Chapter Six

Logic and Ontology

Hegel's Logic *as Ontology*

In the preceding chapters I have argued that Hegel's *Logic* provides a presuppositionless account of thought and its fundamental categories. The *Logic*'s task, on this view, is to determine, without taking anything for granted, what it is to think; it fulfills this task by "exhibit[ing] the realm of thought philosophically, that is, in its own immanent activity or what is the same, in its necessary development" (*SL* 31/1: 19). The *Logic* is thus Hegel's alternative to Kant's "Metaphysical Deduction" in the *Critique of Pure Reason*—the analysis through which Kant aims to discover the basic categories of thought prior to determining in the "Transcendental Deduction" whether or not they apply to the objects of experience.

At various points in the preceding chapters, however, I have indicated that Hegel's *Logic* provides an account of the basic structure of *being*, as well as of thought. Interpreted in this way, the *Logic* is not only a logic but also an ontology or metaphysics—Hegel's alternative to, say, Spinoza's *Ethics* (or at least part 1 thereof). In recent years it has become popular to deny that Hegel's *Logic* makes any metaphysical claims.[1] The purpose of this chapter is to defend the view that Hegel's *Logic* is a metaphysics or ontology and to explain precisely how Hegel's onto-logical science differs from ontology and metaphysics as Hegel believes they were undertaken before Kant.

Hegel states explicitly in both the *Logic* and the *Encyclopedia Logic* that his speculative logic is a metaphysics. In the preface to the first edition of the *Logic*, for example, he talks of "the logical science which constitutes metaphysics proper, or pure, speculative philosophy" (*SL* 27/1: 16).[2] In §24 of the *Encyclopedia Logic* he claims that "*logic* coincides with *metaphysics*, with the science of *things* grasped in *thoughts*" (*EL* 56/81), and in the introduction to the *Logic* he maintains that "the objective logic . . . takes the place . . . of former *metaphysics* which was intended to be the scientific construction of the world in terms of *thoughts* alone" (*SL* 63/1: 61). Hegel also emphasizes the metaphysical character of the *Logic* by asserting that its subject matter is the *logos*, "the rea-

1. See, for example, Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, p. 6.
2. Translation revised.

son of that which is": "it is least of all the logos which should be left outside the science of logic" (*SL* 39/1: 30).

Now it is true that according to the passage just cited from the introduction to the *Logic*, only the "Objective Logic" (which includes the doctrines of being and essence) "takes the place" of the former metaphysics and so by implication constitutes Hegel's ontology. André Doz argues, however, that the whole of the *Logic* is to be regarded as ontology, since all the concepts analyzed in it—including the concepts of "concept," "judgment," and "syllogism" examined in the "Subjective Logic" (the doctrine of the concept)—are "nothing but more developed forms or modes of being."[3] Doz's interpretation is confirmed, in my view, by passages from Hegel's own texts. In the doctrine of the concept, for example, Hegel explains that the "concept" (*Begriff*) analyzed in the *Logic* is to be regarded "not as the act of the self-conscious understanding, not as the *subjective understanding*, but as the concept in and for itself which constitutes a *stage of nature* as well as of *spirit*" (*SL* 586/2: 257)[4]; in the *Encyclopedia Logic* he states that the "syllogistic form is a universal form of all things (*aller Dinge*)" (*EL* 59/84 [§24 Add. 2]). These passages clearly indicate that the words "concept," "judgment," and "syllogism" name structures in nature, and so in *being itself*, not just forms of human understanding and reason. They are, therefore, ontological as well as logical structures—structures of being, as well as categories of thought.

Hegel does not claim that ontological structures are known in the *Logic* precisely as they occur in nature. The *Logic* conceives such structures in abstraction from space, time, and matter first of all, and the *Philosophy of Nature* then examines how such structures manifest themselves in space and time. Hegel's claim that conceptual and syllogistic form is to be found in nature (or in "all things") should not therefore be taken to blur the distinction between the *Logic* and the *Philosophy of Nature*. What that claim does make clear, however, is that for Hegel "concept" and "syllogism" are forms inhering in what there is and are not just forms in terms of which we think; they are ontological and not merely logical structures.

As the *Logic* takes us from the categories of being (such as being, becoming, something, finitude) through the determinations of essence (such as difference, form, content, substance, causality) to the determinations of concept (such as concept, judgment, syllogism, Idea), it does not suddenly shift from being an account of what there is to being an account of our own mental activity but remains throughout an account of the basic categories of thought *and* of the basic forms of being. It is from beginning to end an ontological logic that renders ex-

3. A. Doz, *La logique de Hegel et les problèmes traditionnels de l'ontologie* (Paris: Vrin, 1987), pp. 22–3, my translation. See also O. Pöggeler, ed. *Hegel* (Freiburg/München: Verlag Karl Alber, 1977), p. 78.

4. Translation revised.

plicit what is implicit in the indeterminate *thought* of being and in *being* itself. Indeed, the *Logic* presupposes from the start that the structure of thought—of our own *certainty* of being—is identical with the structure of being itself. We will examine later whether a philosophy that prides itself on being presuppositionless is entitled to make this Platonic or Spinozan assumption (especially after Kant's critical turn). Let us first confirm that Hegel does indeed argue for the identity of thought and being and consider how such an identity is—and is not—to be understood.

The Identity of Thought and Being

The identity of thought and being is proclaimed at various points by Hegel. In the introduction to the *Logic*, he declares that the *Logic* presupposes "liberation from the opposition of consciousness" (between subject and object) and that this liberation commits the speculative logician to the view that "the absolute truth of being is the known concept [*Begriff*] and the concept as such is the absolute truth of being" (*SL* 49/1: 43). Later in the text, Hegel claims that in the *Logic* "being is known to be the pure concept in its own self, and the pure concept to be the true being" (*SL* 60/1: 57; see also *SL* 51/1: 45).

This does *not* mean that being is simply an idea in the mind of God or of human beings. Hegel is not a quasi-Berkeleyan subjective idealist who denies the reality of the world around us and believes it to exist only for or in finite or infinite consciousness. For Hegel, being and all that it entails exists in its own right without having to be thought or "represented" by a conscious mind.[5] Hegel does not take the view, either, that beings have independent existence but are all endowed with a consciousness of their own. The identity of thought and being does not mean that all things, including stones and chairs, are thinking, imagining beings. Spinoza endorses a diluted version of this position, but Hegel patently does not.[6]

So what does it mean to say that thought and being are "identical"? It means neither that beings exist only for conscious thought nor that they are all capable of conscious thought themselves but that they exhibit a logical *form* or structure that is intelligible to thought and is the same as the structure of our basic categories. Indeed, it means that being *is* in itself intelligible logical form and that thought is the direct awareness of such intelligible being. Being is immediacy, or sheer "that-ness," prior to consciousness or "spirit." But immanent in such immediacy are various ways or modes or forms of being—being determinate, being something, being finite, being infinite—that have a definite logical struc-

5. See Hegel, *EPN* 7/16 (§246 Add.): "natural objects do not think, and are not presentations (*Vorstellungen*) or thoughts," and J. N. Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-Examination* (1958) (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 22.

6. *A Spinoza Reader*, p. 124 (*Ethics* II P13 Schol.), and Hegel, *EL* 56/81 (§24 Add. 1). See also *EL* 144/192 (§88 Add.).

ture of their own (characterized, for example, by negation or self-relation). Hegel's claim is that the logical structure of, say, "something" constitutes what it is to *be* something. Anything we encounter in the world that is "something" thus necessarily exhibits that logical structure. This pen, for example—whatever other qualities it may have—*is* itself self-relating negation because self-relating negation is the logical structure of any "something." For Hegel, therefore, being is intelligible because the "pure concept" is "the innermost nature (*das Innerste*) of things" (*SL* 37/1: 27).[7]

To understand the nature of being, Hegel maintains, all we need to do is understand what is implied by the category of "being" because the structure of that category is identical to that of being itself. The nature of being can thus be determined *a priori* by examining the basic concepts of thought. This is not to deny that there are many contingent features of the world of nature and history that can only be discovered *a posteriori* by empirical experience. Hegel's most famous example of such contingency is the fact that there are—or apparently were in Hegel's day—over sixty species of parrot (*SL* 682/2: 375). Thought cannot derive this fact from the nature of being but must discover it through observation and reflection on what we observe. Thought can, however, demonstrate a priori from the nature of being that there must be contingencies and why. Furthermore, thought can determine a priori the logical structure of contingency in general and its relation to necessity. The fact that all contingent things are subject to change and eventual destruction can be known a priori, therefore, even though pure thought cannot predict precisely how any given thing will change or when it will be destroyed. Indeed, Hegel never claims that the exact course of the world can be predicted by pure thought: "the future is not absolute, and it remains exposed to contingency."[8] What Hegel claims is that, whatever contingencies await us in the future, pure thought can determine with absolute certainty what it is to be "something," to be "finite," to be "quantitative," to have "form" and "content," to exercise "causality," and so on. Pure thought is thus able to set certain limits on the range of possible future contingencies because it knows that, whatever happens, nothing can be "something" or be "finite"—or indeed *be* at all—without exhibiting the corresponding logical structure. Pure thought, therefore, can predict what will happen insofar as that is governed by the logical structure of "something" or "finitude," but it is not in a position to foresee everything that will happen and in that sense does not lay claim to a "total" vision of things.[9]

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7. Translation revised. In the doctrine of the concept Hegel describes the *Logic* as the "science of the *absolute form*" (*Wissenschaft der absoluten Form*) (*SL* 592/2: 265).

8. Hegel, *PR* 155/241 (§127 Add.). See Houlgate, "Necessity and Contingency in Hegel's *Science of Logic*," p. 44.

9. On Hegel's view of the "limits" of philosophy, see Houlgate, "Necessity and Contingency in Hegel's *Science of Logic*," p. 42.

The task of the *Logic* is not to predict all the specific contingent changes that will happen to being and to beings but to disclose and understand the general ways or forms of being (such as being something or being finite) that are logically entailed by, and so inherent in, being as such. It is to discover through pure thought all that being *logically* proves to be. The presupposition behind the *Logic* is the same as that associated by Hegel with pre-Kantian metaphysics: namely, that "thinking in its immanent determinations and the true nature of things form one and the same content" (*SL* 45/1: 38; see *EL* 66/94 [§28]). This presupposition is strikingly at odds with Kant's conviction that understanding is incapable of disclosing the character of things as they may be in themselves and is restricted to determining objects as they appear to us in the pure, subjective forms of intuition, space, and time (*CPR* 361/302–3 [B308–9]). Even though Hegel's *Logic* is written in the wake of Kant's critical turn, therefore, it remains a metaphysical or ontological text. Yet the *Logic* presents a new, modern metaphysics that departs in certain significant ways from pre-Kantian metaphysics as Hegel conceives it. Indeed, the metaphysics contained in the *Logic* is the direct result of Hegel's own *critique* of pre-Kantian metaphysics—a critique prompted by Kant's critical turn or at least by what Hegel takes to be the implications of that critical turn.[10]

As we have seen, Hegel endorses the metaphysical conviction that pure thought can determine by itself the inner nature of things. He is critical, however, of two further assumptions made by pre-Kantian metaphysicians. The first such assumption is that the objects addressed by metaphysics—the soul, the world, God—are given entities, or "*completed given subjects*" (*fertige gegebene Subjekte*) standing, as it were, "over there," quite separate from the mind "over here" that knows them (*EL* 68/97 [§30]).[11] Pre-Kantian metaphysics thus draws a sharp line between the *truth* (or object) that is known and the *certainty* enjoyed by the knowing mind. Another way to put the point is to say that pre-Kantian metaphysics assumes from the start that its objects are indeed *objects*—distinct, determinate entities that stand over against us—and that the task of the metaphysician is to gain access to and to tell us *about* such objects. It presupposes that the mind stands in *relation* to its objects but that the "space" between thought and things can be bridged by pure thought itself.

The second assumption made by pre-Kantian metaphysics, according to Hegel, is that thought tells us about things in the world by attributing properties or "predicates" to them in *judgments*.

> This metaphysics presupposed that cognition of the Absolute could come about through the *attaching of predicates to it*. . . . *Being there* (*Dasein*), for instance, is a predicate of this kind like in the proposition

10. See chapter 1, above, pp. 25–7. On Hegel's critique of pre-Kantian metaphysics, see also Houlgate, *Hegel, Nietzsche, and the Criticism of Metaphysics*, pp. 96–112.

11. Translation revised.

> "God is there"; or *finitude* and *infinity*, in the question whether the world is finite or infinite; or *simple* and *composite*, in the proposition, "The soul is *simple*" (*EL* 66/94 [§28]).

Truth was thus conceived to lie in the correspondence between our judgments (and their constituent concepts) and what there is—a correspondence that had to be verified by pure reason alone.[12]

In determining whether its judgments were true, Hegel maintains, pre-Kantian metaphysics took for granted that reason had to abide by the laws of formal logic and syllogistic reasoning. It also presupposed that the concepts with which it operated were mutually exclusive—that the soul was either simple or composite, and the universe either finite or infinite. Metaphysics was thus a form of "dogmatism" governed by the understanding (*Verstand*), because "it had to assume that of *two opposed assertions* . . . one must be *true*, and the other *false*" (*EL* 69, 65/98, 93 [§§32, 27]).

In the *Encyclopedia Logic* Hegel explicitly identifies such pre-Kantian metaphysics with the philosophies of Christian Wolff and the Scholastics (*EL* 76, 299/106, 383 [§§36 Add., 231]). According to the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (delivered in the 1820s), Descartes, Leibniz, and Spinoza also fall within the "period of metaphysics."[13] It would be hard to claim, however, that these philosophers are all completely "metaphysical" in Hegel's sense: Scholastics often denied that God could be adequately understood by human beings, and it is not obvious that Spinoza conceived of substance as a "completed, given subject" separate from human thought since he thought of human beings as modes *of* substance itself. But none of these philosophers—with the possible

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12. As we saw in chapter 1, Hegel argues that Kant retains this idea that thought is above all the activity of judgment, even though he denies that we can come to know the true nature of things through our judgments. In this sense, for Hegel, there is a continuity between pre-Kantian thought and Kant's own critical philosophy. Kant insists that human understanding must be the activity of judgment because—unlike divine understanding—it is not intuitive but discursive; that is to say, it has to be *given* something to think about. Since human understanding is not intuitive, human intuition, for Kant, cannot be intellectual but must be *sensuous*; that is to say, it must arise through our being affected by things. Kant's conclusion is that human judgment can only be given something to think about through sensation. Note that Hegel's pre-Kantian metaphysicians do not share Kant's view that the activity of judgment is dependent on sensuous intuition. They believe that the objects of metaphysics—the soul, the cosmos, and God—can be brought before the mind, or "represented," by reason itself (see *EL* 68/97 [§30]). They thus appear to believe that human beings are capable both of judgment *and* of a form of "intellectual intuition" because they take their judgments to be about objects that are (somehow) given to us by the *intellect*. For Kant, by contrast, human understanding is the discursive activity of judgment to the exclusion of any intellectual intuition (see chapter 1, above, pp. 16–18).

13. Hegel, *VGP* 3: 122–267.

exception of Wolff—is actually reduced to being a metaphysician by Hegel. All Hegel claims is that Leibniz, Wolff, and others are to be considered metaphysicians to the extent that they aim to understand the true nature of objects through pure concepts (such as "substance" and "cause") and believe that their judgments tell us *about* a separate reality.[14]

Hegel challenges both of the presuppositions of pre-Kantian metaphysics mentioned above because he regards them as taken for granted uncritically; as we know, he believes that after Kant's critical turn the one thing we must avoid above all else is taking things for granted. Of course, Hegel may not assume himself that being is *not* made up of objects and that thought does *not* involve forming judgments about such objects, but he may, and does, object to the fact that (as he sees it) metaphysicians before Kant simply assumed from the outset that thought is essentially the activity of judgment. His complaint is that "there was no investigation of *whether* predicates of this kind are something true in and for themselves, nor of *whether* the form of the judgment could be the form of truth" (*EL* 66/94 [§28], my emphasis). In Hegel's view, the properly self-critical thing to do after Kant is not to reject outright but initially to suspend the idea that metaphysics is a *relation* of the knowing mind to *given objects* and that it tells us from a position, as it were, "over here" *about* things that are, as it were, "over there."

As we have seen, Hegel acknowledges that there *is* being; being is not just a figment of our imagination or a "construct" of thought. He insists, however, that we may not assume from the start that being is a separate realm of objectivity *to which* we stand in relation. Initially, all we may assume is the minimal idea that being is the sheer immediacy of which thought is immediately aware. Being may well—and, as we shall see in part 3, does—turn out to constitute a world of objects, but we should not *presuppose* that it does. We must wait to find out whether that is the case starting from the indeterminate thought of sheer immediacy. Hegelian metaphysics will thus not face the task of having to gain "access" to and form judgments "about" a realm of objectivity that is assumed from the beginning to be separate from us—a task notoriously fraught with epistemological difficulties—but will simply have to unfold whatever is implicit in the immediacy of which thought is aware—that is to say, whatever is implicit in the bare *thought* (or *certainty*) of such immediacy. Such metaphysics will accordingly take the form of *logic*: it will provide an account of being by examining the thought of being and the various categories that are inherent in it. In Hegel's ontological logic,

> what we are dealing with . . . is not a thinking *about* (*über*) something which exists independently as a base for our thinking and apart from it,

14. It is interesting to note that Hegel does not regard Plato and Aristotle as metaphysicians in this sense, but sees them as close in spirit to his own speculative philosophy; see *EL* 76/106 (§36 Add.).

> nor forms which are supposed to provide mere signs or distinguishing marks of truth; on the contrary, the necessary forms and self-determinations of thought are the content and the ultimate truth itself (*SL* 50/1: 44).

It is important to bear this in mind when considering Hegel's well-known claim in the *Encyclopedia Logic* that the categories analyzed in speculative logic can be regarded as "definitions of the Absolute" (*EL* 135/181 [§85]). This has been taken by some commentators as clear evidence that Hegel understood his *Logic* to tell us "about" a cosmic entity called the "Absolute" or "Absolute Spirit." Indeed, Frederick Beiser maintains that "one basic, straightforward and indisputable fact about Hegel's philosophy" is that "its aim is to know the absolute, the infinite or the unconditioned."[15]

It is true that Hegel argues in the doctrine of essence that being proves to be the Absolute or what there absolutely is.[16] But it is important to recognize that being is not conceived in this way by Hegel from the start. The Absolute is not the enduring subject (or object) of Hegelian discourse—it is not an infinite being or entity "about" which Hegelian metaphysics informs us throughout its course. It is rather what sheer immediate being as such eventually *turns out to be*. (Indeed, later in the *Logic*, such absolute being itself proves to be not just absolute being but self-determining reason, "concept," or "Idea.") Hegel concedes that, retrospectively, from the perspective of the end of the *Logic*, "it may indeed be said that every beginning must be made *with the absolute* (*dem Absoluten*), just as all advance is merely the exposition of it." He also points out, however, that "because the absolute is at first only *in itself* (*an sich*)[,] it is equally *not* the absolute nor the posited concept, and also not the Idea" but sheer immediate *being* (*SL* 829/2: 555). If we take this remark seriously and also recognize that Hegelian ontology arises from the critique of pre-Kantian metaphysics, we can see that Hegel's claim in the *Encyclopedia Logic* is actually misleading: speculative logic does not, and cannot, provide a series of "definitions of the Absolute" in any straightforward sense.

Hegelian ontology cannot provide such "definitions of the Absolute" because it does not start out by assuming that there is an Absolute (or substance or God or spirit) and see its task as that of providing an account of such a "thing" (and of having to justify its claim to direct access to that "thing"). Indeed, it does not start out from any determinate conception of what there is at all. It

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15. F. C. Beiser, "Hegel, A Non-Metaphysician? A Polemic Review of H. T. Engelhardt and Terry Pinkard, eds. *Hegel Reconsidered*," *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain* 32 (Autumn/Winter 1995): 3. A similar position is adopted by Charles Taylor, for whom Hegel's basic ontological thesis is "that the universe is posited by a Spirit whose essence is rational necessity"; see C. Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 538.

16. See Hegel, *SL* 530–40/2: 187–200.

starts out from the utterly indeterminate awareness or thought of being as such and sees its task as the onto-*logical* one of simply unfolding what is implicit in that bare thought itself. In Hegel's view, such a developmental onto-logic is required by Kant's critical turn because it follows directly from self-critically suspending the pre-Kantian assumption that being is a determinate *object* to which we relate and from adopting the minimal idea that being is, at least initially, merely the immediacy of which we are aware in thought.[17]

Similarities and Differences Between Kant and Hegel

Hegel's ontology is indebted to Kant in another sense because it is prefigured in Kant's transcendental logic. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant distinguishes transcendental logic from general logic in the following way. General logic sets out the rules of valid thinking in general—the rules (such as the law of noncontradiction) that all thought must observe if it is to be logical and formally valid at all. Transcendental logic, by contrast, sets out the rules governing the thought of objects (*Gegenstände*)—the rules we are to observe if what we are conscious of is to count as an *object* rather than a mere succession of subjective images or perceptions.[18] This latter logic stipulates, for example, that what we perceive can only be understood as an object if it is conceived of as a quantifiable unity, as a substance (or as an accident thereof), and as having a cause. In this way, such logic demonstrates that categories such as quantity, substance, and cause are the "transcendental" conditions of any consciousness or experience of objects (*CPR* 224/134 [B 126]). Consequently, Kant claims, we know *a priori* that any object we encounter in experience must have a definite magnitude and a cause even if we are unable to determine in every specific case precisely how big an object is or what caused it to be as it is.

Categories, Kant argues, are generated a priori by the spontaneous activity of our understanding and are not abstracted from our experience of things. Furthermore, we are justified in employing such categories not because they accurately "mirror" the true nature of things but because they stipulate what is to be understood by the term "object" and so define what is to count as an object for us. This is Kant's famous Copernican Revolution: to argue that our fundamental concepts do not have to be shown to conform or correspond to the objects we encounter because nothing can be encountered as an object in the first place unless it already conforms to our fundamental concepts (*CPR* 110/19–20 [B xvi]).

Accordingly, after Kant's revolution, if we are to undertake a philosophical study of the objective structure of things, we no longer need to try to gain "ac-

17. See also Doz, *La logique de Hegel et les problèmes traditionnels de l'ontologie*, p. 44.

18. Kant, *CPR* 195–6/98 (B 79–80). See also Hegel, *SL* 62/1: 59.

cess" from a position "over here" to things "over there" (and to explain how we are able to gain such access). All we need to do is study the basic categories of our own understanding and the rules that govern their use. This is because the objective structure of things—at least, of anything that can count as an object for us—is contained *in* our own understanding itself, specifically in such categories as quantity and cause. As Kant puts it,

> the proud name of an ontology, which presumes to offer synthetic *a priori* cognitions of things in general in a systematic doctrine (e.g., the principle of causality), must give way to the modest one of a mere analytic of the pure understanding. (*CPR* 358–9/296 [B 303])

Or as Hegel puts it, "the critical philosophy . . . turned metaphysics into logic," specifically, *transcendental* logic—the study of objects via the examination of the *categories* (and their conditions of use) that are required for any consciousness of objects (*SL* 51/1: 45).

As we have seen, Hegel follows Kant's lead by developing an ontological logic that also circumvents the need to gain "access" to things—in Hegel's case by rendering explicit what is implicit in the sheer immediacy of which thought is immediately aware. Kant's transcendental logic thus directly anticipates Hegel's ontological logic. It falls short of that onto-logic, however, for two reasons. First, it takes itself to be determining a priori the structure of *objects* rather than immediate being as such. Second, it only tells us what "objectivity" means (and must mean) *for us*, not how the world (or being) *itself* is to be understood. Kant argues that categories, such as quantity and causality, can only be used to conceive as a realm of objects what is given to us in sensuous intuition. Furthermore, he believes that the forms that characterize everything we intuit—space and time—are merely the *subjective* forms in which we intuit things, not forms that belong to things themselves (*CPR* 185/83–4 [B 59–60]). Categories can only be used, therefore, to interpret the *appearance* (*Erscheinung*) of things—what *we* intuit—as an ordered objective world; they do not grant us any insight into the fundamental nature of things in themselves or being itself (*CPR* 234, 356–65/162, 291–308 [A 111, B 300–15]). In Hegel's words, Kant thereby gave "the logical determinations . . . an essentially subjective significance" with the result that the critical philosophy remained burdened with "the residue of a thing-in-itself, an infinite obstacle, as a beyond" (*SL* 51/1: 45). Kant's groundbreaking transformation of metaphysics into logic thus does not earn Hegel's unequivocal endorsement, for it sacrifices the one feature of pre-Kantian metaphysics that Hegel wants to preserve: the conviction that thought can disclose the innermost nature of things—of being—as such.[19]

Hegel is profoundly influenced by Kant's conception of transcendental

19. On the close proximity, but also difference, between Kantian transcendental logic and Hegelian ontology, see Taylor, *Hegel*, pp. 226–7.

logic, but he dismisses the restrictions Kant places on the categories. For Hegel, "thoughts are not merely our thoughts, but at the same time the *In-itself* of things" (*EL* 83/116 [§41 Add. 2]). This is not to say that Hegel thinks we can after all reach a realm of being beyond our sensuous experience that Kant deems to be inaccessible. It is to say, rather, that Hegel rejects the idea that what is "in itself" transcends our experience. For Hegel, the "in-itself of things" is here, all around us; it is present *in* our experience and its true nature is disclosed *in* our thought. What is revealed through the logical study of our basic categories is thus the structure not just of objectivity *for us* but of *being itself*. Hegel's logic is not merely a transcendental logic, therefore, but an ontological logic that determines what it is *to be* by determining what it is to think.

For Hegel, pure thought is indeed the intellectual intuition of being. It is directly aware *that* there is being and it understands by itself what being is. This is why, at the beginning of the main text of the *Logic*, Hegel speaks of the category of nothing as "the same empty *intuition or thought* (*Anschauen oder Denken*) as pure being" (*SL* 82/1: 83 [195], my emphasis).[20] This is not to say that Hegel believes pure thought is able to intuit the immediate existence of *individual* things by itself without the aid of sensation. I can only determine whether, for example, there is a squirrel in my garden by looking and listening and reflecting on what I see and hear. Hegel insists that I am conscious through *thought* of the squirrel's actually *being there*, of its *immediacy*: I see certain colors and shapes and hear certain sounds, but I *understand* what I see and hear to be an existing object there before me.[21] Nevertheless, he also recognizes that, in order to determine that there is a squirrel rather than a cat scampering around on my lawn, I must perceive certain colors and sounds and understand what I actually *see* and *hear* to be an existing thing. Thought can thus only intuit the existence of individual things with the assistance of perception; it cannot establish by itself that specific things exist.

Hegel does not accept that space and time are merely subjective forms in which *we* perceive things rather than forms of what there is.[22] The fact that our consciousness of individual things is tied to sense perception does not mean, therefore, that we are conscious only of the way such things *appear* to us. 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. There is no further reason to deny that what we are conscious of thereby are things as they are in themselves. Hegel's claim is simply that thought cannot intuit the existence of individual things themselves without the aid of perception.

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20. See Hegel, *SL* 827-8/2: 553, and Doz, *La logique de Hegel et les problèmes traditionnels de l'ontologie*, p. 39.

21. Hegel, *EPM* 159, 224/206, 283 (§§418, 465).

22. Hegel, *EPM* 198/253 (§448 Add.).

Hegel insists, however, that thought can know through purely intellectual intuition that *there is being as such* and that being takes (and must take) the form of finitude, quantitative and causally determined being, self-determining reason, and ultimately, nature. In this sense, pure thought by itself can make certain general existence claims.[23] For Kant, by contrast, thought—at least, human thought—is irreducibly and exclusively discursive (as we saw in chapter 1). Thought is incapable of determining by itself that there *is* anything at all but can only tell us how something given in sensuous intuition is to be understood. It can tell us that what we see and hear is something *objective*—a quantifiable object that has a cause and produces an effect—and (in its empirical form) it can identify that object's empirical characteristics; but it cannot bring to mind by itself the *immediacy* of anything. Only sensuous intuition can do that. "Intuition," Kant writes, is "that through which [knowledge] relates immediately (*unmittelbar*) to [objects], and at which all thought as a means is directed." Intuition, however, takes place "only insofar as the object is given to us (*uns gegeben*); but this, in turn, is possible only if it affects the mind in a certain way" (*CPR* 155/63 [B 33]). Accordingly, all human intuition is sensuous intuition.

Kant thus distinguishes between our consciousness of the *immediacy* of a thing and our consciousness of the *objectivity* of that thing. The former is made possible by sensation and the pure forms of intuition (space and time), and the latter is made possible by understanding and its categories. As is well known, Kant believes that we are never conscious of the immediacy of a thing without judging it to be objective in some way (that is, to be a thing or an event): perceiving and judging always occur together. Intuitions without concepts are "blind" for Kant, just as thoughts without content are "empty" (*CPR* 193–4/94–

23. This is another respect in which my interpretation of Hegel differs from that of Klaus Hartmann. Hartmann accepts that Hegel's account of the basic categories of thought is also "an account of the determinations of the real, or of what is" ("Hegel: A Non-Metaphysical View," p. 103). For Hartmann, the *Logic* is thus an ontology: categories are "stances of grasped being, or of being grasped in various degrees of coincidence with thought" and accordingly entail "an identity of being and thought" (pp. 106, 108). Hartmann denies, however, that Hegel's ontological logic can provide any independent philosophical demonstration that anything must exist. Hegelian ontology accepts the findings of ordinary, nonphilosophical consciousness that there is a world and that there is being, but it is "devoid of existence claims" of its own (p. 110). Hegel's *Logic* thus does not itself prove that there is and must be a world of finite beings or anything at all. It simply describes the logical, categorial structure of the world that is *given* to us through ordinary experience; it tells us *what* that world is in truth (p. 114). The fact that Hegel's *Logic* does not prove by itself *that* anything exists but merely renders *what* is given intelligible explains why Hartmann considers Hegel's *Logic* to be a *nonmetaphysical* ontology (pp. 117–18). For other differences between my reading of Hegel and Hartmann's, see chapters 3 and 4, above, pp. 55, 99–100.

5 [B 74–5]).[24] It is important, however, to note the radically different contributions that sensuous intuition and understanding make to our experience of things. It is especially important to recognize that understanding does not itself entail any consciousness of the *immediacy* or actual presence of things. It simply judges that what is immediately before our eyes is an *object* of a certain kind.[25] The categorial structure conceived spontaneously by thought is thus not known by thought itself to be the structure of anything that is actual and immediate but is understood merely to be the structure of *possible* objects—objects that can only be known through sensuous intuition actually to exist.

This, I believe, is a fundamental difference between Kant and Hegel. For Kant, as he explains in the *Critique of Judgment*, "concepts . . . deal with the mere possibility of an object," whereas "sensible intuitions . . . give us something actual, yet without allowing us to cognize it as an object."[26] Concepts, in other words, tell us what it is or *would be* to be something: pure concepts or categories stipulate what it would be to be an object in general; schemata lay down what it would be to be a spatio-temporal object in general; and empirical concepts tell us what it would be to be a determinate thing, such as a squirrel or a cat. Intuition, on the other hand, constitutes direct awareness of the immediacy of the thing. Entertaining the mere concept of something—be it of an empirical object, an object in general, or indeed a "thing in itself"—can thus never assure us *that* such a thing exists. It can only tell us *what* that thing would be if it were to exist. We can only know that something we have conceived actually exists when we are given intuitions that can be subsumed under, and so be rendered intelligible by, our concepts.

In Kant's view, as we have seen, such intuitions can be given to human beings only by means of sensation. Furthermore, they presuppose the subjective forms of human sensibility, space, and time. We can thus only confirm the existence of objects—of quantifiable substances causally related to one another—in the realm of sensuous experience. That is to say, pure understanding, which by itself is restricted to conceiving of possibility, can only know a priori the structure of *actual* objects in the sphere of empirical appearance. By contrast, the idea that things have an existence "in themselves" apart from the way they ap-

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24. See also Kant, *CPR* 211/117 (B 105). This is not to deny that we can form conceptions of the categories in abstraction from intuitions. But, for Kant, categories only yield knowledge of objects in conjunction with sensuous intuitions.

25. For Kant, the copulative "is" in judgments (which are formed by the understanding) thus confers objectivity, not immediacy, on to our intuitions (see *CPR* 251–2/152–5 [B 141–2]). Later in the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant notes that the copula also "posits" the existence of a thing (or "posits" certain qualities as being in a thing) (*CPR* 567/572 [B 626]). It remains the case, however, that the thing we posit as existing cannot be known to exist unless it is capable of being intuited sensuously.

26. I. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. W. S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), pp. 284–5 (§76).

pear to us must remain a purely logical possibility—albeit one that we *must* entertain—that can never be definitively confirmed or disproven. The concept of the "thing in itself" is thus considered by Kant to be necessarily "problematic" (*CPR* 362/304 [B 310]).

For the metaphysician Hegel, on the other hand, thought is not primarily the conceiving of possible objectivity but is above all the direct awareness of immediate *being*—the intuitive understanding *that* there is being and of what being is. The forms of being set out in the *Logic* are thus not just forms of possible being, but forms that actually inhere in being itself—forms that being must and does take on: being finite, being quantitative, being rational, and so on. As far as these general ways of being are concerned, Kant's judgment is therefore correct: "if our understanding were intuitive, it would have no objects except actual [ones]."[27] *Pace* Kant, however, this does not mean that an intuitive intellect can never entertain possibilities. It means, rather, that genuine possibilities must be rooted in actuality itself; they must be *actual* rather than merely formal, "logical" possibilities.[28]

As we have seen, Hegel does not argue that an intuitive understanding by itself can intuit the existence of individual things. For Hegel, as for Kant, the existence of individual things can only be established in conjunction with sense perception. There are certainly differences in the ways the two thinkers explain our consciousness of individual things. For Kant, we are conscious through sensuous intuition that something is there, and thought merely identifies what it is; for Hegel, by contrast, thought both identifies what we are perceiving *and* understands it to *be there*. In Hegel's view, thought thus confers both objectivity and immediacy on to what we perceive. (In the *Logic*, as we shall see, Hegel shows that the logical categories constitutive of being an *object*, such as "something" and "finitude," are actually implicit in the thought of immediate being itself.) Both Kant and Hegel acknowledge, however, that understanding and sensation must work together if we are to be conscious of the existence of any particular thing. Furthermore, both acknowledge that it is possible to misidentify what one perceives and so to assert that something exists when it does not. The two philosophers thus end up giving very similar accounts of our knowledge of individual things.

Where they differ is in their understanding of what pure thought by itself can know of being as such. For Kant, pure thought can know nothing of being as such, but can only conceive of what is possible. For Hegel, by contrast, pure thought can intuit the true nature of being itself. Indeed, provided that the logical derivation of the pure categories in speculative logic properly unfolds the immanent implications of the concept of being, such logic cannot fail to disclose

27. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, p. 284 (§76).

28. See Houlgate, "Necessity and Contingency in Hegel's *Science of Logic*," pp. 40–5.

the nature of being because the nature of being is identical with the structure that being is *understood* to have.

Hegel's "Transcendental Deduction"

In the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant's argument justifying the claim that the categories of pure thought apply to objects of experience is called the Transcendental Deduction of the categories. Hegel's arguments in support of the claim that thought understands not just the objects of our experience but being itself can be regarded as forming his own Transcendental Deduction. I now want briefly to review that Hegelian "deduction" so that it is quite clear what justifies Hegel's neo-Spinozan or neo-Platonic confidence that thought can determine from within itself the true character of being. It should be noted, by the way, that Hegel's Transcendental Deduction is not undertaken within the main body of the *Logic* but is presupposed by it. This is made clear by Hegel's statement that the "unity" of thought and being constitutes from the start the "element" of the *Logic* itself—the subject matter that speculative logic is to determine (*SL* 60/1: 57).

There are two intimately related arguments at the heart of Hegel's Transcendental Deduction, both of which should now be familiar. The first is extraordinarily simple. After Kant's critical turn, Hegel maintains, the logician is no longer justified in taking for granted any rules, laws, or concepts of thought (*SL* 43/1: 35). Indeed, the logician cannot take for granted anything at all about thought except thought's own simple being. In the science of logic, therefore, we may begin from nothing more determinate than the sheer being of thought itself—thought *as* sheer being.

> The beginning must be an *absolute* . . . beginning; and so it *may not presuppose anything*. . . .Consequently, it must be purely and simply *an* immediacy, or rather merely *immediacy* itself. . . . The beginning therefore is *pure being*. (*SL* 70/1: 69 [175])

For Hegel, then, thought must be minimally the thought of being—not of objects, or nature, or even possibility—because *being* is all that is left once thought has self-critically suspended all its presuppositions about itself. This argument obviously echoes Descartes's at the start of the second Meditation, according to which, by doubting everything it knows, including itself, thought discovers that its own being is irreducible.[29] The principal difference between Descartes and Hegel, of course, is that for Hegel the process of suspending all that thought has previously taken for granted about itself leaves us not with the recognition that *I* am but with the indeterminate thought of thought itself as sheer *being*.

29. See *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, 2: 17.

Hegel's second argument is equally simple but starts from the idea of "being" rather than from thought. If we are to be thoroughly self-critical, we cannot initially assume that being is anything beyond the being of which thought is minimally aware. We may not assume that being stands over against thought or eludes thought but must take being to be the sheer immediacy *of which* thought is minimally aware—because that is all that the self-critical suspension of our presuppositions about being and thought leaves us with. A thoroughly self-critical philosopher has no choice, therefore, but to equate being with what is thought and understood. Any other conception of being—in particular, one that regards being as possibly or necessarily transcending thought—is simply not warranted by the bare idea of being as the "sheer-immediacy-of-which-thought-is-minimally-aware" from which we must begin. At the beginning of logic, therefore, we do not yet know all that being will turn out to be, but we do know that the structure of being will be the structure of the thought of being. That is to say, we know that "the matter (*Sache*) can be for us nothing other than our concepts of it" (*SL* 36/1: 25).[30]

These two Hegelian arguments, sketched in the prefaces and introduction to the *Logic*, yield two principles that underlie the *Logic*. First, we are aware of being for no other reason than that we *think*; thought is thus the "condition" of our awareness of being. This is Hegel's quasi-Kantian principle. Second, thought is minimally the awareness or intuition of *being itself*. This is Hegel's quasi-Spinozan principle. These two principles dovetail in the single principle that the structure of being is the structure of the thought of being and cause Hegel to collapse ontology and logic into the new science of *ontological logic*.[31]

Hegel acknowledges that there is a difference between thought and being: being *is* what it is in its own right and is not there only *for* conscious thought. Moreover, as we learn in the course of the *Logic*, being does, after all, turn out to constitute a realm of objects ("over there" and all around us). Hegel insists, however, that we may not begin by assuming that being is quite separate from thought. We must begin from the idea that being and thought are in fact *inseparable* (*untrennbar*): for we must start from the idea that thought is initially nothing but the thought of sheer, immediate being, that being is initially nothing but the simple immediacy of which thought is minimally aware, and that both thought and being thus have the same categorial form. This is the "identity" or "unity" of thought and being that forms the "element" of Hegel's *Logic* (see *SL* 60/1: 57). We do not, therefore, need to gain "access" to being in order to understand its nature. All we need to do is to render explicit whatever is implicit in the *thought* of simple, immediate being. In this way, we will discover a priori

30. Translation revised.

31. See S. Houlgate, "Hegel and Fichte: Recognition, Otherness, and Absolute Knowing," *The Owl of Minerva* 26, 1 (Fall 1994): 16–17, and S. Houlgate, "Absolute Knowing Revisited," *The Owl of Minerva* 30, 1 (Fall 1998): 59.

from within thought itself all that being is and must be (including what it is to be "something" or to be an "object").

Note that Hegel's "Spinozan" (or "Platonic") conviction that thought is ontological results from his radically *self-critical* suspension of previous assumptions about thought and being, including Kant's assumption that thought is restricted to conceiving of what is merely possible rather than what is. Hegel does not turn his back on Kantian critique (as he understands it) and revert to Spinozan metaphysics as if Kant had never existed. Nor does he follow Hölderlin and Schelling and overcome the Kantian separation of thought from being by simply *presupposing* that the Spinozan unity of thought and being is the precondition of any such separation. (Hegel took this latter course in early texts, such as the *Differenzschrift*, but does not do so in mature works, such as the *Logic*.) Hegel is driven to his reformed Spinozism by what he takes to be Kant's own call to radical self-criticism: for that call leads him to regard Kant's assertion that pure thought is limited to thinking what is merely possible, rather than actual, as itself quite uncritical and unwarranted.

Hegel, Kant, and the "Thing in Itself"

Hegel's rejection of Kant's notorious concept of the "thing in itself" (*Ding an sich*) is also rooted to a large degree in his belief that Kant does not live up to what Hegel takes to be Kant's own demand for thorough self-criticism. In this section I shall consider the critique of Kant's concept provided by Hegel prior to the beginning of the science of logic itself. Within the main body of the *Logic* Hegel offers a further critique of Kant's concept, which we shall examine in chapter 18.

A "thing in itself," for Kant, is a thing as it might be apart from the way it appears to us and is experienced by us. Kant insists that we can never know whether there is actually anything to things beyond what we experience of them, but he maintains that we can and indeed must entertain the *thought* that there is. Hegel also talks of the "*In-itself* of things" (*EL* 83/116 [§41 Add. 2]), but he does not conceive of it in the same way as Kant. What Hegel has in mind is not some possible dimension of things beyond what we experience them to be but the actual nature of being that is disclosed in our experience and fully articulated by pure, speculative thought. Hegel does not, therefore, accept the idea that there is a dimension to things *beyond* our experience and argue against Kant that we can gain access to that dimension after all. He rejects the idea that what a thing—or being—is "in itself" transcends our experience and instead conceives of being "in itself" as the intelligible, ontological structure *of* the very things we experience. From the Hegelian point of view, Kant fails to develop a proper understanding of the concept of being *in itself* because he does not derive it from consideration of the bare concept of being. Rather, he clings dogmatically to the idea that the fundamental orientation of thought is toward *things* or *objects* and then forms the concept of a thing in itself, in abstraction from our experience of

it—a concept that (as we shall see in chapter 18 especially) ends up being too abstract to count as a concept of a possible *thing* at all.

As far as Hegel is concerned, Kant's legacy is thus an ambiguous one. On the positive side, Kant inaugurates the era of philosophical critique and sets Hegel on the path of radical self-criticism. This prompts Hegel to suspend the assumption of pre-Kantian metaphysics that thought's task is to form true judgments "about" objects and leads him to the view that metaphysics after Kant must take the form of ontological logic—the discovery of what being entails through simply rendering explicit what is implicit in the *thought* of being. Furthermore, Kant's own transcendental logic frees us from the idea that thought must somehow gain *access* from "over here" to objects "over there." Transcendental logic achieves this liberation by arguing that we can understand a priori the fundamental structure of things—albeit only of the objects of "appearance"—through examining the categories of our *own* understanding. Hegel turns Kantian transcendental logic into ontological logic by contending that an examination of our basic categories discloses not just the structure of things as they appear to us but the structure of being itself. Hegel reaches this conclusion, as we have seen, by directing philosophical criticism—under the inspiration of Kant himself—against Kant's claim that thought by itself is restricted to understanding merely *possible* objectivity rather than being as such. Kant thus moves Hegel to develop an original position that goes beyond both pre-Kantian metaphysics and Kant's own critical, transcendental philosophy.

On the other hand, Kant still adheres to the assumption, shared by pre-Kantian metaphysics and ordinary consciousness, that thought is fundamentally a *relation* of the knowing mind (and of judgment) to *things* and *objects*. Unlike metaphysics and ordinary consciousness, Kant believes that the understanding itself stipulates what is to count as an object of experience and so can know a priori the necessary structure of any such objects without needing to gain "access" to them (through pure thought or perception). Furthermore—again in contrast to metaphysics and ordinary consciousness—Kant denies that we can ever know the true nature of things in themselves. He never suspends the assumption, however, that thought is essentially concerned with objects and so never sees that thought is minimally the understanding not of objects but of *immediate being*. Accordingly, Kant never reaches the point from which Hegel thinks a thoroughly self-critical philosophy must begin. In Hegel's view, Kant's unquestioning insistence that thought is primarily directed toward objects is particularly evident in his conception of the "thing in itself."

Some of Hegel's comments, however, fail to make his precise reasons for criticizing Kant's conception of the "thing in itself" apparent. In the *Logic*, for example, Hegel twice refers to the concept of the "thing in itself" as a product of abstraction calling it a "product of . . . merely abstractive thought" and a "thought-thing" (*Gedankending*) (*SL* 62, 36/1: 60, 26). These remarks do not, in my view, adequately explain why Hegel disapproves of Kant's concept. Indeed,

a Kantian might argue that by themselves they do not actually constitute criticisms of Kant at all. After all, Kant himself acknowledges that the concept of the "thing in itself" is produced by the understanding when it *abstracts* from the sensuous conditions under which alone we can experience objects and considers what objects might be like in themselves apart from such conditions.

> The understanding (*Verstand*), when it calls an object in a relation mere phenomenon, simultaneously makes for itself, beyond this relation, another representation of an *object in itself* (*Gegenstand an sich selbst*) and hence also represents itself as being able to make *concepts* of such an object. (*CPR* 360/302 [B 306-7])

If Kant himself explicitly understands the concept of the "thing in itself" to be the product of abstraction, then why should Hegel's comment that this is the case be regarded as a criticism? It can only count as a criticism of Kant if thought is not supposed to produce such abstractions. But it is not immediately clear by Hegel's own criteria that self-critical thought should avoid acts of abstraction. Indeed, does Hegel not recommend that self-critical thought should suspend, and so *abstract from*, all that it takes for granted about itself, and does he not insist that the beginning of the *Logic* should be "an *abstract* beginning" (*SL* 70/1: 68 [175])? Could one not argue, therefore, that the concept of the "thing in itself" is actually the result of Kant's taking self-criticism seriously since it is generated when thought sets to one side, and so *abstracts* from, the traditional metaphysical assumption that the world is as we know it to be and considers that things might differ from the way we experience them?

If we turn to Hegel's discussion of Kant in the *Encyclopedia Logic*, however, we see more clearly why Hegel regards the concept of the "thing in itself" as a sign of Kant's failure to be thoroughly self-critical rather than an indication of his self-critical intent. In §44 of the *Encyclopedia Logic* Hegel repeats his charge that the concept of the "thing in itself" is the product of abstraction: it is, he says, "the *product* of thinking . . . that has gone to the extreme of pure abstraction." But then he adds a significant remark. The concept of the "thing in itself," he tells us, is the "product of the empty 'I' that makes its own empty self-*identity* into its *object* (*Gegenstand*)" (*EL* 87/121). What this remark makes clear is that, in Hegel's view, the concept of the "thing in itself" results from an act of abstraction that *preserves* the idea that all thought relates to objects and that does not in any way suspend or abstract from that conviction. The problem with Kant, therefore, is that he does not actually abstract enough from the way we ordinarily conceive of things.

The assumption that thought is fundamentally a relation to objects that stand over against us rather than an awareness of the immediacy of being as such is one that is made by pre-Kantian metaphysics and by ordinary consciousness. As we know, Kant shares the view that our ordinary, sensuous experience is fundamentally an experience of objects. According to Hegel, Kant retains the idea

that thought fundamentally relates to objects even when formulating the thought of things as they might be in themselves apart from the conditions under which they are ordinarily experienced by us. The fact that Kant regards things in themselves as quite beyond the reach of our knowledge—and, indeed, the fact that he regards their very existence as problematic, as no more than logically possible—makes no real difference to Hegel's point. The fact remains that Kant conceives of things in themselves as logically possible *objects* transcending our experience. Nor does it matter that Kant admits that "it . . . remains completely unknown whether such an object is to be encountered within or without us, whether it would be canceled out along with sensibility or whether it would remain even if we took sensibility away." For, wherever the "thing in itself" might be thought to reside—even if within the mind itself—it is conceived by Kant as a "transcendental *object*" (*transzendentales Objekt*) that is "the cause (*Ursache*) of appearance (thus not itself appearance)" and to that extent is conceived as quite distinct from the field of objects of which alone *we* can be aware.[32]

The core of Hegel's charge against Kant prior to the start of the science of logic itself is thus 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—even though it points to that which might possibly transcend ordinary experience.

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32. Kant's claim that "the concept of the noumenon is . . . not the concept of an object" does not contradict the argument of this paragraph. Kant's point in making this claim, as I understand it, is that in the absence of sensibility no object is *given* to us to which the concept of "noumenon" could apply. This claim is quite compatible with the further assertion made by Kant that the understanding "*thinks* of an object in itself . . . as a transcendental object," and that "if we want to call this object a noumenon . . . we are free to do so" (*CPR* 380–1/330 [B 343–5], my emphasis). I assume in this discussion that the concepts of the "thing in itself," "transcendental object," and (negative) "noumenon" are all essentially the same concept: the bare concept of "something" or of "something in general = X" (*etwas überhaupt = X*) (*CPR* 231/151 [A 104]). On the identity of the thing in itself and the noumenon, see *CPR* 362–4/304–8 (B 310, 312, 315); on the identity of the thing in itself and the transcendental object, see *CPR* 424/395 (A 366). I recognize, however, that these concepts often perform different functions in Kant's philosophy. The concepts of the "thing in itself" and (negative) "noumenon" serve primarily to "limit the pretension of sensibility" by allowing us to think of things as being different in themselves from the way in which they are known under the conditions of human sensibility (*CPR* 362/305 [B 311]). The concept of the "transcendental object," by contrast, often serves a more constructive role as a condition of experience itself. On the one hand, it is the thought of "something" embedded in every category that allows us to think of what we intuit as *something* real, *something* with size, or *something* that exercises causality (*CPR* 233, 347–8/159, 299 [A 109, 250]). On the other hand, it is the thought of "something" that allows us to understand our sensations to be the result of being affected by *something* beyond our experience (*CPR* 381/330 [B 344]). It has to be said, however, that Kant is not always consistent in his use of these concepts.

This is confirmed by a passage from the introduction to the *Logic* where Hegel first states explicitly that Kant's point of view "remains confined within consciousness and its opposition," and then immediately associates this fact with Kant's concept of the "thing in itself." "Besides the empirical element of feeling and intuition," Hegel writes, Kant's point of view "has something else left over which is not posited and determined by thinking self-consciousness, a *thing-in-itself*, something alien and external to thought" (*SL* 62/1: 59–60).[33] What concerns Hegel, therefore, is not just that the concept of the "thing in itself" is an *abstract* concept but that it is an abstract concept of a *thing* or *object* of consciousness. His objection is that "the *thing-in-itself* . . . expresses the *object* (*Gegenstand*), inasmuch as abstraction is made of all that it is *for consciousness*" (*EL* 87/120–1 [§44], my emphasis). From Hegel's point of view, Kant's philosophy falls short of what radical self-criticism demands, however critical it may purport to be, because it fails to suspend our *ordinary* assumption that we are essentially subjects standing over against, and in relation to, an objective world.

From Kant's point of view, of course, the concept of the "thing in itself" (or "negative noumenon") is itself a *critical* concept that "limits the pretension of sensibility" by keeping us mindful of the idea that the world should not simply be reduced to what we experience it to be (*CPR* 350/305 [B 311]). It reminds us that we should not overestimate the powers of natural science or metaphysics and believe that they can tell us about anything more than the structure of the world we experience. We should not pretend that they reveal the inner nature of things (including natural objects, human beings, and God) themselves.

To the Hegelian eye, however, Kant's apparently modest acceptance that things should not be thought to be reducible to the way we experience them is not modest at all. On the contrary, it rests on two dogmatic assertions. The first is that ordinary consciousness is right to insist that thought is fundamentally a relation to a realm of things or objects. The second is that the forms of space and time through which we ordinarily perceive things are the *a priori* forms of *our* intuiting alone and so—contrary to what ordinary consciousness believes—cannot characterize objects "in themselves," and that human thought can thus do no more than determine the character of objects as they *appear*. This second point is particularly important. Kant maintains that we must entertain the *thought*—the logical possibility—that the objects of experience have a dimension to them that exceeds our cognition and that therefore things in themselves exist, but he insists that we cannot *know* that they do. (Herein lies his apparent modesty.) At the same time, he confidently maintains that such things in themselves must be thought to differ radically from the way we perceive them because the forms of human intuition are a priori and so (according to Kant) can only be the subjective conditions of our experience, *not* the ontological condi-

33. See also Hegel, *EPM* 161/209 (§420).

tions of things. I remarked above that Kant's thought of the "thing in itself" could be said to make space for the idea that things "might differ" in themselves from the way we perceive them (p. 133). It is important to remember, however, that Kant's claim is not that things in themselves definitely exist yet *might differ* from the way we experience them. It is that things in themselves *might exist* yet, whether or not they do, *must be thought to differ* from the way we experience them. It is their existence that is problematic, not the idea that they differ from our experience of them. Indeed, this idea is put forward by Kant without the slightest hesitation.

From a Hegelian point of view, the claim that the *a priori* forms of our intuition definitely cannot belong to the world in itself as well (whether or not such a dimension to the world exists) is never properly justified by Kant and is indeed asserted quite dogmatically. The claim that human cognition is limited by virtue of being conditioned by a priori forms of intuition is thus also a dogmatic one.[34] For Hegel, indeed, Kant's insistence that human cognition is limited is an uncritical insistence that needs to be challenged. "People speak of the limits of human reason as a sign of humility (*Demut*)," Hegel notes in his 1817 lectures on logic, but "reason knows itself to be something finite according to the assertion (*Behauptung*) of those who say that man can know nothing of anything higher, of God." Consequently, he adds, "their humility becomes proud (*stolz*) because they assert this."[35]

The genuinely self-critical thing to do, according to Hegel, is to suspend all the assumptions about thought made by ordinary consciousness and Kantian "critical" philosophy and to start from scratch. This means giving up the ordinary assumption (shared by Kant and pre-Kantian metaphysics) that thought is fundamentally a relation to objects. It also means setting to one side Kant's distinctive further assertion that we must frame the thought of a hidden dimension to objects—what they are in themselves—that differs fundamentally from the way we experience them. The result of giving up such assumptions, as we have seen, is that thought is left with nothing to think to begin with except sheer indeterminate being. Suspending Kant's apparently critical but in fact dogmatic restrictions on thought thus leads us to the quasi-Spinozan idea that thought is minimally ontological: the thought not just of *possibility* but of *being*. Hegel is a reformed Spinozist, in other words, because he is more of a critical philosopher than Kant himself.

Hegel is sometimes thought to have put us back in touch with "things in themselves" after Kant had separated us from them. But to present Hegel's chal-

34. For Hegel's critique of Kant's subjectivization of space and time, see *EPM* 198/253 (§448 Add.). For Kant's dogmatic statement that space and time are a priori, subjective forms of intuition and *therefore* cannot be properties of things themselves, see *CPR* 176, 180, 185/70, 76, 83 (B 42, 49, 59).

35. Hegel, *VLM* 7, my translation.

lenge to Kant in this way is somewhat misleading. Hegel's response to Kant is not to say "yes, we can know things in themselves beyond experience, after all." It is to *give up* the very idea that there might be a realm of being "beyond" our "limited" experience—together with all other preconceptions about being—and to attend to whatever may be implicit in the simple thought of being as such.

Pippin's Hegel

Perhaps the most significant recent nonmetaphysical interpretation of Hegel's *Logic* is that offered by Robert Pippin in his book *Hegel's Idealism*. To end this chapter, I wish to indicate the principal ways in which his interpretation overlaps with and differs from mine.

For Pippin, Hegel does not attempt to prove the existence of a Divine Mind, nor does he aim to offer "a deduction of the content of the actual universe or of world history." Rather, he preserves—indeed, radicalizes—Kant's "transcendental break with the metaphysical tradition." What Hegel's *Logic* provides is a "full 'scientific' account by thought of the basic categorial distinctions involved in . . . self-understanding."[36] Yet Pippin does not see Hegel as a pure category theorist. Pippin's Hegel does not just "establish that there are peculiar sorts of relations among primitive and somehow basic concepts" and so give "an account by thought of itself." He seeks to determine the categories through which "a subject could take itself to be in relation to *objects*." Indeed, he proposes to disclose "the conceptual conditions required for there to be possibly determinate objects of cognition in the first place."[37] Pippin's Hegel is thus overtly committed to continuing the project of transcendental logic as Kant himself conceived it: namely, to establish not just the rules that govern thinking in general but the particular rules, or "categories," that are required if we are to understand something to be an *object*.

Pippin's Hegel differs from Kant, however, in two important ways. First, he does not rely on a table of judgments to work out which concepts are needed for cognition of objects but derives the categories by reflecting on the bare thought of "being" and determining its conceptual "conditions."[38] Second, he holds that these categories do not merely render intelligible our sensuous experience and leave a putative realm of things in themselves beyond our comprehension. For Hegel, the categories cannot be contrasted in this way with what there ultimately is or might be because they themselves contain "all that 'being' could intelligibly be." Whatever is judged to be determinate, actual, or possible—to be *anything* at all—can only be so judged with the help of the categories. The categories thus structure "any possible world that a self-conscious judger could

36. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, pp. 5, 39, 16, 169.
37. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, pp. 177, 171, 176, my emphasis.
38. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, pp. 39–40.

determine."[39] Nothing can be judged to lie "outside" or "beyond" their range of validity.

For Pippin's Hegel, therefore, metaphysics and ontology give way to transcendental logic: for being can be understood only by examining the *categories* through which it is necessarily conceived. Determining what it is to be, or to be an object, actually means establishing what it is to be an "apprehensible object" or an "object of thought."[40] Truth is reached, on this view, by understanding properly what it *means* to be an object of thought, not by trying to match our categories to something "out there."[41]

To the extent that Pippin interprets Hegel's *Logic* as an account of the basic categories of thought and as a revised transcendental logic, his reading overlaps with one side of the interpretation offered in this study. Pippin's interpretation of Hegel differs from mine, however, in three ways. First, Pippin takes it for granted that Hegel, like Kant, is seeking to establish the conceptual conditions under which there can be *objects* of thought. He believes that Hegel—like Kant—does away with the need to prove that thought corresponds to objects "out there" by showing that thought can determine from out of itself a priori what it means to be an object. He never doubts, however, that for Hegel thought is always oriented toward objects rather than sheer immediate being.

Second, Pippin takes a strikingly different view of the course of the *Logic* from the one I adopt in this study. As I see it, the task of the *Logic* requires us simply to unfold the initial indeterminate thought of being. In so doing, we see the thought of being turn into—or turn out to be—the thought of quality, quantity, reflexivity, causality, concept, judgment, syllogism, and self-determining reason, or Idea. The *Logic* thus shows an initial indeterminate thought mutate into further categories in terms of which we must think and must understand being.

For Pippin, by contrast, as we pass from the doctrine of being to the doctrines of essence and concept, we move on to consider not just further categories but also the fundamental *operations* or *activities* of self-conscious thought, which he contends are the preconditions of there being determinate objects of thought. The doctrine of being, according to Pippin, reveals the problems that arise when one tries to conceive of determinacy in terms of simple negation; namely, that things end up being conceived "in a spuriously infinite relation with all other things" as not this, not this, not this, and so on. The doctrine of essence then shows that the employment of categories of reflection, such as "essence," "form," and "content," allows us to identify things more successfully. It also shows that "there is and must be a kind of spontaneous, positing reflection necessary for the determinacy of any determinate being to be accounted for."

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39. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, pp. 98, 250.
40. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, pp. 227, 200.
41. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, p. 187.

(This, Pippin notes, is Hegel's idealism "in a nutshell.")[42] The doctrine of the concept demonstrates further that the activity of reflection itself presupposes a total conceptual scheme generated by the self-conscious spontaneity of thought. Pippin identifies such self-conscious spontaneous thought, together with the system of categories it produces, as the "Notion" or concept (*Begriff*). The "Notion" is thus not just a complex concept in terms of which we must think; it is the "necessary subjective activity"—the "process of 'thought's autonomous development'"—that is presupposed by all thought of determinacy.[43] Hegel's *Logic* thus tells a story that is strongly indebted to Kant: namely that cognition of objects presupposes subjective activity that is at least implicitly self-conscious or "apperceptive."[44]

The problem, to my mind, is that the text of Hegel's *Logic* simply does not support this aspect of Pippin's interpretation. In the doctrine of essence, Hegel states unequivocally that "what is under discussion here is neither reflection at the level of consciousness, nor the more specific reflection of the understanding, . . . but reflection generally (*Reflexion überhaupt*)" (*SL* 404/2: 30–1); in the doctrine of the concept, as was noted at the start of this chapter, Hegel writes that "here . . . the concept is to be regarded not as the act of the self-conscious understanding, not as the *subjective understanding*, but as the concept in and for itself" (*SL* 586/2: 257).[45] What is described in the *Logic* are thus the ontological structures of "reflexivity" and "concept," not the *operations* of self-conscious reflecting and conceiving.

Pippin justifies his interpretation by referring to two passages in which Hegel appears to equate the concept, or "Notion," with self-consciousness. Hegel comments at one point that "the concept, when it has developed into a *concrete existence* that is itself free, is none other than the *I* or pure self-consciousness" (*SL* 583/2: 253); he goes on to say that "the object . . . has its objectivity in the *concept* and this is the *unity of self-consciousness* into which it has been received" (*SL* 585/2: 255).[46] Pippin neglects to point out, however, that the second of these passages is not actually Hegel's own position but is Hegel's restatement in his own words of *Kant's* position. Nor does Pippin point out that the first passage equates self-consciousness with the concept only insofar as the concept has "developed into a concrete *existence* (*Existenz*) that is itself free." As we learn later in Hegel's system, the concept or reason exists as self-conscious reason in space, time, and history. In the *Logic*, however, the concept

42. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, pp. 197, 201, 216.

43. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, pp. 224–5, 232–4.

44. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, pp. 19–21, and R. Pippin, "Hegel's Idealism: Prospects," *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain* 19 (Spring/Summer 1989): 31.

45. Translation revised.

46. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, p. 232.

is understood not as existing in this concrete form but as a purely *logical* structure or category. The lesson of the *Logic* is thus not that the thought of determinate being presupposes self-conscious activity but that the concept of being turns into the concept of "concept" and that being itself thus turns out in truth to be reason. Provocative though Pippin's reading is, it is in my view based on a misreading of Hegel's *Logic*.

The third difference between Pippin's interpretation and mine is that Pippin does not consider the *Logic* to be an ontology in a strong sense. On my reading, the categories articulated in the *Logic*—including those of "reflexivity" and "concept"—are forms or ways of *being* as well as categories of thought. Speculative logic is accordingly not merely transcendental but ontological logic. For Pippin, by contrast, transcendental logic has altogether replaced ontology. We can no longer talk of being or reality *tout court* but can only talk of what it is to be an "object of a possibly self-conscious judgment."[47] Pippin's point is not that ontology is impossible because things are somehow unreachable in themselves. His claim is that ontology is no longer an intelligible undertaking because we now realize that being an object of *thought* is "all that 'being' could intelligibly be."[48] For this reason, after Kant (and Fichte) ontology must give way to transcendental logic.

To my mind, however, this overlooks an important fact about thought: thought opens up—and takes itself to open up—not just the space of "being as it is for thought" but the space of *being as such*—being that has its own immediacy and character. That is to say, thought is aware—and takes itself to be aware—not merely of what is *intelligible* but also of intelligible *being*. If we take transcendental logic seriously, therefore, and set out what thought must understand there to be, we inevitably find ourselves doing ontology, for we necessarily provide an account of the thought of *being tout court* and all that it entails.

Pippin is clearly not moved by this line of reasoning. Yet by protecting transcendental logic against what he regards as "confusion" with ontology, he reintroduces a distinction between being as it *is* and being as it is *thought*, which, on my reading, Hegel's revised "transcendental logic" was meant to set aside. This is not to say that Pippin revives the precise Kantian distinction between "appearance" and "things in themselves." He consistently maintains that it is unintelligible to hold that there is anything beyond what we understand and know there to be. What we understand there to be, as far as we are concerned, *is* what there is; the objects all around us, which we regard as determinate, exhaust what we mean by "being." Nevertheless, Pippin draws a distinction between the conditions needed for these objects to exist and be whatever they are and the conditions needed for them to be picked out and identified by thought *as* determinate

47. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, p. 250.
48. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, p. 98.

things.[49] The categories presented in the *Logic* serve only the latter function. They are concepts in terms of which we think and determinations that must characterize objects if they are to be determinate objects of thought; but they are *not* ontological forms, or ways of being of things themselves.

Pippin makes this eminently clear in the course of chastising Hegel for transgressing what Pippin regards as the proper limits of transcendental logic:

> Hegel . . . "forces his argument beyond what it can strictly yield," by confusing the requirement that any being be characterized "contrastively," in a way that will distinguish it from some other, with the claim that *beings* actually oppose and negate each other and, in their opposition and negation, are essentially related, could not be what they are outside such a relation. The latter claim, then, not only represents a conflation with the first, but is itself suspect, since it again confuses logical with ontological issues. It appears to claim that a thing's not being something else is a property of it, part of what make[s] it what it is.[50]

At numerous other points in his book Pippin warns Hegel and his commentators against "confusing the conditions of thought with the conditions of existence" or "carelessly confusing the conceptual with the real order." In the doctrine of being above all, Pippin complains, Hegel "slips frequently from a 'logical' to a 'material' mode" and makes "a claim . . . , on the supposed basis of logical necessity, about things."[51]

It is clear from these remarks that Pippin assigns a considerably more limited role to Hegelian logic than I do. In Pippin's view, such logic sets out "all that 'being' could *intelligibly* be," but it does not set out "all that 'being' could intelligibly *be*." It determines the categorial structure that things must be understood to have if they are to be picked out as intelligible, determinate objects of thought, but it does not show us the structure they must have in order to *be* at all. To my mind, however, Pippin misses the essential lesson of transcendental logic as Hegel conceives it: namely, that *being* can no longer be distinguished at all from what it is *understood* to be. The whole point of Hegel's radicalized "transcendental turn" is to do away with the very distinction between the structure of being or existence and the structure of intelligibility on which Pippin continues to insist. *Pace* Pippin, Hegel is not and cannot be guilty of "confusing" logical and ontological issues; on the contrary, he shows that they are intrinsically inseparable. This is because "being" is simply what we are aware of through thought and its categories, and an account of the basic categories of thought thus has to be an account of *being*. Pippin's claim that for Hegel there

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49. For the idea of "picking out" an object of thought, see Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, p. 204.

50. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, p. 188.

51. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, pp. 207, 193, 187.

should still be difference between the determinacy things must be thought to have and the determinacy they must exhibit as existing things suggests that his Hegel is actually closer to Kant than to Hegel himself (or at least to the Hegel presented in this study).

Pippin may be motivated to retain the distinction between logical and existential determinacy by his worry that if things really did "oppose and negate each other" they would be caught up "in a spuriously infinite relation with all other things."[52] It is not clear to me, however, that Pippin has good reason to be worried here. On my reading, Hegel does indeed argue that negative relations to other things form part of what it is to be something. He concludes from this (a) that things are intrinsically vulnerable to being changed and reconstituted by other things and (b) that they necessarily differ from and are limited by those other things. These conclusions do not, however, strike me as obviously problematic. What would be problematic is the claim that *we* cannot identify a thing at all until we have distinguished it from everything else—for such a task would clearly be impossible for us to fulfil. But Hegel is not making *that* claim.[53] He is simply arguing that each thing itself differs from and is open to being affected by other things and that such difference and determinability are *intrinsic* features of things. From a Hegelian point of view, Pippin's resistance to the idea that negative relations to other things are co-constitutive of the very being of things means that he must deny that things are intrinsically vulnerable to external determination. It also suggests that, like Kant, Pippin would prefer to keep being free of negation and contradiction and to understand it as pure positivity. But does this not mean that, like Kant, Pippin perhaps exhibits an "excessive tenderness for the world" (*SL* 237/1: 276)?

Another reason why Pippin continues to keep logical and ontological claims apart might be that he wants to avoid turning Hegel into a subjective idealist. If he were to admit that logical determinations, such as negation, do actually constitute the ontological or existential conditions of things, then he would be forced by his own reading of Hegel's text to regard existing things as also conditioned by the *activities* of self-conscious reflection and conceiving. This, however, would turn Hegel into an unacceptable neo-Berkeleyan. To claim by contrast that the activities of reflection and conceiving are merely the transcendental conditions of any object's being determinate for us is much less objectionable since it is an "idealist" claim that is quite compatible with the idea that objects exist independently of their being conceived.

On my reading of the *Logic*, there is no such risk of turning Hegel into a subjective idealist. This is, first, because the *Logic* is understood to be an account of the basic categories, not the self-conscious operations, of thought (there is thus no danger that we might be misled into thinking of being itself as condi-

52. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, pp. 197, 201.

53. See chapter 16, below, note 23 (p. 311).

tioned by self-consciousness) and, second, because the *Logic* shows being to have the same logical form or determinacy as the categories of thought but not actually to be constituted by *our* concepts and categories. Hegel's claim is far removed from that of Berkeley. It is the neo-Platonic or neo-Spinozan claim that being is what it is in its own right but is constituted by formal determinations, such as "negation" and self-relation," that are intelligible from within thought. What Pippin does not see is that Hegel is led to that neo-Spinozan position precisely by his radicalization of Kant's transcendental turn. In Hegel's eyes, being itself must be intelligible to thought because "being" is precisely what we *understand* there to be—the "space" that thought itself opens up to view and intuits.