, as the act of a conscious being, it will be similarly finite.

Bringing these points together, we should now have a clearer picture of what Hegel means by the 'finitude of consciousness.' This phrase, and the synonymous 'opposition of consciousness,' expresses the fact that consciousness is essentially dependent upon something external for its nature, it is defined by the opposition between subject and object.[281] Consciousness would not *be* consciousness if there was no object *of* consciousness.

This is no small matter. The fact that consciousness is defined in terms of this opposition is, in effect, the heart of the problem. It is because of this opposition that Kant, focusing on the transcendental unity of apperception as a unity *of consciousness*, was never able to comprehend the object as it is in itself. And by taking this opposition for granted, Kant failed to critically examine it, thus leaving him unable to explain the opposition of subject of object that is so critical to his philosophy. Hegel's solution to this problem is to work with Thought as it is

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the position of consciousness in the Hegelian system, where it arises quite late, indicating that it is not a basic logical determination but something purely mental, to be discussed in the *Philosophy of Spirit*.

[281] In a way, then, the phrase 'finitude of consciousness' is a way of expressing the restriction we saw Kant placing on the transcendental unity of apperception in the previous chapter. It captures the fact that consciousness, which for Kant is essentially the self-consciousness of the transcendental unity of apperception, is dependent upon the external and limited by it. This, and the fact that in connection to it Hegel often mentions that transcendental unity of apperception by name, lends further textual support to the analysis of Hegel's criticisms provided in the previous chapter.

"unencumbered by the finitude of consciousness,"[282] "liberated from the opposition of consciousness."[283] Thought, understood in this way, is infinite Thought, pure Thought, the subject/object neutral Thought described above. This Thought would be wholly self-determining and self-defining, not the thought of a particular conscious subject, which must always be constrained by that subject's character and the nature of the object they are related to.

We thus have the first major feature that distinguishes Hegel's Thought from our everyday conception. Thought, for Hegel, is not restricted to the minds of conscious beings, nor is it something we need to be conscious of.[284] Consciousness, as such, is always finite and restricted by its relation to what lies outside it. But infinite Thought, as Hegel understands it, cannot be restricted in this way. It is neither subject nor object, but the self-determining neutral element that generates the finite forms of subject and object out of itself.

This reading of Hegel's conception of Thought, however, is not universally accepted. Indeed, other readers have taken Hegel's entire philosophy to be a study of consciousness. Perhaps most prominent among them is Robert Pippin, who argues that the *Science of Logic* is Hegel's exploration of the conditions on self-consciousness.[285] Pippin might accept the above discussion of the finitude of consciousness, but claim that self-consciousness is a special case. In self-consciousness, we are not aware of external objects, but of ourselves. The difference between subject and object thus disappears in the case of self-consciousness, and we have something that could perhaps be understood as infinite Thought.

Perhaps the most telling text for this reading is a quote from the introduction of the *Science of Logic*, where Hegel writes that "As science, truth is pure self-consciousness as it

[282] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.47-48.
[283] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.34.
[284] Hegel even goes so far as to describe nature as "the system of unconscious thoughts." Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 24, addition 1.
[285] Pippin, "The Significance of Self-Consciousness in Idealist Theories of Logic."

develops itself and has the shape of the self, so that that which exists in and for itself is the conscious concept and the concept as such is that which exists in and for itself."[286] This quote, however, does not run counter to the reading I have presented here, and for two main reasons.

First, Hegel prefaces this remark with the claim that this is truth "as science." In other words, this is truth insofar as it is systematically developed by human beings in the course of their studies. Thus, that there is mention made of consciousness here does not mean that logic itself is the study of consciousness. Instead, it is simply a nod to the fact that all scientific enterprises are performed by conscious human subjects, so that insofar as it is a science, the *Science of Logic* must be the development of a self-conscious subject. This is supported by the references to knowledge in the passage, and to the position of this quote immediately after a discussion of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which focuses on the development of human consciousness into a science.[287]

Second and more importantly, the claim that Thought is neutral does not mean that Thought is *not* something we are conscious of. It is just the claim that Thought is not necessarily tied to consciousness, that consciousness is just one side of Thought.[288] As we shall see in more detail in the section that follows, Thought does in fact appear in consciousness. But to think of Thought as *only* or *primarily* the operation of conscious beings would be a mistake. It should not be overlooked that in Pippin's passage, the terms "conscious concept" and "self-consciousness" are balanced by references to what "exists in and for itself." To focus on consciousness alone would be a mistake; Thought is not merely consciousness, but the neutral root of both finite consciousness and the independently existing world. Far from supporting a

[286] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.33. Pippin opens his argument with this quote in "The Significance of Self-Consciousness in Idealist Theories of Logic," 7.
[287] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.33.
[288] This is corroborated by the fact that consciousness arises late in the dialectic, coming up only the *Philosophy of Spirit*, after Thought has divided itself into Nature and Spirit. Hegel, *Philosophy of Spirit*, sect. 413.

consciousness-centric reading of Hegel, this quote in fact supports the Thought-as-neutral reading I have been advancing here.

In sum then, Hegel's frequent reference to Thought as unencumbered by the finitude of consciousness should be understood as a way of describing the fact that Thought is not something tied to consciousness or conscious beings. This marks a major advance on Kant's conception of thought as essentially tied to consciousness and hence as limited by what is outside of consciousness - the thing-in-itself. Hegel takes this finite conception of thought and replaces it with his conception of Thought as infinite and hence as subject/object neutral Thought. I turn now to a consideration of what Hegel might mean by saying that Thought is the 'foundation of everything' and the 'substance of things.'

2.3 Thought as the Substance of Things

The fact that Thought is not to be thought of as a matter of conscious representations, but as something underlying both conscious subject and the object of consciousness, gives us a starting point in trying to understand what it might mean to say that Thought is the "substance of external things," the "principle of the world," or the "foundation of everything."[289] Such a claim would be an absurdity if Thought were understood as the subject's act of manipulating representations. But if Thought is subject/object neutral, independent of our individual minds, then it can go beyond our finite consciousnesses and determine the nature of reality as it is in itself. Still, more has to be said to make sense of Hegel's claims here.

Luckily, Hegel himself gives us a clue here by pointing to one key way we use the word 'thought' in everyday conversation. Consider the phrase 'thinking things over.' Hegel points out that to think things over is an activity that aims to get at the universal, essential nature of a

[289] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 24, addition 1; Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.34.

thing: "that whatever is truthful in objects, the constitutions of things or events is the inner, the essential dimension, the basic matter on which something hinges, … that it is not what appearances first present and what first occurs to one; that instead one must first *think it over* in order to arrive at the true constitution of the object."[290] Here thinking something over seems to be the activity of trying to discover the universal and essential element of something, to get at its inner nature. This is further elaborated on in Hegel's discussion of the scientific method, where he describes scientists as aiming to arrive at "*laws*, *general propositions*, a *theory* - i.e. the *thoughts* of what there is."[291] Here too, Thought is identified with the universal, general element, and distinguished from merely dealing with particular events and contingent happenings. When we think things over, we are trying to find their universal features, their essences, and the laws or necessary connections between them.

Thought is this essential, universal element in things.[292] It forms the essence of any particular entity, and in this sense it is that entity's substance; it makes it what it is. To take Hegel's own example, without the universal feature of animalness, there could be no dogs.[293] And 'animal' here is simply an example close to hand. Other features, such as being, existence, or causality, are even more general and foundational. Taken together and with all their interrelationships, these different universals constitute the essential structure of the world as a whole. Thought, as the system of these universals (Hegel's term is 'thought-determinations'), is the "substance of the world" in that it constitutes the essential structure of the world, giving the world the shape it has and making it what it is.

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[290] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 21.
[291] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 7. It may seem as if 'thoughts' is used in a purely subjective sense here, as associated with theories and propositions. This need not trouble us, however - as subject/object neutral, Thought can appear both as general propositions in the minds of subjects and as universal laws governing objects. This point is elaborated in more detail in the rest of this section.
[292] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 24, and sect. 24, addition 1.
[293] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 24, addition 1.

The role of Thought as "substance of the world" in this sense has three different facets.[294] The first of these is discussed in the *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopedia Logic*, where Hegel deals with 'pure Thought,' or Thought as it is independent of the natural or mental worlds. This is the logical dimension, where we find universal features that are shared between both nature and the mental. In fact, Hegel even provides an analogy to traditional logic to help us understand what he is getting at, and in precisely what sense Thought could be subject/object neutral. Logic, even in its traditional guise, has typically been assumed to describe not just features of how we think, but also features of how parts of the world must fit together.[295] Without this basic assumption in place, the entire project of using concepts and inference to study nature would be unworkable: if the laws of inference didn't track the actual connections between objects, what purpose could inference serve? Pure Thought, in Hegel's sense, is just this common logical element so ubiquitously assumed to be present, an element that must be neutral in that it is not merely a feature of the subject's mind, nor is it only a feature of objects in themselves.

Historically, logicians have not studied this neutrality explicitly, taking it simply as granted and not considering why logical operations and forms could be legitimate. Kant was one of the first to take these questions seriously, but his answer remained within the subjective sphere, and he treated logical forms as something that the subject imposes upon experience. Hegel grants to logic a true neutrality, not as a form imposed on anything external, but as the fundamental substance of things: a substance we can access through representation, but which also underlies things as they are in themselves. Pure Thought, understood this way, is not so

[294] I name these and present them briefly here, but they will be discussed in more detail when we come to Hegel's dialectic and how it derives the subject/object distinction.
[295] "One can appeal to the representations typical of ordinary logic; for it is assumed that in definitions, for example, the determinations are not just of the knowing subject but are rather determinations of the subject matter, such that constitute its innermost essential nature. … Everywhere presupposed by the use of the forms of the concept, of judgement, inference, definition, division, etc., is that they are not merely forms of self-conscious thinking but also of objective understanding." Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.34-35.

strange as it might seem - it is the logical element that philosophers have taken for granted for so long, but here the subject/object neutrality of that element is made explicit, and Hegel's philosophy moves forward with a clear awareness of that neutrality.

But Thought does not remain in this pure logical state alone; it also manifests itself in the natural world. Universal features such as space and time are specific to the natural world, and Hegel deals with them in the second part of the *Encyclopedia*, the *Philosophy of Nature*. One of Hegel's challenges will be to explain why and how the purely logical element also structures the natural world of everyday experience. Third and finally, Thought also manifests itself in the mental realm, which Hegel describes as "spiritual activity."[296] In that context, we have universals such as 'consciousness,' 'perception,' and 'willing' that determine the essential nature of the mind. Moreover, the various thought-determinations can appear in the finite mind as objects of representation; we can represent the universal features of the world to ourselves. This explains why Hegel can use the word 'Thought' to describe both mental phenomena *and* physical phenomena, Thought structures both of these, and appears in both.

As in the last section, however, this reading of Hegel's claims is not uncontroversial. A number of commentators see the *Science of Logic* as not dealing with the substance of the world in the robust sense described here, but instead see it as a theory of categories analogous to Kant's.[297] For them, Hegel is describing how we as subjects must *think* about the world. Since our only access to the world is conditioned by how we must think about it, the rules of thought can be understood as forming the substance of the world in the sense that they provide the basis for all our experience of the world.

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[296] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 24, addition 1.
[297] Burbridge, for example, reads Hegel as developing a category theory, but with additional wrinkle that the categories are dynamically interrelated and developed over time by intersubjective discourse. See "Hegel's Conception of Logic," 92-94, 100. Pinkard argues along similar lines, describing the *Logic* as an explanation of the basic concepts we use to understand the world. See Pinkard, *Hegel's Dialectic*, 13-14.

But such a reading would leave Hegel saddled with many of the same objections we saw him raising against Kant. It would leave him trapped within experience without any legitimate claim to know things as they are in themselves and would have him assume the distinction between subjects and objects rather than explaining it. Moreover, this reading also fits uncomfortably with Hegel's texts. Hegel persistently objects to the idea that Thought is formal, that it gives a form to any external content.[298] But to take Thought to be the substance of the world because it gives a form to raw experience and renders it intelligible, is precisely to think of Thought as a form applied to some external content. Such a reading also restricts Thought to an activity of conscious beings, leaving it unable to account for the claims regarding the 'finitude of consciousness' described above. Hegel's texts thus cannot fit with an understanding of Thought as forming a set of necessary conceptual categories. Instead, the claims about Thought as the principle of reality or the substance of things should be taken as an expression of the fact that it is the universal, essential element of the world that makes things what they are. 'Thought' is Hegel's term for precisely this universal element, the necessary structure, of the world.

The overall picture emerging from this discussion so far, then, is one of Thought as a network of universal determinations that constitutes the structure of the world, dividing and interrelating all the various parts of it.[299] In this, it has the neutrality typical of traditional logic in that it is something present in both mental operations and the world as it is in itself. This purely neutral Thought, then, also comes to encompass both the natural and mental spheres, structuring these in turn, and determining them with the features constitutive of them. And

[298] See Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 12.27, 21.29.
[299] This might be misleading in that it implies that there is something external to Thought that it structures, something particular that lies outside the universal determinations. Hegel does acknowledge the presence of contingency and particularity, but sees the existence of these as themselves necessary and in that sense as parts of Thought in turn. Contingency and particularity are thus not opposed to Thought, but are necessitated by Thought itself and form a part of its structuring activity. This point is central to Hegel's philosophy of Nature, and I will discuss it in more detail when we come to that stage of the dialectic.

recall that all of this structuring occurs prior to any conscious awareness of it, and indeed the existence of consciousness is one of the parts of that structure. To take Thought to be subject/object neutral in Hegel's sense, is to take Thought to be this structuring and determining force independent of minds and of the physical world, but operative in both.

But one important feature of Thought has yet to be mentioned here: how does Thought do all this? Hegel is clear that Thought structures not something external to itself, but in all this it is generating its own determinacy, providing its own content.[300] Thought is, so to speak, thinking itself. Indeed, it is this self-determining character of Thought that makes it infinite in the sense described above. Hegel's name for Thought's self-determining activity is 'dialectic,' and it through the dialectic that Hegel aims to achieve his main philosophical goals. So it is to the dialectic that I now turn.

3 An Example of the Hegelian Dialectic - from Pure Being to Becoming

In trying to understand the nature of Thought, Hegel cannot study it primarily in its manifestation in the human mind, nor can he study it as it appears in the natural world. Pure Thought is neutral between these two, and forms the essential logical substance of both the mental and the physical world. So Hegel aims to begin without any assumptions, taking Thought as wholly indeterminate. At the beginning of the dialectic, all that we can say about Thought is that it is. Hegel describes this as "being, pure being - without further determination."[301] In other words, Thought simply *is* - the only universal determination of reality is that there *is* reality. Thought at this stage is so indeterminate that it is not even distinct from anything else, it is not

[300] See for example, Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.48.
[301] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.68.

related to anything else. The only thing that can be said of it is that it has being. One might imagine here a universe whose only feature is that it is. This is Thought as being.[302]

But, if Thought is being, Hegel points out, it must also be nothing. To make vivid why this is the case, imagine you are describing something. If you describe it by saying that it is, you have, in effect, said nothing about the thing. To say that something is, in this wholly indeterminate way, says nothing, and to say that something is nothing is just to say that it is wholly indeterminate; nothingness just is this total lack of determinacy.[303] It is at this point that Thought as being reveals a kind of instability - Thought cannot just be indeterminate being, since if it is, then it must also be nothing. Or, thinking again in terms of universal determinations of reality, Hegel's point here is that the universe could not have only this one feature of being. Such a universe would be internally inconsistent, in that its being would wholly indeterminate, and hence would be the same as its own non-being. It is for this reason that Thought transforms from being to nothing. Hegel describes this as Thought 'passing over' from being into nothing.[304] [305]

Next, Hegel points out that nothing, as pure indeterminacy, immediately passes back over into being.[306] Again, a linguistic example might help clarify Hegel's reasoning. Here one can

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[302] There may seem to be a tension here: are we starting with the claim that the first thought-determination is Being, or are we starting with the claim that Thought has being? Both of these claims, however, amount to the same. To say that Being is the first thought-determination is to say that at this point being is the only universal feature of reality. But reality, at least at this point, is just pure, neutral, Thought itself. Thus to say that being is the only universal feature of reality is to say that Thought has no feature other than being.

[303] "*Nothing, pure nothingness*; it is simple equality with itself, complete emptiness, complete absence of determination and content; lack of all distinction within" Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.69.
"Being is absolutely devoid of all determination, and nothing is the very same lack of determination." Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 87, addition 1.

[304] "The truth is neither being nor nothing, but rather that being has passed over into nothing and nothing into being." Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.69.

[305] This passing over should not be understood in temporal terms (time is a thought determination that arises much later in the dialectic) but in purely logical terms. In that context, to pass over indicates the logical relation between being and nothing, such that each is apparently identical to the other.

[306] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.69.

think of how even when we say that something is nothing, we are at the same time acknowledging that it is, even if we deny it any properties and leave it wholly indeterminate. In this way, nothing is just as much the same as being as being is the same nothing. So, immediately after shifting from being to nothing, Thought finds itself again shifting back from nothing to being. And as soon as it has become being, it again passes over into nothing - neither being nor non-being can be the sole universal determinations of reality. As long as we remain only with these two, their instability generates a constant motion between being and nothing, each passing over into the other.[307]

Hegel, however, does not stop here. We have seen how being, because of its instability, passes over into nothing, which then passes back into being in turn. But this whole endless process of transformation is itself Thought's next stage: becoming. Becoming just is the transitioning of being into nothing and vice versa.[308] The universe we were imagining is no longer determined as merely being or nothing, but as the process of transition between the two. [309] At a conceptual level, the idea of something becoming includes both something being, but also the element of its disappearance, of nothing. Becoming thus resolves the instability inherent in being and nothing, since they are no longer seen as having this problematic identity, but are preserved as distinct moments in the process of becoming. At this third stage of becoming we find a new form that includes both of the others while preserving their distinct natures. This relationship of inclusion, which simultaneously preserves the previous forms but also transforms them by relating them to one another, Hegel calls 'sublating.' Becoming is the sublation of being and nothing.

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[307] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.70.
[308] "Their truth is therefore this *movement* of the immediate vanishing of the one into the other: *becoming*." Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.70;
"The truth of being as well as of nothing is therefore the *unity* of both; this unity is *becoming*." Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 88.
[309] Again, note that the the imagined universe in these examples is not something distinct from Thought itself; Thought is that universe, which consists (at this point) merely of these determinations.

As the dialectic continues, becoming will in turn reveal itself to be unstable, and more and more complex forms of Thought will arise, each intrinsically dependent upon those prior to it for its content, just as the prior forms depend on those that follow them for their stability.[310] The details of these further stages, while interesting in their own right, are not enormously relevant to our goals here. Instead, I want to note a few features of the dialectical method, and ultimately show how the dialectic, as a process of deriving new forms of Thought, mirrors the Kantian derivation of the categories.

3.1 Major Features of the Dialectic

In the dialectic, Hegel describes Thought as it changes in response to the instabilities inherent to each of its stages. To each of these stages he gives a different name which is intended to reflect the word we use to describe that particular stage in our everyday language. If we look at how we think about 'becoming,' for example, it should not be too difficult to notice that we see things that are becoming as including some degree of being but also some degree of nothing. One could think of the prototypical example of becoming, the passage of time, as an alternation between the alternating being and nothing of moments, as each exists and then passes into nothingness.

Hegel calls these different stages of Thought 'thought determinations.'[311] These thought determinations are analogous to the Kantian categories in a number of key ways that will be presented throughout this chapter.[312] Here, however, I would like to begin by noting that just as

[310] In our example, becoming would not have its nature if it did not include the stages of being and nothing. Being and nothing, in turn, would not have their stable identities unless they were united in the process of becoming.
[311] See Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 24, addition 1, and Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.34, for examples. The phrase 'thought determination' and reference to the stages of the dialectic as 'determinations' is ubiquitous.
[312] Hegel makes this analogy clear himself. In section 41 of the *Encyclopedia Logic*, for example, he mentions the Kantian concepts of the understanding, and in the next sentence refers to them as "these thought determinations." See also Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 42.

for Kant, the categories are necessary features of the objects of experience, Hegelian thought determinations are necessary features of the world itself. Recall that at the outset, the Hegelian ontology consists only of Thought, and wholly indeterminate Thought at that. By going through the various thought-determinations, Hegel reveals different determinations of the most fundamental entity in his ontology. Since each of these determinations flows necessarily from the ones prior to it, each of these determinations represents a necessary feature of Thought. Thought is necessarily determined as being, as becoming, etc.; for there to be any being, there must also be a becoming.

But where for Kant, these determinations would be applied to some externally given sensations, for Hegel, Thought is *identical* with its determinations. As we noted above, Thought is the system of universal features of reality. There, I presented that interpretation on the basis of Hegel's texts, but did not present his argument for it. Hegel's argument is the dialectic itself; in the course of the dialectic, Thought comes to be determined not merely as being, nothing, etc., but as the encompassing, self-determining, system of universal features which we described as Thought and which Hegel renames, at the end of the dialectic, the 'Absolute Idea.'[313] Starting as an indeterminate, subject/object neutral being, Thought develops dialectically until it takes the form of the Absolute Idea, the foundational of all things recognizable from the discussion above. This dialectical development is Thought's own development of its own internal character, so that, in the dialectic, Thought is both determined *and* determiner. Thought is thus not, for Hegel, something applied by subjects to external objects. It is a self-determining network of

[313] It is for this reason that while at the beginning of the logic, Hegel names Thought as the subject of his text, at the conclusion, he writes that the absolute idea is the "sole subject matter and content of philosophy." Hegel, *Science of Logic*, sect. 12.236.

universal features of reality; in the course of the dialectic, Hegel shows that reality itself is precisely this self-determining network of universal features.[314]

This character of Thought makes it radically different than the Kantian categories. The categories are only necessary features of experience, imposed upon our representations by the transcendental unity of apperception. Thought determinations, on the other hand, are necessary features of the world itself, immanent in it due to an inherent instability that pushes each thought determination in turn to generate its opposite and ultimately unify with it. Thought determinations thus belong to a different ontological class than the Kantian categories - they are not representations, but elements of Thought, the neutral third element we described above. They appear both in our experience (we think of things as beings, as becoming, etc.) and in the things as they are in themselves (these things are, become, etc.). Moreover, where Kant had to demonstrate the necessary role the categories have in constructing a necessarily unified experience out of our raw sensations, Hegel does not have to engage in any such argumentation. The thought determinations are not imposed upon sensations or any other raw data, but are immanent in the world itself, as its necessary structuring features.

These thought determinations form the basic elements of the Hegelian dialectic. But what is perhaps most distinctive about the dialectic is the way in which each of these thought determinations gives way to the next. This process has three major stages. In the first, we begin with some thought determination or other. At the very beginning of the dialectic, we have only being, but as we go, more and more complex thought determinations arise.[315] Second, this original thought determination (e.g., being) has its identity problematized by a relation to

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[314] It would be reasonable to ask at this point what these are universal features *of*? Hegel's idea is that Thought itself generates particularity as one of the universal features of reality, thus determining itself as both the universal and the particular element in things. As Hegel puts it in the *Science of Logic*, particularity is "the universal's own immanent moment; in particularity, therefore, the universal is not in an other but simply and solely with itself." Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 12.37. See also Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 24, sect 167.

[315] See Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 80, and sect. 80, addition.

another thought determination (e.g., nothing). In the case of our example, being was found to be identical to what should be its opposite: nothing. But this identity of opposites renders each of the two thought determinations incoherent - if being is nothing, then the term 'being' loses all meaning. Another example is Hegel's discussion of cause and effect. At first, we think of the effect as something caused by the cause. But it is also the case that the cause would not be a cause if it did not have an effect. In this second sense, it seems as if it is in fact the effect which is the cause of the cause, since without the effect the cause would not be cause at all. Cause and effect, just like being and nothing, are threatened with incoherence, and each seems to lose its distinct nature in the other.[316]

This incoherence and blurring of determinacy is distinctive of the second stage which Hegel describes as the "self-sublation of such finite determinations by themselves and their transition into their opposites."[317] Important to note here is that each first term has one and only one corresponding opposite term, and the nature of the relation between them is unique in every case, since it arises from the specific terms involved.[318] This allows Hegel to claim that Thought is developing itself in the dialectic, since the uniqueness of the opposed pairs means that the dialectic is a rigorous derivation of thought determinations, one from the next, as opposed to a series of stages invented by Hegel himself.

The third stage, sometimes called 'synthesis,' or the 'speculative' moment, aims to resolve the incoherence in the prior stage.[319] It does this by bringing the previous thought

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[316] See Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 153-155 and Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 11.396-11.409 for Hegel's discussion of cause and effect.
[317] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 81.
[318] "The dialectic has a *positive* result, because it has a *determinate content* or because its result is in truth not an *empty, abstract nothing*, but instead the negation of *definite determinations* that are contained in the result precisely because it is not an *immediate nothing*, but a result instead." Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 82. See also Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.38; Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, sect. 59. This is sometimes referred to, as in these latter passages, as the Hegelian doctrine of 'determinate negation.'
[319] "The *speculative* or the *positively rational* grasps the unity of the determinations in their opposition, the *affirmative* that is contained in their dissolution and their passing over into something else." Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 82.

determinations into a single whole, where each has a distinct role to play. Thus defined by their role in the unifying whole, they are distinguished from one another in a way that they could not be if examined on their own.[320] Being and nothing, for example, are in themselves problematic in that they are distinct yet also identical to one another. But at the level of becoming, the passing over of one into the other assigns to each a role in the process, thus distinguishing them as elements (Hegel's term is 'moments') in the thought determination of becoming.[321] Through synthesis, the different stages of Thought are not destroyed or superceded, but instead they are preserved and maintained throughout the process. Thought thus does not have different stages in the way a river travels through different cities. Instead, the different stages are like waves in the ocean - each contained within the ocean itself. Just as becoming includes being and nothing, the final culmination of the dialectic includes all the thought determinations that came before it, preserved in a complex and harmonious web of mutually determining relationships. Indeed, it is only at this stage that any of the prior ones truly attains a completely determinate content, and it is this drive toward determinate content that drives the unifying activity of the dialectic. Lastly, note that as in the previous stage, there is only one synthesis appropriate for any pair of opposites; this stage, too, consists of a rigorous derivation based on content and not on the writer's fancy.

This reading of the dialectic as falling into the three stages presented above is widely accepted among scholars, although there is some debate as to how strictly Hegel stuck to this exact pattern. Exactly why the dialectic takes on this form, however, is a matter that could be debated. On the one hand, if we see Thought as subjective, as part of the subject's mental

[320] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 82.
[321] As Hegel's description of existence: "existence is (1) the unity of being and nothing in which the immediacy of these determinations has disappeared and with ith the contradiction in their relationship, - a nity in which they are now only moments." Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 89. See also Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.92-93, where being and nothing are described as moments of becoming. As the first two thought determinations, being and nothing are carried throughout the dialectic, and form moments of all the thought determinations that follow.

faculties, then the driving force of the dialectic is the subject's own dissatisfaction with the previous stages. On this reading, it is not so much that Thought itself has any incoherence, but that the subject, in attempting to make use of the concept 'being' for example, finds that concept to be incoherent unless the concept 'becoming' is also present as part of their conceptual scheme. In this way, the driving force of the dialectic is the internal inadequacies of the thought determinations *for the subject's use*, not any inadequacy they have in and of themselves. A reading of this sort would be appropriate for readers like Pippin or Brandom, who see Hegel as analyzing the necessary conditions for experience or self-consciousness.[322]

But on the reading presented here, the subject's needs are not operative in the dialectic. If they were, then the dialectic would remain at the level of the subject and its representations, and would thus not be able to respond appropriately to the challenges Hegel raises against Kant. Moreover, in addition to this systematic reason, there is good textual evidence against the idea that it is the subject's requirements that push the dialectic forward. First, there is a conspicuous lack of reference to the needs of a thinking subject in Hegel's texts themselves. In his description of the dialectic, Hegel never talks as if it is the subject's inability to determinately represent something as, for example, being, that moves the dialectic forward to its next stage. That he does not mention the subject in this way over the course of 700 pages devoted to discussing the dialectic makes it implausible that the subject's requirement for determinacy is the operative force here. Instead, Hegel consistently speaks as if it is the thought determinations themselves that lead to one another. He writes, for example, that "pure being and pure nothing are therefore the same," not that "pure being and pure nothing are therefore *thought of as* the same."[323] The relationships he describes are grounded in the natures of the thought determinations, not in the subject's requirements.

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[322] See Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, and Brandom, *Reason in Philosophy*.
[323] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.69.

Moreover, in his focused discussions of his method, Hegel emphasizes the fact that in his method, Thought determines *itself*, and is not determined from without by subjective demands. He emphasizes the "immanent emergence of distinctions," arguing that without it, the thought determinations would be brought up merely according to the subject's whims, and not with the rigorous systematicity befitting a proper philosophical science.[324] In describing the transition of thought determinations into one another, he describes it as something done "by themselves."[325] In these same contexts, Hegel is careful to distinguish what he is doing from any "subjective seesaw system" and attacks the idea that dialectic is "an external and negative activity which does not belong to the fact itself but is rooted in mere conceit, in a subjective obsession for subverting and bringing to naught everything firm and true."[326] In both his positive and negative remarks, then, Hegel makes clear that the dialectic is not motivated by the needs of a subject, but by the nature of Thought itself, and the incoherence Thought itself faces in each of its determinations. This fact further supports a reading that takes Hegel's metaphysics seriously, and would be difficult to make sense of on a reading that sees Hegel as focused on subjective conditions on representations. The dialectic, like Hegel's philosophy in general, should be understood not as focused on the subject's needs, but as a study of the necessary features of subject/object neutral Thought.

Hegel's dialectical study of Thought proceeds through three books that together make up his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*.[327] The first book, called the *Logic*, deals with the purely logical dimension of Thought. These thought determinations culminate in what Hegel

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[324] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.39-21.40.
[325] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 81.
[326] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 81; Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.40. For a more specific example, see Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature,* sect. 257, addition 1, where Hegel describes the transition between space and time. There he writes that "the transition to time is not made subjectively by us, but made by space itself."
[327] He applies the dialectic in other texts as well, but these three provide the outline of his systematic philosophy in general, with other are more focused, dealing with subjects such as the history of philosophy.

describes as the 'Absolute Idea,' at which point Thought has become an entire universe, containing both subjectivity and objectivity, as well as any number of other important thought determinations such as causality, necessity, purpose, and various syllogistic forms. But Hegel does not end the dialectic with the logical Absolute Idea. Where he goes next is crucial for understanding Hegel's answer to the question of how this neutral element could yield the subject and object distinction, and, based on that distinction, make sense of our knowledge of the world.

3.2 Logic, Nature, and Spirit - Hegel and the Subject/Object Distinction

At the beginning of the *Logic*, Thought was taken as wholly indeterminate being, and it is through the stages of the dialectic that it reveals its nature as the universal logical element of reality, both subjective and objective. The various thought determinations presented in this dialectic are purely logical, features of the world that are present both in the physical and the mental. For example, being is ascribed indiscriminately to both the physical world and the sphere of representations. Likewise, causality can be used to describe both relations between representations or relations between physical objects. At the culmination of the *Logic*, Hegel describes a thought determination he calls the 'Absolute Idea.' The Absolute Idea combines all of the determinations that came before it - it is a self-determining whole, both knowing itself and acting purposefully for its own development. Yet something crucial is missing. At this stage, Thought is still inadequate and in need of further development, here because it is merely the domain of logical truth. At the level of the logical Idea, causality is as yet not the causality of particular spatio-temporal objects or of representations - it is just causality as a pure thought determination.[328] The logical Idea lacks physicality, corporeality; as Hegel describes it through a

[328] This way of motivating the dialectical transition from the *Logic* to the *Philosophy of Nature* is not universally accepted. Houlgate, for example, sees the transition as a result of the fact that in the logical

characteristic Christian metaphor, Thought must be made incarnate.[329] Thus even the entire first book of his system, and its culmination in the Absolute Idea, serves only as the first in the overarching dialectical triad of the Hegelian system.

This deficiency in the Idea, like the deficiency in thought determinations prior to it, leads it to pass into its opposite. For Hegel, the existence of the physical world is a necessary consequence of the dialectic: without the physical, the logical would be incoherent. In this way, the neutral element of pure Thought is used to dialectically derive the existence of the physical universe.[330] Just as being led to nothing, the Idea of the logical universe governed by necessary relations between thought determinations has as its opposite the messy and contingent physical world.[331] As Hegel puts it, "In Nature, not only is the play of forms a prey to boundless and unchecked contingency, but each separate entity is without the [concept] of itself."[332] Being 'without the concept of itself' is Hegel's way of saying that the particular entities that make up the natural world are imperfect copies of their concepts, in a way analogous to Plato's

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Idea, "the Idea is not just being that determines itself and develops in a certain manner, but also being that is *immediately* itself, being that simply is what it is." Houlgate, *An Introduction to Hegel: Freedom, Truth, and History,* 106-108. This immediacy, he takes it, is embodied in the natural world. I find this reading inadequate, however, because Hegel stresses externality and otherness, not immediacy, in his discussion of the transition: "Nature has presented itself as the Idea in the form of *otherness*. Since therefore the Idea is the negative of itself, or is *external to itself*, Nature is not merely external in relation to this Idea (and its subjective existence Spirit); the truth is rather that *externality* constitutes the specific character in which Nature, as Nature, exists." Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, sect. 247.
This externality and otherness to the Idea is found in the contingency of nature, whereas merely pointing to immediacy would not make sense of the transition. Ultimately, however, the key point here is not the details of how this transition occurs, but the fact that occurs at all. See Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, sect. 247-251 for the emphasis on externality and contingency.

[329] See Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, sect. 247, addition. I describe this transition as a 'becoming incarnate,' where Thought literally generates the spatiotemporal physical universe. Like all relations between thought determinations (Hegel sees 'space' and 'physical' as thought determinations), the relation between the logical Idea and physical reality is a logical relation. To speak of 'generation' in this context is the Hegelian way of describing how the dialectical requirements make necessary a further stage - the stage of the logical Idea requires those of the physical universe. Readers who see the dialectic as a Kantian exploration of the mind's operations only would read this as a derivation of the *concept* of the physical world. I oppose this reading for the reasons rehearsed above.

[330] Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, introduction.

[331] Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, sect. 248. See also Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, 249, 250.

[332] Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, sect. 248.

conception of the Forms.[333] This kind of immersion in imperfection is characteristic of the Idea as it appears in the natural world, to the point that Hegel describes nature as the "self-degradation of the Idea."[334] Nature itself is a part of Thought, but it is Thought as enmeshed in contingency and arbitrariness. Although Nature is governed by certain necessary structures (space, time, chemism, and others), each of these is at the same time conditioned by a great deal of contingency. While it is necessary that natural world be spatial, for example, it is merely contingent how objects fill that space. Yet at the same time, this contingency is itself a necessary feature of reality, so that at no point do we ever leave the sphere of Thought. Nature, for all its contingency, is still a necessary element of reality, and hence a part of Thought.

In his discussion of nature, to which the second book of his *Encyclopedia* is devoted, Hegel describes the necessary structure of the natural world. He describes this study as an act of discerning the element of Thought in the natural; pure Thought, as discussed in the *Logic*, is always the necessary, the universal, and even in the natural world, certain governing features emerge, albeit always surrounded by an element of contingency.[335] The dialectic in Hegel's philosophy of nature describes these governing features, thought determinations in the sphere of nature. Among them are determinations such as space, time, gravity, and mechanics.

As the dialectic proceeds through the thought determinations that govern the natural world, the prevailing trend is toward greater and greater order and unity. We go from space, which is characterized by the indifferent coexistence of things, to gravity, an external law set upon physical things to govern their interrelations, and which governs their interrelationship.

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[333] Hegel makes explicit reference to the Platonic Forms in this connection at Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, sect. 246, addition.
[334] Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, sect. 248.
[335] "It is precisely externality which is characteristic of Nature, that is, differences are allowed to fall apart and to appear as indifferent to each other: the dialectical Notion which leads forward the *stages*, is the inner side of them. A thinking consideration must reject such nebulous, at bottom, sensuous ideas." Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, sect. 249, remark. See also Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, sect. 246 and sect. 246, remark.

Further stages include the animal organism, which freely governs itself. Ultimately the dialectic of nature leads to the genesis of *Geist*, a term usually translated as 'spirit,' but which can also be used to mean 'mind.' Thought, after moving through the thought determinations of the natural world, is ultimately led to manifest itself as not just a sphere of empty logical relations, nor as an ordered natural world, but also as a thinking being.

Hegel picks up the third and last book of his *Encyclopedia* at this point, and, just as before, dialectically derives various thought determinations, this time those that govern the nature of thinking beings. In this book, the *Philosophy of Spirit*, Hegel derives mental features such as memory and imagination, but also goes farther, showing how thinking beings are led to have goals and morals and to form societies. The dialectic of spirit goes through various governmental forms and cultural developments, each of which is demonstrated as a necessary consequence of the former, and so, as a necessary development of the pure indeterminate Thought with which we started. Ultimately, this dialectic culminates in the final development of the Hegelian system: philosophy. At its peak, Thought as a thinking society comes to reflect upon the world around it. This world, however, is itself the manifestation of Thought, so that in doing so, Thought is reflecting upon itself.[336] This, then, is philosophy: Thought thinking itself, and, ultimately, discovering that it is one and the same in its various forms, from pure logical category through the natural world and on to the philosophers themselves.

At this point, the Hegelian system is completed, and this completion is marked by the fact that it circles around to begin again, since the philosophical project begins with taking pure, indeterminate Thought as a starting point. Stepping back then, we can take in the system as a

[336] With regard to the Absolute Idea, which is the fully developed nature of Thought, Hegel writes that "Nature and spirit are in general different modes of exhibiting *its existence*, art and religion its different modes of apprehending itself and giving itself appropriate existence. Philosophy has the same content and the same purpose as art and religion, but it is the highest mode of apprehending the absolute idea, because its mode, that of the concept, is the highest." Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 12.236.

whole. This whole is a network of thought determinations, of necessary features of reality. Their necessity is ensured by the dialectical process, where each is derived as a necessary correlate of the prior form. If there is to be anything at all, there must be the whole system, since the whole system is a necessary consequence of even a wholly indeterminate being. In the process of this dialectic, Hegel has derived the logical features of reality that span both the physical and the mental, but also the specific features of the physical world and the mental world as well.

Thought itself encompasses all of these stages. In the *Logic* we see it in its pure logical element. But in the *Philosophy of Nature*, Hegel explicates the nature of Thought insofar as it is embodied in the natural world, and in the *Philosophy of Spirit*, he describes it in its form as a natural organism with the power to form representations and ultimately to come to an awareness of its true nature. Each of these is presented as the natural development of one and the same thing, as each stage tries to overcome the deficiency inherent to it. Only at the final stage does Thought attain a wholly stable, because wholly complete, totality. This stage, which encompases all those prior to it, Hegel calls the Absolute, and he identifies it with God.[337]

In this way, Thought is used by Hegel to explain the dichotomy between representing subjects and objects represented. In answer to the question of why there should be such a fundamental ontological distinction, Hegel can point to the fact that Thought necessary takes on both of these forms as it moves through the stages of the dialectic. The distinction between mental and non-mental phenomena arises at the transition from the philosophy of nature to the philosophy of spirit. At that point, the natural world has taken on such a level of order and self-determination that it manifests as an animal organism.[338] But the animal organism's highest stage comes when it becomes consciously aware of its environment and thus takes the first step

[337] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 11.368.
[338] Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, sect. 350-376.

to breaking out of its merely finite instinctive behavior.[339] This conscious awareness of the natural world is the first step in the dialectic of Spirit.[340]

By showing that Thought takes the form a representing being in this way, Hegel has simultaneously shown that there must be a metaphysical distinction between representations, those that have them (subjects), and what they represent (objects). What Kant assumed at the outset of his system, Hegel can claim to explain. Through the dialectic, he has proven that such a distinction is necessary, that it is written into the nature of being itself. There could not be a universe without a distinction between mental and non-mental, subjects and objects, since that distinction is a requirement for there to be any being whatsoever.[341]

Unlike the Kantian attempt at explaining this distinction, Hegel's system presents the distinction between subject and object not merely as occurring *within* representations. Instead, since Thought is neither subjective nor objective, the distinction is no longer a matter of how the subject handles their own representations, but is a matter of what reality itself must contain. It is not that we have to represent the world in experience as divided between subjective representations and objective, but rather that the world itself contains representations and the objects that they represent.

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[339] Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, sect. 376.

[340] "For us mind has nature as its presupposition, though mind is the truth of nature, and is thus absolutely first with respect to it. In this truth nature has vanished, and mind has emerged as the Idea that has reached its being-for-self." Hegel, *Philosophy of Spirit*, sect. 381. Recall that to describe one stage as the 'truth' of another is to say that it is the dialectical development of it.

[341] The distinction between subjective and objective that Hegel derives is subtly distinct from the Kantian one in the way noted above. For Kant, the distinction is a matter of some representations demanding intersubjective agreement, and others being unique to the individual. For Hegel, the distinction appears in two ways: as the difference between mental as opposed to non-mental features of the world, and as the difference between subjects as representers and objects as things they represent (which could be mental or non-mental). Both of these are derived in the course of the dialectic, when the transition is made from the philosophy of nature to the philosophy of spirit. This difference is rooted in the fact that Kant already assumed a distinction between mental and non-mental, and focused his attention on describing the difference between subjective and objective in the subject's experience. Hegel's focus is on the more basic distinction which Kant takes for granted.

With this, it is hopefully evident how Hegel attempts to correct the perceived flaws of the Kantian system by beginning with the neutral element of Thought and presenting its internal, dialectical development. The form of the dialectic provides a derivation of the categories that is systematic and self-contained, and the particular divisions of the dialectic into nature and spirit lay the groundwork for Hegel's solution to Kant's epistemic worries by explaining the distinction between the subjective and objective.[342] Thus it is only through this reading of Thought as the neutral element, that this kind of solution to the Kantian problems can be found. Having defended this reading and shown how it allows Hegel to resolve some of the tensions in Kant's position, I now focus more directly on Hegel's connection to Kant.

4 Kant & Hegel - Thought as the Successor to the Transcendental Unity of Apperception

The preceding sections of this chapter were directed at presenting and defending a reading of Hegel that takes Thought to be the ontologically neutral starting point from which Hegel derives the necessary structure of the world. In so doing, I established a number of similarities between the theoretical roles that Thought and the transcendental unity of apperception play in their respective philosopher's systems. This in itself establishes a *prima facie* case for conceiving of one concept as the successor of the other. In this section and the next, I focus more precisely on the this claim of succession. I defend that claim first by providing textual evidence that Hegel himself saw Thought in this way, and second by showing how various differences between them are fundamentally rooted in the transition from the Kantian condition on representations to the Hegelian condition on being itself. If successful, these arguments will establish not only that Hegel's Thought is the appropriate analogue of Kant's

[342] I say more about Hegel's responses to the kinds of skepticism Kant was worried about in section 4.1 of this chapter.

transcendental unity of apperception but also that the metaphysical difference between these concepts marks the primary point of distinction between the two philosophers.

I begin with Hegel's explicit comments on the Kantian transcendental unity of apperception. Consider the following passage, which I quoted above but repeat here to emphasize a new point:

> "[Kant's] principle idea is to vindicate the *categories* for self-consciousness understood as the *subjective 'I'*. Because of this determination, his point of view remains confined within consciousness and its opposition, and, besides the empirical element of feeling and intuition, is left with something else not posited or determined by thinking self-consciousness, a *thing-in-itself*, something alien and external to thinking - although it is easy to see that such an abstract entity as the *thing-in-itself* is itself only the product of thought, and of merely abstractive thought at that. - If other Kantians have expanded on the determining of the *intended object* by the 'I' by saying that the objectifying of the 'I' is to be regarded as an original and necessary deed of consciousness, so that in this original deed there is not yet the representation of the 'I' … then this objectifying deed, liberated from the opposition of consciousness, is closer to what may be called simply *thinking* as such. But this deed should no longer be called consciousness; for consciousness holds within itself the opposition of the 'I' and its intended object which is not to be found in that original deed. The name 'consciousness' gives it more of a semblance of subjectivity than does the term '*thought*,' which here, however, is to be taken in the absolute sense of *infinite thought*, not as encumbered by the finitude of consciousness; in short, *thought as such*."[343]

In this passage, Hegel begins by remarking that Kant's focus is on the "subjective 'I'" - Hegel's way of describing the transcendental unity of apperception.[344] He then proceeds to

[343] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.47-48.

[344] This way of referring to the Kantian transcendental unity of apperception is used systematically by Hegel throughout his writings. For a direct identification of the two, see sect. 42 of the *Encyclopedia Logic*, where, in discussing Kant, Hegel writes, "this philosophy identifies the original identity of the I in thinking (i.e. the transcendental unity of self-consciousness) as the specific ground of the concepts of the understanding." Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 42 - the parenthetical remark is Hegel's own. As noted in the previous chapter, Hegel's predecessor's made a similar terminological shift, as in Schelling's "Of the I as the Principle of Philosophy," and Fichte's *Science of Knowledge*. Of course, in all these figures, the transcendental unity of apperception takes on a new form, but all of them give it pride of place and identify it with the Kantian notion. For example, Fichte is explicit that his system is "nothing other than the Kantian," and Schelling restates Kant's question about synthetic a priori judgements explicitly in terms of the I. See Fichte, "Science of Knowledge: First Introduction," 43 and Schelling, "Of the I as the Principle of Philosophy," 73.

present the criticism attributed to him above, namely that this way of proceeding is restricted by its inability to reach the thing-in-itself. He then turns to a consideration of the "objectifying deed" that this 'I' performs. This is the act of judgement through which, as described in the first chapter, the transcendental unity of apperception molds sensations into objects and ultimately into a unified world of experience. The crucial section of the passage comes immediately after this, where Hegel argues that this deed should not be called 'consciousness'; instead the term 'thinking' should be used. In other words, Hegel explicitly connects his conception of Thought to the transcendental unity of apperception, claiming that Thought is better suited to play the crucial objectifying role played by the transcendental unity of apperception in Kant. As a final point, observe that the reason for this shift is precisely the one we have presented above; restricting that objectifying activity to the activity of a conscious being presents it as excessively subjective. Instead, Thought should be understood as 'infinite,' as unrestricted, and, accordingly, as both subjective *and* objective.

Later passages in the *Science of Logic* also support the connection between Thought and the transcendental unity of apperception. On the following page we find Hegel arguing that Kant's transcendental unity of apperception was a valuable contribution to philosophy, but his handling of it obscured crucial issues:

> "Now because the interest of the Kantian philosophy was directed to the so-called *transcendental* nature of the categories, the treatment itself of such categories came up empty. What they are in themselves apart from their abstract relation to the 'I,' a relation which is the same for all, how they are determined and related to each other, this was not made a subject of consideration, and therefore knowledge of their nature was not in the least advanced by this philosophy. What alone is of interest in this connection comes only in the Critique of Ideas. - However, if there was to be any real progress in philosophy, it was necessary that the interest of thought should be drawn to the consideration of the formal side, of the 'I' of consciousness as such, that is, of the abstract reference of a subjective awareness to an object, and that in this way the path should be opened for the cognition of the *infinite form*, that is, of the concept. Yet, in order to arrive at this cognition, the finite determinateness in which that form is as 'I,' as

> consciousness, must be shed. The form, when thought out in its purity, will then have within itself the capacity to *determine* itself, that is, to give itself a content, and to give it as a necessary content - as a system of thought-determinations."[345]

Here Hegel first reiterates the point that Kant's focus on the epistemic status of the categories, his consideration of them as necessary tools for the mind, distracted him from adequately deriving them.[346] But he does give Kant credit for drawing our attention to the 'I' of consciousness. Yet the 'I' as Kant had it, must be modified: it must shed its finitude. In other words, it must be understood not as the operation of a particular subject opposed to an object, but as infinite Thought.[347] Re-understood as infinite, subject/object neutral Thought, it becomes possible to dialectically derive the system of necessary features of reality - the system of thought-determinations. In this way, Hegel directly relates the Kantian unity of apperception to his conception of Thought.

This identification goes the other way as well. Not only does Hegel show how Thought is a modification of the 'I,' or from the transcendental unity of apperception, but he also claims that the conscious 'I' is a part of Thought - it is Thought *as subject*. Hegel writes that "we can say that 'I' and thought are the same; or more specifically, 'I' is the thinking as someone thinking"[348] and that "represented as a *subject*, thinking is a *thinking being*, and the simple expression for a concretely existing subject that thinks is I."[349] The Kantian 'I' thus comes to be seen as a specific

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[345] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.48.
[346] This point is discussed at length in the previous chapter, section 3.2.
[347] In the passage cited, Hegel's term is 'concept,' but, the concept is one of the last and richest thought determinations. We noted above how Thought is identical to its determinations, so that Thought is the Absolute Idea. A similar point holds here - the concept Hegel refers to in this passage is Thought itself, but only at a certain stage where it is infinite *form*. At the culmination of the dialectic in the Absolute Idea, Thought is both form and matter.
[348] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 24, addition 1.
[349] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 20. Although Hegel uses the phrase 'concretely existing' here, he is clear that the 'I' as he understands it is not an empirical self-awareness, but the pure apperception Kant has in mind. He writes, for example, that "When I say 'I,' I mean to refer to myself as this individual, indeed as this determinate person. Actually, however, I do not thereby say anything specific about myself. Everybody else is 'I' as well, and although in denoting myself as 'I' I mean myself, this individual being, I simultaneously utter something completely universal. 'I' is pure being-for-itself in which all that is

determination of Thought, rather than Thought in general. When Thought turns to reflect upon itself, and considers itself as the agent of the dialectical activity, it sees itself as a subject, as an 'I.' This 'I' has the quality of universality, in that can be attached to all our representations, and also has the quality of necessity, in that it attaches to them necessarily. These features are characteristic of Thought and represent its similarity to the 'I.' But when the 'I' is used in consciousness, it becomes related to an object and hence cannot be understood except as finite. As a result, the 'I' of self-consciousness cannot be Thought properly speaking; instead it is only Thought in one of its particular forms, as a subject. In this way, Kant pointed us in the right direction by drawing our attention to the universality and necessity built into the 'I', into all subjectivity, but he did not go far enough, since he continued to restrict this to particular subjects, and thus did not give us the unrestricted universality and necessity that are the marks of infinite, unrestricted Thought.

At this point I hope to have shown that my identification of Thought as the successor to Kant's transcendental unity of apperception is not based only on their theoretical roles, but, given the passages cited above, is something Hegel himself would likely endorse. But there are other candidates that might be put forth as the successor in Thought's place. Robert Pippin, in particular, puts forth a different option. He writes: "What Kant called the original synthetic unity of apperception is what Hegel calls "the essence of the unity of the concept.'"[350] The principal textual motivation for this claim is a passage in the *Science of Logic*, where Hegel seems to make precisely the claim Pippin attributes to him. Here is the passage in full:

> "It is one of the profoundest and truest insights to be found in the Critique of Reason that the unity which constitutes the essence of the concept is recognized as the original synthetic unity of apperception, the unity of the "I think," or of

particular has been negated and sublated; it is the ultimate, simple, and pure element of consciousness." Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 24, addition 1. In other words, although our everyday use of the word 'I' may appear to refer to a specifically determined individual, it is in fact wholly universal, expressing the universal character of Thought in general.

[350] Pippin, 'The Significance of Self-Consciousness in Idealist Theories of Logic,' 2.

> self-consciousness. – This proposition is all that there is to the so-called transcendental deduction of the categories which, from the beginning, has however been regarded as the most difficult piece of Kantian philosophy"[351]

The concept is one of the later stages of the Hegelian dialectic. Like all the stages, it is a form of Thought. Pippin's claim then is that it is not Thought itself, but only a specific form of it called the 'concept,' that is the successor to the Kantian transcendental unity of apperception.

Whether one decides on Pippin's reading or on my own depends on what one takes to be the key feature of the transcendental unity of apperception. On the one hand, Kant clearly takes the unity of apperception to intrinsically involve a kind of pure self-consciousness. Hegel here discusses that self-consciousness in the context of the concept, a specific stage of Thought's dialectical development. If we take self-consciousness to be the pivotal feature of the transcendental unity of apperception, then it might be appropriate to take Hegel at his word here and say that the corresponding element of Hegel's philosophy is not Thought in general, but the specific stage of Thought Hegel calls the 'concept.'[352]

But the transcendental unity of apperception is more than simply a special kind of self-awareness. It plays an important theoretical role in Kant's philosophy in solidifying our knowledge of a priori truths and explaining the distinction between subjective and objective features of experience. As outlined above, it is Thought as a whole that plays this role for Hegel, not the specific stage of the concept. In fact, the concept is able to play this role at all only insofar as it is a part of the subject/object self-determining Thought described above. To focus on this specific stage of Thought would be to miss the crucial feature of Thought, which is its subject/object neutral nature.

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[351] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 12.18.

[352] Note that even if we take self-consciousness to be the crucial mark of the transcendental unity of apperception, another point in the Hegelian system would also recommend themselves as successors to the Kantian conception. Hegel specifically derives self-consciousness only much later in the dialectic, in the *Philosophy of Spirit*, sect. 424-437.

Moreover, just as Pippin has this specific passage identifying the unity of apperception with the unity of the concept, there are other passages, cited above, that identify the unity of apperception with Thought.[353] Pippin's interpretation is thus not alone in having textual support. In sum, since the textual evidence for such a connection is not conclusive, it would be best to let theoretical considerations decide the issue. And it is Thought, in all of its stages, that plays the relevant theoretical role for Hegel. Hence it is Thought that should be taken as the successor to the transcendental unity of apperception, not its specific determination as the concept.

4.1 Kant & Hegel - The Metaphysical Shift

In the previous section, I argued, on the basis of textual evidence, that Thought was the successor concept to the Kantian transcendental unity of apperception. In this section, I argue that the primary distinction that marks the transition from the Kantian to the Hegelian way of thinking is that Hegel sees Thought as a purely logical, subject/object neutral entity, where Kant understands the transcendental unity of apperception as a requirement on the subject's representations. That Hegel does in fact understand Thought in this way has been show above; here I show how a number of commonly cited differences between the two philosophers have their roots in this crucial difference in the ontological status of their central concepts. In so doing, I further strengthen the case for connecting these concepts - if such a connection can explain major differences between these philosophers, then it has an explanatory value that other interpretations might lack.

Perhaps the most obvious difference between Kant and Hegel is in the overall metaphysical picture the two philosophers present. Kant sees the transcendental unity of

[353] See especially Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.48.

apperception as a condition on the subject's representations, and in doing so he begins from an ontology that views the world as divided into perceiving subjects and objects in-themselves. The interaction between these two generates all of the rich world of experience through the subject's operation on the sensations it receives from the object. But this basic ontological starting point remains fixed and unaltered throughout the Kantian system. Indeed, it is the fact that he starts here that makes him unable to explain the distinction between subjects and objects; for him, that distinction is a starting point, and cannot itself be explained. By contrast, Hegel's ontology consists of only one entity: Thought. Through the dialectic, Hegel tries to show how this entity comes to generate what we recognize as the natural and physical worlds, as well as the distinction between representing subjects and the objects they represent. So where Kant remains essentially a dualist, Hegel presents a monistic position.[354]

With regard to the epistemic consequences, because Kant restricts the transcendental unity of apperception to a condition on representations, he is able to secure our knowledge not of the world as it is in itself, but as we experience it. In other words, we can know necessary truths about our experience of the world, and hence of all the natural world and the results of the natural sciences, but we cannot know necessary truths (or any substantive truths) about things as they are in themselves. Since the transcendental unity of apperception conditions our representations, it provides necessary laws only for these representations, and not for things as they are in themselves. Accordingly, with regard to extra-experiential entities like God or the free subject, Kant claims that we cannot have theoretical knowledge regarding their existence. For Kant, this strict agnosticism is a powerful tool in securing the solidity of our faith in these

[354] Hegel explicitly describes Kant as a dualist and attacks him for it: "In every dualistic system, and especially in the Kantian system, its basic flaw reveals itself through the inconsistency of *combining* what a moment ago has been declared to be independent and thus *incompatible*." Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 60.

things, but for Hegel, both this agnosticism and the restriction of our knowledge to experience are unacceptable conclusions, which he sees as founded on a false humility.[355]

Hegel's system of thought determinations aims to secure for us our knowledge both of metaphysical truths in general and of God and freedom in particular. This is done on the one hand by demonstrating that the relevant metaphysical concepts are indeed stages of Thoughts' development, and on the other hand by demonstrating that human beings capable of knowing these metaphysical truths are also a necessary stage of Thought's development. In the first case, since the dialectic demonstrates that the thought determinations are necessary features of the world, when we represent the world as having these features, we can be assured that our representations are accurate.[356] Hegel even goes so far as to say that it is only insofar as we represent these thought determinations that we truly think, and they alone are thoughts; all else is mere sensing, imagining, or remembering, though these mental acts, too, have some element of Thought.[357] What's more, Hegel also shows that human beings that represent the world accurately are also necessary features of that world, again solidifying the epistemological foundations of our claims to knowledge. The ability to grant us knowledge of things in themselves is rooted, ultimately in the fact that Thought is both subject and object of this knowledge, where the corresponding Kantian inability to grant us this kind of knowledge springs from the Kantian restriction of the transcendental unity of apperception to the subject's representations.

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[355] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic,* sect. 19, addition 1.
[356] This is so for necessary truths, but Hegel is not committed to the idea that all our assertions are always true. As finite human beings, we may be lead to make assertions not based purely on thought determinations but on the contingent context that surrounds us.
[357] "In our ordinary consciousness, thoughts are clothed in and combined with familiar sensuous and spiritual material, and when we think things over, reflect, or reason about them, we intermingle our feelings, intuitions, and representations with thoughts (in every sentence with a quite sensuous content - as for instance in 'this leaf is green' -, categories such as being, singularity, are already part of the mix)" Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 3. Note also that Hegel does not take assertions about purely contingent matters of fact (e.g., 'Caesar was born in Rome in 100 BC') to be judgements properly speaking. Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic,* sect. 167.

Aside from these large-scale metaphysical and epistemological consequences, however, Kant's restriction of the transcendental unity of apperception to representations, together with Hegel's corresponding lack of such restriction, also creates some more subtle methodological differences between the two philosophers. To see these, recall first that Kant sees that transcendental unity of apperception as acting to unify not just representations in general, but specifically representations given to the subject from the object through sensation. This element of externality requires Kant to follow a two-step procedure in the *Critique*'s argumentation. First, he describes the basic forms of judgement, and second, he shows that judgement (and hence those forms), is in fact operative in generating experience out of the blur of sensations originally given to the subject. The first stage is the derivation of the categories, and the second is the deduction of their legitimate application. Kant's project breaks into these stages precisely because the transcendental unity of apperception is seen as dependent upon sensation for its content. Since it operates on representations given from without, Kant must first outline the exact forms the mind works with in this operation. Yet even when that is done, it remains an open question whether these forms are in fact imposed on sensation or not. The transcendental unity of apperception, as a condition on experience, is aimed at answering this question in the affirmative.

Hegel, however, combines both these steps into one; the dialectic is both derivation and deduction.[358] On the one hand, each thought determination follows necessarily from the one prior to it, based on the specific deficiency of its predecessor. In this way, the dialectic explicitly derives precisely which thought determinations have a legitimate claim to being necessary features of reality. This is the derivation side of the project. But at the same time, by dialectically deriving these thought determinations, Hegel shows them to be necessary features of Thought,

[358] Sebastian Rödl makes this observation in Rödl, "Eliminating Externality," 185-188.

of the single truly real entity. This being the case, unlike the Kantian project, Hegel faces no question of whether the derived forms have legitimate claim to reality. Thus, the dialectical derivation is simultaneously a dialectical deduction. There must be the specific stage of becoming, for example, because it and only it can resolve the passing over process occurring between being and nothing. At the same time, becoming must truly be a feature of reality, since without it being and nothing would remain in tension. The two stages of derivation and deduction are, in Hegel, merely different ways of viewing the same dialectical process.

A similar subtle distinction between the Kantian and Hegelian approach is in where they locate the basic drive toward unity which operates in their systems. For Kant, unity is built into the nature of the subject. It is because the 'I' must be one and the same in all of its appearances that there must be a corresponding necessary unity among the subject's representations. Just as above, there is a two-step process here. The 'I' must be unified, and hence it imposes this unity on its representations; the representations themselves, whether sensory or conceptual, do not have any unity in and of themselves. In Hegel's case, however, unity is not imposed on anything from without. Instead, it is a need inherent in the thought determinations themselves. Every stage of the dialectic requires the one after it because of a fundamental instability or dependency in the first stage's identity. The synthetic unity of antithesis and thesis is an attempt to reconcile and stabilize these thought determinations. In this way, Hegel sees the drive to unity as immanent in the thought determinations where Kant sees unity as imposed upon representations by the subject.[359]

As a final point of comparison, I want to draw attention to the reflexive element found in both the transcendental unity of apperception and Hegel's conception of thought. In Kant, this element is explicit; the transcendental unity of apperception includes the element of

[359] On this point interpreters who read the dialectic as a description of the requirements for a subject's thought of the world will disagree with me. I hope to have addressed such criticism above.

self-consciousness in its very name, and begins from the demand that our thoughts should be reflexively available to us as our own. Kant thus begins from our self-consciousness, and the transcendental unity of apperception is in many ways a set of conditions on the possibility of our awareness of ourselves, just as much as it is a condition on our experience of external objects.

Hegel does not gives self-consciousness such a privileged role, but it is a persistent theme in his writing, especially in the *Philosophy of Spirit*, that Thought always strives to reach self-awareness.[360] Indeed, given the way the dialectic ends, it is no exaggeration to say that it is only when Thought finally knows itself as Thought that the system reaches its completion. All the prior stages of the dialectic are, then, conditions for the possibility of Thought's self-awareness, just the analytic, synthetic, and objective unities of apperception are conditions for the possibility of the subject's self-awareness in Kant. And just as in Kant, Hegel is emphatic that in the dialectic, dependence goes both ways. The self-awareness of Thought is the precondition for the whole system as well, since it is only at that point that all the prior thought determinations find their resolution. So while the nature of the self-conscious entity has radically shifted from Kant's individual human subject to the all-encompassing totality that is Hegel's Thought, both systems are propelled forward by a drive for self-consciousness, and conclude by demonstrating the conditions under which that self-consciousness is possible. In this, perhaps more than any other commonality between them, it becomes clear the extent to which Hegel's Thought is the philosophical successor to the Kantian transcendental unity of apperception.

On that note, I want to close this section by emphasizing again the similarities between these thinkers' two central concepts. Despite the differences described above, it remains the case

[360] Charles Taylor, in his book *Hegel*, also places great emphasis on the need for self-awareness. He, however, sees this as the need of a universal Spirit, where I describe it as the need of Thought. Universal Spirit is one of Thought's stages, indeed is sometimes described as its final and most complete form; this difference between our readings is for the most part only in the words we choose.

that like the Kantian transcendental unity of apperception, Hegel's Thought is a series of interdependent conditions for the possibility of self-consciousness. Like the transcendental unity of apperception, it demonstrates the legitimacy of our knowledge of necessary features of reality. And like the transcendental unity of apperception, it explains the distinction between the subjective and the objective. Hegel's key innovation was to take the Kantian unifying condition out of the subject's mental faculty and write it into a non-subject, non-object, neutral entity: Thought. The differences between his system and the Kantian are rooted in this shift.

At this point I hope to have made the positive case for a reading of Hegel that takes his connection to the transcendental unity of apperception as a central guiding thread. In the remainder of this chapter, I will defend this interpretation against two key alternative views, which I call the 'sociality of reason' interpretation and the 'unity of the faculties' interpretation.

5.1 The Sociality of Reason Interpretation

What I call the 'Sociality of Reason' interpretation is an interpretative approach to Hegel shared by philosophers Robert Pippin, Terry Pinkard, Robert Brandom, among others.[361] Although there are differences in the various approaches to Hegel taken by these philosophers, one can nonetheless identify a few key interpretative claims that they share. In this section, I briefly outline these claims and detail the ways in which they contrast with the claims I make above. Following this, I argue that while this approach captures important elements of Hegel's thought, it fails to do justice to the metaphysical dimension of his philosophy, thereby ignoring important themes in Hegel's texts and leaving him open to the same objections that he himself raises against Kant.

[361] See for example, Pippin, "Hegel and Category Theory"; Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism;* Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology;* Brandom, *Reason in Philosophy*.

The readings of Hegel presented by Pippin, Pinkard, and Brandom share at least three important features. To begin with, they tend to emphasize Hegel's relationship to the overall tradition of German Idealism, and especially to the founder of that tradition, Kant.[362] In so doing, they hope to do justice to Hegel's own extensive engagement with the thinkers of that tradition, as well as to his repeated claims to be building on them. Moreover, a focus on Hegel's continuity with his predecessors, besides making good historical sense, also helps these interpretations avoid the pitfalls of past readers, many of whom seem to have read Hegel in isolation. As a result, Hegel came to be seen, despite his own protestations, as a dogmatic metaphysician in precisely the rationalist tradition Kant opposed. By emphasizing Hegel's relation to Kant, such arch-rationalist readings are ruled out, and Hegel is in some sense sanitized and made more palatable to present-day analytic audiences.

This brings me to a second central feature of the Sociality of Reason interpretation. In trying to avoid this kind of metaphysically-loaded rationalist reading of Hegel, and in focusing closely on Hegel's relationship to Kant, these readers come to read Hegel as dealing primarily with the same issues as Kant deals with: namely, the structure of experience and the nature and limits of our knowledge.[363] Like Kant, Hegel is said to have emphasized that the nature of experience depends crucially on the mind's creative activity in applying concepts to organize the data provided by sensibility. But unlike Kant, Hegel sees that any individual's ability to use concepts in this way depends crucially on that individual's being a part of a larger society.

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[362] Pippin, for example, spends the first three chapters of *Hegel's Idealism* tracing the evolution of the transcendental unity of apperception from Kant through Fichte and Schelling before discussing its role in Hegel directly. Pinkard, for his part, has written a whole volume discussing the period of German Idealism between Kant and Hegel, and Brandom repeatedly compares Kant and Hegel throughout his work, especially in his *Reason and Philosophy*.

[363] "Whatever else Hegel intends by asserting an 'Absolute Idealism,' it is clear by now that such a claim at the very least involves Hegel in a theory about pure concepts, and about the role of such concepts in human experience, particularly in any possible knowledge of objects, but also in various kinds of self-conscious, intentional activities." Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, 91. See also Pinkard, *Hegel's Dialectic*, 13-14.

Concepts have their meaning only within the wider context of a society's normative practices, which governs their legitimate use. Hegel's major innovation, according to this way of reading him, is to have recognized the role of social forces in determining the meaning of our concepts and, accordingly, in determining how we organize intuitions in the activity of constructing the empirical world.

Together with this comes a third feature of the Sociality of Reason interpretation: a general refusal to attribute to Hegel any substantive metaphysical claims.[364] Hegel is read in this light as primarily concerned with concepts, concept application, and in general with the operations of the mind. In this he is in keeping with Kant, who emphatically rejected the very possibility of metaphysics as a science of things-in-themselves. Hegel, as a good reader of Kant, could not (according to this interpretation) himself go in for the dogmatic metaphysical claims classically attributed to him. Instead, he confines himself to reassessing Kant's account of the role of concepts in experience by noting the crucial contribution of social forces.

For my part, I wholly agree with the emphasis this tradition of interpretation places on Hegel's relationship to Kant, and have tried to describe that relationship at length, both here and in the previous chapter. Yet as should be clear from how I present Hegel's views above, I would be at odds with any reading that sees Hegel as developing a theory of concept use alone. As I read him, Hegel is a full-blooded metaphysician aiming at knowledge not just of how the individual's mind constructs a world, but of the world as it is independent of such construction. At the same time, however, he tries to respond to crucial Kantian insights about the role of the mind in experience and the need for a self-critical and systematic philosophy. Read like this, Hegel is seen not as a return to the dogmatic rationalism that Kant rejects, but as a genuinely post-Kantian metaphysician.

[364] Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, 6.

The principal reason for reading Hegel in this way is that it does justice to his repeated criticisms of Kant's philosophy. Given the objections to Kant presented above, it is implausible that Hegel would concern himself only with the nature of concepts and their application. Such a study would leave him open to the same objections that were raised to Kant above: he would be committed to a formal and subjective understanding of concepts, would be unable to provide an adequate derivation of the necessary features of the world, and would leave us without knowledge of things as they are in themselves.[365] If we are to see Hegel as genuinely attempting to produce a presuppositionless philosophy that can derive and demonstrate the necessary features of the world as it is in itself, then we cannot read him as a philosopher who studies the nature of the mind and the conditions of concept application alone. Instead, he must be read as a metaphysician, and his admittedly unusual metaphysics must be understood as he understood it: as the result of a protracted effort to overcome important Kantian criticisms of the very possibility of metaphysics.

Moreover, I would argue that the Sociality of Reason interpretation outlined above actually correctly understands a number of key points in Hegel's thought, but stops short of Hegel's ultimate conclusions. In particular, philosophers reading Hegel in this way tend to focus on the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, a text in which Hegel explicitly thematizes the role of the mind and of society in constructing and modifying various accounts of what could count as knowledge.[366] Looking at this text, it is easy to see Hegel as a direct descendant of the Kantian tradition in focusing on the role of the mind in our attempts to know the world.

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[365] For example, when Hegel compares his conception of objectivity to Kant's, he writes that, *contra* Kant "the true objectivity of thinking consists in this: that thoughts are not merely our thoughts but at the same time the in itself of things and of the object-world." Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 41, addition 2.
[366] Pinkard, for example, develops the sociality of reason interpretation explicitly through an analysis of the *Phenomenology* - his book is titled *Hegel's Phenomenology*: *the Sociality of Reason*. Pippin also uses primarily the *Phenomenology* to justify his reading of the relation between Kant and Hegel - see Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism,* 36-39.

Yet it should not be forgotten that the *Phenomenology* is intended as a ground-clearing introduction to what Hegel considered his most important text: the *Science of Logic*. In the introduction to the latter, Hegel explains that the purpose of the *Phenomenology* is to show, by way of an immanent critique of various understandings of the mind-world relationship, that the mind and the world are not fundamentally distinct but are in fact two facets of a single original unity.[367] With this in hand, Hegel is able to claim that the rules of the mind's operation (i.e. logic) and the structure of the world (i.e. metaphysics) are one and the same, since both mind and world are fundamentally one, united as different facets of thought. But this means then that the Hegelian project is at bottom a metaphysical project aimed at illuminating not only the nature of our representations of the world but the nature of the world itself. Hegel does examine the nature of the mind and our use of concepts in the *Phenomenology*, but he does so in order to establish a metaphysical claim about the relation between the mind and the world.[368] It is only once that claim is established that the main body of his philosophy begins.

The sociality of reason interpretation, then, is inadequate because it fails to do justice to Hegel's criticisms of Kant and because it does not give due importance to the texts that Hegel himself sees as most central to his project. As a result, it is not able to do justice to the real ontological differences between his position and the Kantian, and which are at the root of Hegel's philosophy.

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[367] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.32-21.34.

[368] This marks a point a at which Hegel takes himself to be more fully self-critical than Kant. Where Kant simply assumes a metaphysical picture wherein the world is fundamentally divided between subjects and objects, Hegel does not make this assumption, and ultimately comes to see the distinction between subject and object as springing from a more fundamental unity of the two. See especially the introduction to the *Science of Logic*.

5.2 The Unity of the Faculties Interpretation

Above, I have emphasized that Hegel deviates from Kant in taking thought to be ontologically neutral, as opposed to being representational. By making this shift, and then deriving the various features of thought through the dialectic, Hegel is able to derive the necessary features both of the world and of how we think about it. The unity of faculties interpretation arrives at a similar end point, with Hegel affirming our knowledge of things in themselves and seeing thought as operative the world at large. Yet this interpretation, presented perhaps most notably by Stephen Houlgate and Sebastian Rödl, begins not from thought as an neutral entity but a critique of the Kantian analysis of the mind.[369] For them, the key restriction is not that the transcendental unity of apperception operates on representations, but that it requires representations to be given to it through the senses, and does not make necessary any unity on representations not given thereby. As we saw in the previous chapter, however, that dependency of the transcendental unity of apperception on the senses is precisely the formalism that comes with the Kantian restriction of it to representations. As a result, this way of reading Hegel mislocates the central Hegelian objection and focuses on a derivative feature of his criticism of Kant. Here, however, I focus primarily on this reading's view of Hegel's positive philosophy, as opposed its position on Hegel's criticism of Kant.

Overall, while I agree with many of the conclusions of this interpretative strategy, I find the emphasis on the unity of faculties to be slightly misleading; the primary shift from Kant to Hegel is the ontological shift described above, not a modification of Kant's theory of faculties. As we saw above, Hegel consistently emphasizes the fact that his philosophy does not present

[369] See for example Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic*, "Hegel's Critique of Kant," and Rödl, "Eliminating Externality."

merely an analysis of the subject's capacities; focusing on the faculties would thus leave it unclear why the laws governing the faculties should be necessary features of the world itself.[370]

But before presenting my reasons, it's important to understand fully the interpretation presented by Houlgate and Rödl, among others. These readers emphasize that for Kant, the categories are, in and of themselves, merely empty concepts. In and of themselves, they would tell us nothing about the nature of experience, but would describe merely how we think. It is only when Kant has demonstrated that they must apply to sensations and intuitions given in space and time that the categories are, for him, given real content. As a result, the legitimate use of the categories is only in ordering the spatial and temporal world we experience - any use of them outside that context would be illegitimate, a mere fantasy at best. One way to put this is to say that the understanding (the faculty of concepts, to which the categories belong) is dependent upon sensibility (the faculty through which we receive sensations). Reason, as the faculty of judgement, is independent of sensibility, but this independence is precisely why so many errors are made; reason's striving for the unconditioned pushes it to apply the categories beyond their legitimate sphere.

Hegel often criticizes Kant's claim that the categories are dependent upon sensibility, claiming that they in fact have a purely logical content of their own.[371] Kant's restriction of them, he says, is dogmatic and based in an insufficiently critical way of thinking.[372] But recall that the categories are a priori concepts drawn from the logical forms of judgement. No longer dependent upon sensibility, they become necessary elements of all thought whatsoever. This breaks down the Kantian division between sensibility, understanding, and reason.

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[370] "When we construe thinking in this way [i.e., as infinite thought], it appears in a different context from when we merely say that among and alongside other faculties such as perception, representation, willing, and so on we also possess the faculty of thinking." Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 24, addition 1.
[371] In the *Encyclopedia Logic*, for example, Hegel writes that "to assert of the categories that, with respect to themselves, they are empty is unjustified insofar as they possess in any case content through the fact that they are determinate." Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 42, addition 1.
[372] Houlgate attributes this criticism to Hegel in *The Opening of Hegel's Logic*, 17-19.

Understanding and reason were previously distinguished by the fact that the former conditioned sensations and was dependent upon them, while the latter was able to go beyond these. Freed from that dependency, understanding and reason would no longer be distinct faculties. Instead, the faculties would be unified and the mind's a priori categories would condition all thinking, including thought about God, freedom, and other topics that Kant maintained agnosticism towards.

In this way, by undermining the dependence on sensations, Hegel is able to expand the scope of our knowledge, and increase the number of necessary concepts beyond the Kantian twelve. The dialectical derivation of concepts emerges at this point as a way of showing which a priori concepts there must be.[373] At the same time, it is no longer necessary to establish that a concept is used in the ordering of sensations, since the legitimacy of the concept is no longer dependent upon its being applied to sensation. This eliminates the deduction stage of the Kantian project, so that the dialectic, by deriving what a priori concepts there must be, at the same time demonstrates them to be necessary forms of our thinking.[374]

According to this interpretation, Hegel also brings a similar charge of dogmatism against Kant's claim that an understanding of the necessary structure of thought would not simultaneously give us an understanding of the world as it is in itself.[375] On this reading of Hegel's view, Kant restricts our knowledge to the subject's experience of the world because he sees the forms of that experience as contributed to it by the subject. Since they have their origin in the subject, they cannot also be necessary features of the object.[376] To Hegel, this is merely a

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[373] Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic*, 42-53.
[374] "Eliminating externality requires that we derive a pure concept in such a way that, by thus deriving it, we know it to be a form of knowledge. In other words, the Metaphysical and the Transcendental Deduction of the pure concepts will be one and the same derivation." Rödl, "Eliminating Externality," 184.
[375] "Before presenting his speculative logic, therefore, what Hegel can say is this: Kant's restriction of the categories to experience rests on his uncritical adherence to the standpoint of understanding, and this ill befits a truly *critical* philosopher." Houlgate, "Hegel's Critique of Kant," 26.
[376] Houlgate, "Hegel's Critique of Kant," 28.

dogmatic assertion. By denying it, Hegel is able to make the final step that differentiates his philosophy from the Kantian - the claim to know things as they are in themselves. The necessary forms of our thinking, i.e., the a priori concepts or thought determinations derived through the dialectic, Hegel takes not to be merely forms of our subjective thinking, but of objects as they are in themselves. He achieves this result challenging the Kantian assumption to the contrary, and, in his *Logic,* showing that the thought determinations of objectivity and subjectivity are actually unified, not strictly separated as Kant would have them.

Hegel's philosophy, on this reading, is born from a demand to take the Kantian critical project to its final conclusion. Where Kant gave a thorough critique of many central elements of our conceptual system, he remained dogmatic about others. Hegel challenges these, and tries to start from a purely presuppositionless philosophy. This he does in the *Science of Logic*, where he works from the bare thought of indeterminate being to develop a complete system of necessary a priori thought determinations which structure both our thinking and the world itself.

Although the order of our expositions and the placement of our emphases are different, the reading I have advanced above shares many features in common with this one. Both emphasize a presuppositionless, neutral starting point, both agree that Hegel aims to give us knowledge of thing as they are in themselves, and both present the dialectic as simultaneously a derivation and a deduction of the a priori features of thought. Where we differ is in the emphasis I have placed on thought as an entity in its own right. I do not see the dialectic as the discussion of how humans must think or as a derivation of necessary concepts analogous to the Kantian categories. On my view, such a reading would leave Hegel stranded within the sphere of representations in a way that he consistently tries to deny and avoid.

This issue comes out in how Houlgate tries to account for Hegel's repeated claims that Thought is not merely representational, but gets at what things are in themselves. For Houlgate,

what Hegel is getting at is that human thinking has an immediate connection with objects as they are in themselves. Houlgate writes, for example, that "In Hegel's view, perception or sensuous intuition discerns colors and sounds in space and time, and thought determines those spatio-temporal qualities actually to be there."[377] It would seem then that on this reading, Hegel's version of thought is a kind of necessary structuring of how we think, but a structuring that also corresponds appropriately to what things are in themselves.

The crucial question at this point is *why* this corresponding occurs. On what basis can Hegel claim, as he clearly wants to, that the determinations of thought are also the determinations of objects themselves? Houlgate's reading seems to present two primary answers. According to the first, Houlgate's Hegel charges Kant with dogmatically insisting that the human mind is dependent upon sensations, and as a result, that it can only know what is given to it through experience.[378] Kant's denial that we can know the world as it is in itself rests on this purportedly dogmatic assertion, which Hegel would overturn. Now, setting aside the issue of whether Kant's claim here really is a matter of mere dogmatism, Hegel's argument against it must run deeper than the mere charge of dogmatism. After all, it is just as much a mere dogmatic assertion to claim the opposite. Hegel's argument against Kant, on this reading, would fall into simply a pair of mutually opposed assumptions, with Kant assuming that things in themselves do not correspond to our modes of thinking them, and Hegel assuming the opposite. This would not do justice to Hegel's texts or to his abilities as a philosopher; Hegel cannot simply replace the Kantian assumption with his own. Instead, we must look for a more compelling argument for an identity between our representations and things as they are in themselves.

[377] Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic*, 125.
[378] Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic*, 18.

The more interesting second argument Houlgate attributes to Hegel is that the very concept of a 'thing in itself' is a part of our conceptual framework. For Kant, the thing in itself is a real entity, a mind-independent ground of our representations. Hegel's argument against this is, as Houlgate writes, is "that the concept of the 'thing in itself' is the result of an act of abstraction by thought that remains mired in the perspective of ordinary consciousness insofar as it retains the idea that all thought relates to objects."[379] Here Houlgate is describing what we described as the 'finitude of consciousness' above: the idea that all consciousness (and hence all thought, since for Houlgate thought is something involving consciousness) is essentially related to objects. For him and for me, Hegel attacks Kant for taking thought as limited by this relation to something essentially external to it. The thing in itself should not be seen as a boundary on thought; instead, the idea of a thing in itself is just one of the many conceptual tools we use, and is thus *internal* to thought. Kant's mistake was to take the concept at face value, thus assuming a certain ontological picture of minds in relation to external objects. Once we set this aside, we can see that how we think of things must correspond to how they are in themselves, since that latter concept is itself a part of how we think of them.

There is much truth in this view, and I myself have insisted that Kant's ontological assumption is a major sticking point between the two philosophers. But Houlgate's reading of Hegel makes a crucial mistake. Despite these insights, Houlgate nonetheless continues to see Hegel's conception of thought as essentially a matter of conscious representations.[380] As a result, he reads Hegel as presenting a category theory, an analysis of how we as humans beings must conceive of the world. For him, although there is a deep mirroring between thought and things

[379] Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic*, 134.
[380] "Thought is the direct awareness of such intelligible being." Houlgate*, The Opening of Hegel's Logic*, 117.

in themselves, they remain distinct. This is a mistake for three reasons, which I present in the remainder of this section.

First, if Hegel remains restricted to providing a category theory, then his claim that the thing in itself is a mere category cannot do any real damage to the Kantian position. Understood this way, Hegel is arguing that Kant's concept of the thing in itself is itself based on our mental categories. Accordingly, Kant cannot know that there are such things in themselves, and so cannot use them to restrict our knowledge of the world. But if in his study of thought Hegel is himself engaged, as Houlgate argues, in a study of how we as human subjects must think, then the question of whether there are things in themselves outside this thinking remains undecided. Hegel cannot claim a real connection to such things in themselves; all he has shown is that when we think of them, we do not get outside the boundary of our thinking. This shows that the issue of connection to things in themselves is beyond resolution, but it does not show that there positively is such a connection. Hegel remains within the sphere of the subject, even if he can argue that idea of something external to that sphere is itself only part of that same subjective sphere.

Second, if we truly separate thought from finitude, from a need for a relation to objects, then it no longer makes sense to think of it as a mental phenomenon. The essential feature of the mental is its representational quality, its relation to something external to it. If we separate thought from this as Houlgate wants to argue Hegel does, then thought becomes the Thought we have been discussing above: the non-mental, non-physical, neutral, and presuppositionless starting point of Hegel's philosophy. At that point, we should no longer read Hegel as providing rules for how experience or conscious thought operates, but for how this neutral entity is structured. Houlgate does not reach this conclusion, but it is entailed by the arguments he (and I) attribute to Hegel.

Last, there are a pair of important textual points to be made here. First, consider the following passages: (1) "thought in so far as this thought is equally the fact as it is in itself;"[381] (2) "thoughts are not merely our thoughts but at the same time the in itself of things."[382] In these passages and throughout his texts, Hegel does not speak as if thought *corresponds* to things in themselves, but as if it *is* those things. Thought *is* the essence of things, it *is* things in themselves. Hegel uses the language of identity, not the language of correspondence. As second textual point, note that Hegel also claims, in the passages we have cited above and elsewhere, that Thought is to be understood as "the system of thought-determinations for which the opposition between subjective and the objective falls away."[383] For these passages, Houlgate could argue that the 'falling away' of that opposition is just a deep symmetry between thought and being. But Hegel says that it is *for the thought determinations, for Thought itself* that the opposition has fallen away. This would imply not that thought remains to one side of a duality, but that it is thought itself that should be understood as neutral. My reading takes this neutrality seriously in an attempt to do justice to these passages of Hegel. Houlgate's reading insists on reading thought as one side of the pair, as concerned with the realm of the mental, though nonetheless deeply connected to things as they are in themselves. I do not believe that reading to do full justice to the texts, nor to follow through on what separting thought from the opposition of consciousness should truly entail.

In sum, then, the unity of faculties readings suffers from maintaining a separation between thought and being, despite acknowledging a deep correspondence between them. Such a separation is not compatible with Hegel's theoretical aims nor with his texts as I read them. When we speak of presuppositionless thought, we should not think of this is a special kind of

[381] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.33.
[382] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 41, addition 2.
[383] Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, sect. 24, addition 1.

mental phenomenon, a special way we can approach the world. Thought, as Hegel takes it in the beginning of his philosophy, is a subject/object neutral entity whose inner instability generates the universal and necessary structure of the world.

6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have aimed to defend the claim that the primary modification made by Hegel to Kant's philosophy is the shift from the transcendental unity of apperception as a condition on representations to Thought as a unifying force acting in reality itself, and that this modification is what allows Hegel to address the issues he raises for the Kantian system. In arguing for this claim, I have pointed to Hegel's own explicit identification of Thought with the Kantian 'I,' including his direct claims to be taking that 'I' beyond the "finitude of consciousness" and making it into "infinite thought."[384] Also of importance are the numerous theoretical similarities between the two central concepts: their theoretical roles, the structure of dependence they set up, and the reflective element in each of them. Taken together, these point to a deep affinity between the concepts. Moreover, the apparent differences between the two are ultimately rooted in the difference in their ontological status. This difference is also how Hegel is able to respond to the problems he finds in Kant. Without the ontological shift I describe, Hegel would be open to the same charges of subjectivism that he brings against his predecessor. But with that shift made, Hegel is able to use the dialectic to derive the categories and explain the distinction between subjects and objects, and is able to set our knowledge of the world on a firm foundation. In sum them, reading Hegel as taking the Kantian transcendental unity of apperception and making it into a metaphysical principle, as opposed to a principle of

[384] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.47-48.

representations, is a reading that accounts for Hegel's explicit textual claims, his criticisms of his predecessors, and ultimately, for his solutions to the problems of philosophy as he sees them.

CONCLUSION

In concluding this dissertation, I will spare the reader a restatement of what I have probably repeated too often already - that Hegel transformed the transcendental unity of apperception by taking it from a condition on representations to a condition on reality as a whole. Instead, I want to take a moment to reflect on broader points concerning my approach to Hegel and Hegel's reception in modern-day metaphysics.

It is no secret that Hegel's writings are dense and obscure, nor is it any secret that he is often looked down upon by today's metaphysicians. It is often hard to see what exactly his claims are, much less his arguments for them, and when he asserts that thought is necessarily self-contradictory, it is easy to simply dismiss him as having gone too far down some bizarre conceptual rabbit-hole.[385] As I have noted above, when today's philosophers do come to Hegel looking for insights, they often aim to sanitize some of his unusual claims so as to make them more palatable for today's philosophical sensibilities.[386] This is how Hegel can come to be treated as purely a philosopher of the mind, for example.

Here I have tried to do justice to Hegel's genuinely unusual metaphysics (and thus to his texts) while simultaneously aiming to present his claims in a way that is if not attractive, at least not immediately repugnant to a philosopher of today. Approaching Hegel through Kant is part of this strategy; Kant is a respected figure whose ideas are at least commonly understood or discussed. Seeing Hegel through the lens of a criticism of Kant can thus provide a useful entryway to his philosophy, in addition to being of historical interest.

That said, however, I found myself struggling to present Hegel's ideas in a way that would seem plausible or even, at times, comprehensible. This difficulty arose especially in

[385] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 21.40
[386] This is not always the case, of course, but it is a common trend. Various adherents to the non-metaphysical readings I have mentioned previously would fall into this camp.

relation to the dialectic, where the discussion of Thought's self-contradiction and resultant transformation was quite difficult to put into language that did not seem simply false, or else so obscure as to be worth very little. At the same time, I myself could not shake the conviction that Hegel was getting at something quite profoundly *true*. In my experience, struggling with trying to express something that feels undeniably true yet, it seems, cannot be put into words without appearing ridiculous is a common struggle for philosophers, and I experienced it directly in relation to Hegel's dialectic.

Although I did my best, I am not sure that I entirely succeeding in presenting Hegel's dialectic in a way that is both metaphysically serious and palatable for the modern-day analytic mindset. But to some extent - and I do not say this merely to excuse my failings - this is a consequence of a deeper, more fundamental difference between the modes of reasoning accepted by Hegel and philosophers in the analytic tradition today. Hegel was not setting out to set up one metaphysical system among others. Rather, his metaphysics is at the same time a logic, which means it is meant to model not simply how the world is but how thought about the world works as well.[387] This means that, for Hegel, how one argues for claims, how one reasons toward conclusions, all of these are modeled by the dialectic.

We can see this in our everyday lives - when people encounter contradictions in their thinking, they do not simply sit down and stop, nor do they derive all sorts of fanciful nonsense, as one might if one were operating with a propositional calculus, as traditionally conceived.[388] Instead, people use these contradictions to revise beliefs, introduce new distinctions, redefine their concepts, and move forward with their theorizing and with their lives; in other words, contradiction is a productive, motivating force for thought. Hegel's dialectic models these

[387] See Bencivenga, *Theories of the Logos*.
[388] I have in mind here the fact that, according to many traditional logics, from a contradiction literally anything follows.

patterns of reasoning, as opposed to the propositional calculus modeled by the logical systems put forth by Frege and Russell at the outset of analytic philosophy.

What is more, both views of logic have yielded their own metaphysics. On the one hand we have the metaphysics of Thought I have presented as Hegel's, where a single entity complicates and redefines itself through contradiction until it comes to be the totality of the world as we know it. On the other hand there are the various systems of analytic metaphysics stretching as far back as Aristotle, where clearly demarcated categories hold static relations to one another in an ordered, structured, classification of the totality of the world's contents.[389]

Both of these views have their strengths and weaknesses. For me, the purpose here has not been to prove one perspective superior to another. Rather, in addition to the general historical interest of this study, part of the subtext has been my attempt to put these two modes of reasoning into a kind of dialogue. After all, the great joy and value of studying the history of ideas is in discovering different ways of thinking and placing them in contact with one another and with one's own world. In Hegel we find some of the most richly developed and radically different ways of thinking there is in the history of philosophy. If my work can contribute in some small way to helping others find their way into that way of thinking, I will count this project as a success.

[389] This is of course a very broad brush with which to paint 2500 years of metaphysics, and many metaphysicians will not be properly characterized by it; it is meant to describe an overall ethos rather than any particular philosopher or school. Notable exceptions might include philosophers like Whitehead, Bergson, or Spinoza.

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