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HEGEL'S SPECULATIVE METHOD

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I dedicate this dissertation to my parents.

Introduction

§1

Hegel's *Science of Logic* has a good claim to being one of the most difficult books in the history of philosophy. It is clear enough that the book is importantly related to the claim that the conditions on the possibility of thinking are the conditions on the possibility of being, that to be is to be thinkable. So he says that, as he understands it, “*logic coincides with metaphysics*” (EL §24), that in logic concept and being are “*inseparable*” (5.57/21.45). It is also clear, just by glancing at the table of contents, that the book articulates the different, fundamental forms of thinking and of being. And it is finally clear that Hegel's argument centrally rests upon the activity of pure thought, unaided by either the deliverances or the forms of sensibility – an activity that he frequently describes as involving some kind of progression or movement from form to form: that, as he puts it, logic “*present[s] the realm of thoughts philosophically, that is, in its own immanent activity or, what is the same, in its necessary development*” (5.19/21.10).¹

It is precisely because everything in the book depends upon the last claim that it is so difficult. For, though it is clearly a central element of the book, it is not clear what it can possibly mean. Two difficulties are paramount in making sense of it: first, how can pure thought alone make valid pronouncements about reality? Kant, at least, had argued that pure thought alone is empty. To explain how thought can make valid *a priori* judgments about the world, he argued, one must appeal to something other than thought (a third thing) which gives us access to the world (our forms of intuition) (cf. A9/B13). Because we also have *a priori* access to this, thought

¹ Some scholars take issue with this claim. Some argue that the *Logic* is in some way empirical, such that the deliverances of sensibility contribute to the progression that occurs in it: cf. Burbidge 2014. Others have argued that the forms of sensibility contribute to the progression: cf. Sedgwick 2012. Neither of these views is widely held, however, and they seem hard to square with Hegel's emphasis on logic as the “pure science” of “pure thought” (5.43-4/21.33-4). I provide more detailed arguments against the former view in chapter 2, and arguments against the latter in chapter 6.

hcan make valid *a priori* judgments about the world as it is given to us in intuition. It is only in relation to this third thing, our form of intuition, that we can connect thought to the world in an *a priori* synthesis.

Moreover, Hegel praises Kant for having discovered this notion of an *a priori* synthesis: “It belongs to the deepest and most correct insights which one finds in the critique of reason that the *unity*, which constitutes the *essence of the concept*,” that is, the essence of the subject matter of the *Logic*, “is cognized as the *original-synthetic* unity of *apperception*, as [the] unity of the “*I think*” or of self-consciousness” (6.254/12.18; cf. also 6.254-62/12.17-22). Given this high estimation of the critical enterprise, how can Hegel claim that pure thought alone can make synthetic judgments about the world? And, lacking any appeal to sensibility or any other third thing, why does he think that these judgments would be objectively valid?

The second difficulty concerns the very idea of a logical progression, “of the inner self-movement” of the “content” of the *Logic* (5.49/21.37). What could it mean for pure thought, the content of the *Logic*, to progress? We know what it is for something to progress or move in space and time, and it is not too difficult to see what it might mean to articulate the necessary conditions on that movement and to think of those necessary conditions as the conditions on the possibility of thinking and of being. Perhaps both of those claims are confused, but we are not immediately struck dumb by them. Hegel’s claim, on the other hand, pulls us up short: what can it possibly mean to say that the conditions on the possibility of thought and being themselves progress or develop? This seems to imply that those conditions develop in an atemporal but somehow time-like medium, a time before time or something like that, and the prospects for any such idea seem dim.

My aim in this dissertation is to address both of these difficulties by explaining what Hegel means by a synthesis grounded in pure thought alone, a synthesis which he argues takes the form of a logical progression. I aim to show that he thought such a synthesis was required to make sense of the fact that we can have knowledge of the world. I aim, finally, to defend Hegel: that is, to motivate his idea of a synthesis grounded in pure thought alone, one having the form of a logical progression, is required to make sense of our capacity for knowledge of the world.

My central thesis can be broken down into three parts, or themes that run throughout the dissertation as a whole. The first part is an interpretation and defense of Hegel's claim (in EL §§24-5) that the laws that govern our *subjective* capacity to think are none other than the laws that govern what it is for anything – any *object* – to be. That is, though thought is a capacity possessed by a particular kind of being, we can employ it to think truly about the world in general – I mean in the sort of humdrum sense that I can know what the fastest route to school is, why my flowers died this year, or what chemicals make up water. According to Hegel, we can make sense of the fact that we have this ordinary knowledge only if the laws that determine my thinking are *identical* with the laws that determine the world. If the laws that determined my thinking were not identical with the laws that determined the world, then (Hegel thinks) my subjective capacity would not determine me to judge in accordance with what is true. I would think that my flowers died because of locusts not because they did, but because thinkers like myself judge in that way. Thought is not like that – I judge that locusts killed my flowers because (I take it that) they did – and, if it were, ordinary knowledge would not be possible.²

² I defend the claim that I judge because I take my judgment to be true in chapter 1 and argue that this is only intelligible if I judge as I do because my judgment is true in chapter 2. Further, I will show that ordinary *thought* about the world would not be possible if laws that determine the capacity to think were not identical with the laws that determine the world: cf. chapter 2 §2 and chapter 5 §2.

That the laws that govern my thinking are identical with the laws that govern the world does not mean that what it is to be a thinking being is the same as what it is to be a being in general. Of course, there are non-thinking beings, and they will have a nature different from that of thinking beings.³ But the capacity to think, though possessed by one kind of being, must be determined by the same laws that determine the world in general. The *Logic* is an account of how that can be so; it is, also, an account of those laws themselves.⁴

I argue, further, that he thinks that the account of these laws has a distinctive form, different from the form of our ordinary thoughts about the world: Hegel calls this form of thought “speculative.” “Speculative” is one of Hegel’s terms for describing the kind of thoughts expressed in the *Logic*, which he also describes as a “speculative logic” (EL §82). A term that gets used for the same topic in the secondary literature is “dialectical,” as in “dialectical thinking” or the “dialectical method.” As Hegel uses these terms, the dialectical and the speculative are two different aspects (or “moments,” as he puts it) of the logical progression.⁵ I use the term “speculative” (as opposed to “dialectical”) to designate the logical progression in general for three reasons. First, the term lacks some of the baggage that the expression “dialectical” has, baggage which I fear may cloud a thorough investigation of the shape of the logical progression. Second, Hegel himself tends to use “speculative” rather than “dialectical” to

³ Hegel accounts for the nature of unthinking being in the *Encyclopedia of Nature* (EN) and of thinking being in the *Encyclopedia of Spirit* (EG). Further, as I interpret the *Logic*, it makes no existence claims until the very end of the book, when Hegel claims that the final result of the *Logic* is an account of why there is something rather than nothing (cf. 6.572-3/12.252-3). I will not attempt to discuss that claim in this dissertation.

⁴ This claim needs a justification: why is an account of how the laws can determine both thinking and the world also a list of those laws? You might have thought these two topics are separable – Hegel, evidently, does not. I address this question in chapter 3. The gist of the answer is that the distinction between an account of the nature common to all of the laws and an account of the particular laws themselves lapses for the form of cognition in the *Logic* (speculative cognition). So, an account of the nature common to all of the laws just is an account of the specific laws (and vice versa).

⁵ Hegel uses the term “dialectical” to designate “the moving soul of the scientific progress” (EL §81) – that is, the generation of a “contradiction” at a given point or “stage” in the *Logic* which necessitates the progression beyond that point. He uses the term “speculative” to pick out the next stage, in which “the unity of the determinations in their opposition” is grasped (EL §82).

describe the form of his *Logic*, because (I argue) the dialectical aspect (of contradiction) only makes sense in light of the speculative aspect (of resolution) that completes it.⁶

Speculative cognition, according to Hegel, is defined in terms of the logical progression: so, the laws that determine thought and the world are developed in a logical progression. On my interpretation, Hegel's entire account of speculative thinking – and of the logical progression that defines it – is grounded in his understanding of what is required to make sense of the fact that we can know the world.

The second part of my thesis concerns my interpretation of speculative cognition: I advocate what I call a transformative view of it. On the transformative view, the progression looks like this: we offer an account of one stage which reveals a requirement on making sense of that stage that cannot be met by the stage as we account for it. This requirement stands in *tension* with the stage. This is how I make sense of Hegel's claim that the stage "shows itself as the other of its self" (6.561/12.244-5). We progress to the second stage by thinking the unity of the first stage and the requirement with which it is in tension. This second stage is a way of being the first stage. But it is also essentially united with whatever stands in tension with the first stage. So it must be the first stage in a transformed way. Or, in short, it is the *transformation* of the first stage. This is how I explain Hegel's claim that the progress is a "going into itself" – the next stage is a form of the first stage – which is nevertheless a "going outside of itself" – it unites that stage with what is in tension with it, thereby transforming it (6.570/12.251). And, finally, this transformation *preserves the validity* of the first, untransformed stage. This is how I make sense of Hegel's claim that the progress consists in "grounding" the starting point (6.570/12.251).

⁶ He describes the Logic as "speculative philosophy" at PhG ¶37, and he makes similar remarks at PhG ¶56, 5.16/21.7, 5.114/21.95 and EL §§9A, 235. For my account of why the speculative aspect is needed to make sense of the dialectical aspect, cf. chapter 3 §6 and chapter 6 §4.

I will give a very brief example to clarify. The example is not meant to be convincing, but just to illustrate what I mean with my talk of tension, transformation, and preservation. In an account of judgment, we note that a judgment links a subject concept with a predicate concept in a determination of some subject matter (cf. EL §166A). We cannot relate just any two concepts in a judgment: the relation between the different concepts must be grounded. The judgment, however, does not itself provide this ground: to provide the ground we need a different way of linking the subject and the predicate, one which is not provided by judgment itself. This is the tension: a judgment must be grounded, but reflection on the concept of a judgment does not let us grasp how it can be. We progress by uniting the idea of a judgment with the idea of what grounds it: this unity is the idea of a syllogism. A syllogism connects the subject and the predicate of a conclusion through a middle term, and thereby grounds the concluding judgment. A syllogism is, moreover, a way of judging (by our definition): it too determines some subject matter by linking a subject concept with a predicate concept. But we cannot grasp the way in which a syllogism is a way of judging without grasping that the link is provided by a middle or grounding term, a link not present in our initial account of judgment. So, syllogism is the transformation of judgment. Finally, by progressing to a syllogism, we make sense of and preserve the validity of our untransformed account of judgment: it is precisely in virtue of the validity of syllogisms that judgments can be grounded, and so it is precisely in virtue of advancing to the thought of syllogisms that our account of judgment is made valid.⁷ (I give a more worked out example in §3 and in chapter 3 §6)

Before explaining how this account is supposed to respond to the second difficulty mentioned above, I want to note something about my use of the term “tension.” This term is how I will characterize what often gets described in the literature as the “contradiction” or, equally

⁷ This is a much simplified version of Hegel’s account of judgment: cf. EL §§166-71 and 6.308-9/21.57-9.

frequently, the “negation” that emerges in the course of the dialectical method. This is often made the focal point of interpretations of Hegel’s method, and reasonably so since Hegel describes it as “the innermost source of all activity... , the dialectical soul that has everything true in it” (6.563/12.246). My approach to Hegel’s method is different, however: I focus on the overall structure (the “speculative” structure) that the tension animates. Getting this larger structure in view, I think, can help us appreciate what kind of movement the tension generates and thereby what kind of tension it is. For the most part, though, what I do here is preparatory work for an account of the tension – I do not give an account of it. In particular, I do not try to explain why the tension emerges.

I do advance two important claims about it, both primarily negative or ground-clearing: first, the generation of the tension is no sign that we have made an error – the tension truly characterizes the nature of the stage at which it emerges, though through the advance beyond that stage we realize that it does not render the stage either incomprehensible or invalid. Second, by offering an account of speculative cognition in which it is sharply contrasted with ordinary knowledge (of the humdrum sort mentioned above), we can rule out any interpretation of the tension which assumes that it is like the kinds of negations and contradictions that occur in ordinary knowledge. I defend these points most thoroughly in chapters 2 and 4, and say a bit about it below in §3.

My account of the logical progression responds to the second difficulty mentioned above, about how one can so much as make sense of the idea of a logical progression. On my interpretation, the logical progression is effected by nothing other than the thought of the first stage. To so much as grasp one stage is already to at least implicitly grasp the next stage. As the example illustrates, I cannot so much as grasp the idea of a judgment without grasping that it can

be grounded, which means that I at least implicitly grasp the idea of a syllogism. This means that the progression has a strong unity, in that I cannot stop prior to grasping every stage and still have counted as grasping any stage. Of course, my reading of Hegel's book, or my expression of its contents, can both be stopped in the middle. But if I am stopped in the middle of the *Logic* in the sense that I have not yet, even implicitly, grasped the stages that follow, then that means that I have not in fact grasped the stages which preceded (and so I have not really stopped in the middle, because I have not grasped even the first stage). The progression does not occur in a time-like medium, as the second difficulty suggests, because it is contained in each stage.

But this seems to respond to the second difficulty only by running headlong into the first difficulty: for, even granting that there are conditions on the very thought of some stage which require advancing to another stage, with what right can we assert the objective validity of the next stage? The mere fact that we have to think it, or that it is subjectively necessary, is not just by itself sufficient, as Kant showed and Hegel must have recognized.

The third part of my thesis responds to this worry and once again treats the nature of speculative cognition, this time as it relates to Kant and Hegel's treatment of theoretical cognition. Before introducing my thesis about that relation, it will be helpful to explain what I mean by "theoretical cognition" and elaborate further on what I mean by "speculative cognition."

"Theoretical cognition" is Kant's term for the kind of cognition investigated in the first *Critique*. He introduces the term in the B edition by contrasting it with practical cognition: cognition "can relate to its object in either of two ways, either merely **determining** the object and its concept (which must be given from elsewhere), or else also **making** the object actual. The former is **theoretical**, the latter **practical**" (Bx). That is, theoretical cognition is cognition of an object which is not the cause of the object's existence; since it does not cause the object to exist,

to cognize an object theoretically the subject must be able to be affected by it (“it must be given from elsewhere”). Hegel makes the same contrast in his logics, when he divides “cognition” into the “Idea of the True” and the “Idea of the Good.” The former, he notes, is “*theoretical*,” and has “a content whose foundation is *given*” (6.499/12.200-1). This contrasts with practical cognition as described in the “Idea of the Good,” which he describes as having the “drive” “to realize itself,” in that it realizes or causes the existence (“external reality”) of its object (6.541/12.231).

In the course of the *Critique*, it is clear that Kant uses the term “speculative cognition” as some kind of synonym for “theoretical cognition” (cf., e.g., A15/B29), though he frequently reserves its use for contexts in which he is discussing reason (in its theoretical use) and the demand for totality or the unconditioned (cf. A329/B386, B395, A466-7/B494-5). Hegel also links the speculative to reason (it is the “positively-rational”) and to cognition of the unconditioned or the absolute (EL §82). But he understands the nature of this cognition and its relation to theoretical cognition very differently from Kant, and this is the topic of the third part of my thesis.⁸

I argue that Hegel *systematically contrasts* speculative cognition with theoretical cognition. Indeed, I show that Hegel’s descriptions of speculative cognition only make sense in light of the way they contrast with his descriptions of theoretical cognition. For instance, Hegel famously claims that the logical progression is circular, or returns into itself (6.566-7/12.249-50), and he claims that the progression is simultaneously analytic and synthetic (cf. 6.557/12.242). Both of these features contrast with the structure of theoretical cognition, as both Kant and Hegel understood it, and I show (in chapter 6) that Hegel notes exactly this contrast to clarify the meaning of his description.

⁸ Michael Wolff also notes Hegel’s distinctive use of speculative cognition in relation to Kant’s: cf. Wolff 2013: 90, 96.

It follows that Hegel could not have thought of “speculative cognition” as a synonym for “theoretical cognition.” But the upshot of this is not that speculative cognition is practical, for speculative cognition has the form of a logical progression and practical cognition looks nothing like that. Rather, the form of speculative cognition is neither theoretical nor practical.⁹ Indeed, I argue that the form of speculative cognition is such that a speculative thought, simply as such, is valid: in it, the conditions of possibility for “mere thinking” are the conditions of possibility for “objectively valid” thinking. I want to spell out what this means.

According to Kant, both practical cognition and theoretical cognition open up a distinction between the thought of something, which merely shows that the thing is logically possible, and the cognition of something, which shows that that thing is really possible (cf. Bxxvi). The logically possible is not for that reason really possible, and the fact that we can think it does not show that it can in fact be in the world: as examples, Kant mentions telepathy and prophesying, which (he thinks) are concepts that we can think but which we know *a priori* cannot be realized in the world (cf. A222-3/B270). The distinction between the logically possible and the really possible is of a piece with the first difficulty mentioned above: to establish an objectively valid conclusion, something which holds true of the world, I must go beyond the conditions on the possibility of thinking. I argue that Hegel, in his discussion of theoretical cognition, recognizes this distinction.¹⁰

⁹ As Hegel puts it, the absolute idea “is the identity of the theoretical and the practical,” from which it follows that cognition of it is neither theoretical nor practical (6.548/12.236). That speculative cognition is not practical is clear enough from the table of contents of the *Logic*: the “Idea of the Good” is followed by the “Absolute Idea”.

¹⁰ I believe that he also recognizes the distinction in his discussion of practical cognition, but I will not attempt to treat practical cognition in this dissertation. This has the significant consequence that my argument for the claim that to make sense of theoretical cognition we need to also possess speculative cognition is incomplete, since one might instead think that practical cognition would suffice. It should be relatively apparent from my description of what is needed to make sense of theoretical cognition that practical cognition will not do; nevertheless, this topic deserves extensive treatment, and I hope to take up practical cognition and its relation to speculative cognition in future work.

I further argue that Hegel recognizes the Kantian consequence of this: that neither theoretical nor practical thought alone can produce a synthesis. That is, Hegel's picture of theoretical cognition is Kantian – and it is on this basis, I argue, that he finds it so “strange” that Kant did not see that we must possess another, higher form of cognition (6.499/12.201).¹¹ In this higher form of cognition, speculative cognition, the very distinction between logical and real possibility lapses. Within speculative cognition, there is no longer any room for the worry that a thought might be either empty or not objectively valid: the objective validity of the thought is ensured by its very form. Consequently, I argue, the logical progression is valid: whatever is required to think one stage is itself, just thereby, objectively valid.

A Kantian is likely to see the appeal to speculative cognition as like an appeal to intellectual intuition, in which the act of thought either just is or at least ensures the reality of what it thinks. She is therefore almost certain to argue that we do not possess it. Moreover, she may argue that we could not possess it and at the same time possess the capacity for theoretical cognition. And non-Kantians might be even less sympathetic, arguing that the very idea of a form of cognition in which mere thought ensures validity is nonsense. But recall the first part of my thesis that Hegel's conception of speculative cognition is grounded solely in the claim that we can know the world (where, in Kantian terminology, these ordinary thoughts are either theoretical or practical). Hegel, I argue, thinks that we possess speculative cognition because it is the only way in which we can make sense of ourselves as able to know the empirical world. Kant has his own strategy for securing the validity of theoretical cognition, and so an adequate response to a Kantian, skeptical of the idea of speculative cognition, should indicate why such a

¹¹ On my view, Hegel agrees with Kant about the structure of theoretical cognition as it pertains to the understanding; I further argue, against most other interpreters, that Hegel even thinks Kant got the relationship between the understanding and sensibility (as that relationship is understood within theoretical cognition) right. But Hegel disagrees with Kant over how to validate the forms of the understanding, and over the role of sensibility in the deduction of the objective validity of the forms of the understanding. I take these topics up in chapters 5 and 6.

strategy will not work. Further, to so much as make sense of the Hegelian alternative requires seeing how speculative cognition can be required to make sense of theoretical cognition.

According to the interpretation I put forward here, that means articulating how theoretical cognition generates a tension that must be transformed, and how speculative cognition is the transformation of theoretical cognition. I offer these arguments in chapter 6, and sketch them below in §4.

In the following sections, I will give brief summaries of my arguments for each of the three parts of my thesis, and explain how the interpretation encapsulated in these three claims relates to the interpretations put forward by other scholars.

§2

The first part of my thesis concerns the everyday conception of thought, or (as Hegel puts it) the “customary, subjective meaning” of thought considered as an “activity or a capacity” (EL §20). This is the kind of thought I above described as theoretical, or cognition of what must be able to be given to the thinker. (It also includes practical cognition but, as noted above, I will not consider that here.) On my interpretation, in these sections (EL §§19-25) Hegel is arguing that our everyday conception of thought requires that we also possess the capacity to think speculatively.

He offers this argument as a way of introducing the topic of the *Logic*. He offers another argument that theoretical cognition requires speculative cognition within the course of the *Logic* itself which I will discuss in chapter 6. The argument within the *Logic* has a speculative form: in it, there is a logical progression from theoretical cognition to speculative cognition. The introductory argument, on the other hand, is grounded from within our everyday, pre-

philosophical understanding of our activity of thinking. Hegel's characterizations of this activity "may be regarded as *Facta*" that are "found at hand in the consciousness of each if he has thoughts" (EL §20A). That is, we are supposed to recognize Hegel's claims in our own activity of thinking, and be led by reflection on that activity to the topic of the *Logic*.

To the extent that these sections get treated in the secondary literature, their role tends to be conflated with Hegel's general introduction of his philosophy (EL §§1-18) and his account of other thinkers (EL §§26-78). However, the specific role of these sections is to introduce Hegel's own conception of logic, they are explicitly oriented towards our everyday understanding, and they are not nearly as difficult as the long path of the *Phenomenology* (which is supposed to introduce the topic of the *Logic* in a more rigorous or scientific fashion).¹² Consequently, they are a useful focal point for an introduction into the topic and nature of Hegel's *Logic*.

In line with confining our attention to these sections, I do not try to address the relation between Hegel and other philosophers in chapter 1: most notably, though the claims that Hegel advances in §§19-25 are incompatible with Kant's view of cognition, I will not try to address that incompatibility until chapters 5 and 6. This has the dual advantage of simplifying the account of the topic of Hegel's *Logic* and also of allowing me to get Hegel's own view on the table before considering how it relates to Kant's.

The argumentative core of these sections from the EL lies in two claims. First, Hegel notes that the product of our activity of thinking has "the value of the matter [*Sache*], the *essential*, the *inner*, the *true*" (EL §21). If we reflect on our capacity to think, Hegel claims, then

¹² On my view, neither these few sections nor the succeeding accounts of other views (EL §§26-78) replace the *Phenomenology*, and Hegel does not intend them to replace the *Phenomenology* (for the classic discussion of this topic, cf. Fulda 1965). In particular, the *Phenomenology* explains why various forms of skeptical despair emerge, something not contained in either these introductory sections or in the *Logic* itself (I say a little bit more about how I understand the *Phenomenology* in chapter 4 §4).

we will see that we take it to be a capacity to reach the truth.¹³ That this reflects the nature of our capacity is manifest, for instance, in the fact that when I form a judgment, I take my judgment to be true, and I withdraw it in the face of evidence that I think shows it to be false. Further, Hegel does not mean that thought is the capacity to arrive at beliefs which happen to be true – that we can by accident, without any justification, chance upon the truth by thinking about the world. Rather, Hegel means that we have the capacity to *know* the world through thinking about it. In the basic, fundamental case, I do not form a judgment either by chance or with the thought that my judgment is grounded on inconclusive evidence: in the basic case, I form a judgment because I take myself to have knowledge, and I do.

Hegel's claim is incompatible with the view that thought is parochial. In the sense in which I use the term, a capacity or an act of a capacity is parochial when its product articulates merely how it seems to the one with the capacity, and leaves open how it is in fact. When we err, in our judging, our acts are parochial: our so judging is not explained by the fact that the world is as we judge it to be, but rather by some fact about me which explains why the world seems to me to be that way. For instance, I might err because I have poor eyesight, or because my community raised me to believe in ghosts, or because human beings cannot hear a particular pitch. Such explanations, which appeal to something about me as a way of explaining why I do not judge truly, are incompatible with the product of my capacity being knowledge.

The *worry* that thought might be parochial is generated by the second claim Hegel makes: that thought is active in determining sensibility (the way we represent the world in being affected by it). So Hegel writes that “it is only *by means of a change*” in the way in which the object is

¹³ It is worth noting that Hegel's claim is not controverted by the fact that we sometimes make mistakes when we judge – it is a claim about the nature of a capacity and does not entail that the capacity is always exercised successfully.

represented in “perception, intuition, representation” that “the *true* nature of the *subject matter* comes to consciousness” (EL §22).¹⁴

Hegel’s claim that the activity consists in a change is a difficult topic which I want to ignore here – I discuss it at length in chapter 1 §3. The claim I want to focus on now is that thought is active in determining sensibility (abstracting from the fact that this activity involves a change). He thinks that we understand thought to be active in determining sensibility just from within a reflection on our capacity to think. As I sense things, I represent them as here or there, then or now. As I think about them, I relate what is given to me in sensation to things that are not given to me in sensation (for instance, to the general laws that explain why such and such obtains here and now). He thinks we are all cognizant of the fact that this relating does not occur in the sensation; it occurs by actively thinking about what we sense and thereby determining it by giving an account of it. So, he claims, I am conscious that I arrive at the truth, at an explanation or account of what I sense, through actively determining what I sense (by relating it to things in general).

The laws that determine or govern my activity in thinking are the laws of the nature of thought. But that means that, in our account of why we think as we do, we cannot merely appeal to the nature of what affects us – we must also and essentially appeal to our subjective nature as thinkers. This is what threatens to make our capacity to think parochial: for that subjective nature is not shared by the unthinking objects whose antics we so frequently think about. Any determination of our thoughts that arises from the nature of our capacity to think would seem to

¹⁴ I will translate “Gegenstand” as “subject matter” unless it is in the plural, in which case I will translate it “objects” and note the German in parentheses.

be a kind of imposition on the nature of the world as we think about it, an imposition which makes our thought parochial.¹⁵

To avoid this conclusion, Hegel claims, we have to think of the laws that govern or determine our subjective capacity to think as identical with the laws that determine the world, or what we think about. Moreover, this identity must be available to us in our reflection on the nature of thought and the world. For we make the judgements we do only in taking them to be true, not parochial. And we are conscious of thought's activity in determining our sensible representations in order to arrive at the truth. Thus, we can only take our judgments to be true if we can be conscious of thought's activity as determined by the way the objects in fact are: to use Hegel's language, we must be able to think of our "subjectivity" as "determinationless," as not imposing any determinations foreign to the objects we think about (EL §24). For this reason, Hegel thinks that the laws of thought, the subject matter of logic, must also be the laws that express "what used to be called the *essentialities of things*" (EL §24). And so Hegel claims that "logic falls together with *metaphysics*" (EL §24). Hegel calls this reconceived subject matter of logic and of metaphysics "objective thought" (EL §24).

The *Logic* is an account of objective thought, the concepts that determine the common nature of thought and the world. In our ordinary, everyday thoughts – the thoughts that are an exercise of our subjective capacity to think – we are not thinking about these laws. Rather, we are thinking about particular objects or events or states of affairs or what have you: things within the world. This suggests that our account of these laws has a form different from that of our

¹⁵ Robert Pippin has done the most within the Hegel literature to emphasize this worry (cf., e.g., Pippin 2013), and my account of the source of the worry (in the activity of thought as exercised upon the sensible manifold) is influenced by his work. Other Hegel scholars (cf. Stern 1990) have attributed a kind of common sense realism to him, according to which the form of the objects as we think about them does not have its nature in our activity of thinking. I respond to this view, and to Stern's so-called realist interpretation of Hegel, in chapter 1 §2.

ordinary thought: it has the form of speculative cognition.¹⁶ As noted previously, the account of the form of speculative cognition is anchored in what is required to think through the identity of the laws that determine thought and the laws that determine the world so as to avoid the conclusion that thought in its everyday form is parochial.

At this point, it will be helpful to clarify the relation between my interpretation of the topic of the *Logic* and other interpretations. My interpretation is most closely related to that put forth by Paul Franks in *All or Nothing*. According to him, German Idealism (and Kant as the Idealists read him) sought to ground ordinary or, to use the term he prefers, empirical thought in transcendental thought. Moreover, he thought they were all committed to the claim that the two forms of thinking “be kept rigorously separate”: transcendental grounds do not ground particular empirical phenomena, but rather the validity of empirical thinking in general.¹⁷ At no point in an empirical explanation does one appeal to a transcendental ground – the transcendental grounds show that empirical explanations can be, as empirical, valid (he calls this “the Dualistic Demand”).¹⁸

My interpretation of Hegel is inspired by Franks’ account. For I argue that theoretical cognition has a form different from that of speculative cognition (Hegel’s version of the transcendental), and that speculative cognition grounds the validity of theoretical cognition. On my interpretation, too, one does not explain objects of theoretical cognition using speculative

¹⁶ The identity is what secures the fact that I can validly think about these objects, but it is not the topic or the subject matter of those thoughts. According to work by Rödl (cf. Rödl 2007b) and Pippin (cf. Pippin 2014), it is present in ordinary thought in our self-consciousness: in thinking that thunder follows lightning, I am or can become conscious that *I think* that thunder follows lightning. On their views, my self-consciousness, explicitly expressed in my use of the first person pronoun, manifests my consciousness of the identity of the laws that determine my subjective capacity to think and the laws that determine the nature of what is. If they are right to say this (and I think they are), it follows that the account offered in the *Logic* is an account of the nature of self-consciousness. (I discuss the relation between my account and self-consciousness in somewhat more detail in chapter 2 §3 and chapter 3 §4.)

¹⁷ Franks 2005: 20.

¹⁸ Cf. Franks 2005: 20. Franks’ use of the term “dualistic” is potentially misleading, since it may suggest that the two forms of cognition are on a par. But, as my explanation brings out, he thinks of this dualism such that one of the two sides is the ground of the other.

cognition – speculative cognition grounds, rather, the form of theoretical cognition, showing it to be valid. In his work so far, Franks has focused mostly on German Idealism up to 1800, and has not written anything on Hegel's *Logic* (versions of which were published between 1812-1830). So my work builds on his understanding of early German Idealism, extending it to Hegel's later writings.

The most significant difference between my interpretation and Franks' lies in the nature of the threat that faces empirical thought. As Franks understands early German Idealism, the threat stems from the fact that empirical thought is subject to the Agrippan trilemma, such that all empirical thinking lacks sufficient grounds.¹⁹ On my interpretation of Hegel's *Logic*, the threat rather concerns the fact that thought seems to be parochial (to reveal only how it seems to ones like us) because it is the exercise of a subjective capacity. Even, then, if we had sufficient grounds for a belief, in the sense that our grounds satisfied whatever demands thought imposed upon us, if our conception of thought is parochial than those grounds would still be insufficient to arrive at the truth.²⁰

My interpretation can be contrasted with another popular interpretation, what I call the contradiction or conceivability interpretation. According to this interpretation, I advance from one stage to another because I cannot help but think that the advance is required. Perhaps not making the advance yields some kind of pragmatic contradiction, or perhaps it contradicts something I know to be true or must think; perhaps for some other reason I cannot conceive of

¹⁹ Cf. Franks 2005: 80-3.

²⁰ By noting this difference, I do not mean to suggest that the two threats of Agrippan skepticism and of parochialism are unrelated to one another, or that the worry that thought might be parochial is somehow deeper. I only mean to note a difference between them, a difference which is salient for exegesis of the *Logic*. For instance, in Hegel's argument within the *Logic* that we must advance beyond theoretical cognition, the need is not generated by a worry about a brute assumption or a regress or a vicious circularity. The need is generated, rather, by the fact that theoretical cognition is never *progressively* complete: that is, we can never finish drawing further conclusions in, for instance, geometry or physics. The Agrippan trilemma is not a helpful analytical tool for thinking about why the progressive incompleteness of theoretical cognition requires that we advance beyond it.

doing otherwise.²¹ I argue that any interpretation of this form cannot be right, because it never arrives at a form of thought in which we can make sense of the validity of our capacity to think. For according to the conceivability or contradiction view, I employ the ordinary, theoretical form of thought (the form of thought from which pragmatic contradictions and the like are familiar), and attempt to draw conclusions about how thought and the world must be on its basis. But I never employ a form of thought that can account for or develop the identity between the laws that determine my capacity to think and those that determine the world. The threat that thought may be parochial, then, remains untouched, and so these interpretations do not allow us to comprehend how we can know the world.²²

§3

I take myself to show, in my first two chapters, that Hegel thinks of speculative cognition as consisting in an account of the laws that determine both the capacity to think and the world. But one might think that this overstates what I have shown, that at most I have shown that we need to think of these two sets of conditions as mirroring one another or as in some sort of correspondence with one another. And, anyway, what does it even mean to establish that the conditions are *identical* with one another? In my third chapter I offer another argument for the

²¹ Two prominent interpretations of this stripe are advanced in Hösle 1987 and Wandschneider 1995. In the *Logic*, both claim, we are dealing with claims about the nature of thought such that we cannot deny them, because to deny them would be to fall into a kind of pragmatic contradiction: the denial of these claims undercuts itself by denying something affirmed in the very denial. They then see the arguments of the *Logic* as working by a kind of *reductio*: we show that we are contradicting ourselves because we have not yet introduced sufficient categories to make sense of the acts of thinking we are engaged in, and so we are forced to introduce yet more categories.

²² It also follows that the arguments of the *Logic* are not transcendental arguments as these are usually construed. A transcendental argument, on the usual understanding of it, starts from premises about how things seem to the thinker (or the subject more generally) and arrives at conclusions about how things are in fact (for an account of transcendental arguments along these lines, cf. Stroud 2000). That is, we infer from something subjective to something objective. But the *Logic* contains no such inferences: rather, it employs a form of thought which is simultaneously subjective and objective, and thereby its arguments hold of both thought and the world. (I discuss the relation between Hegel's arguments in the *Logic* and Stroud's understanding of strong transcendental arguments in more detail in chapter 2.)

conclusion that, according to Hegel, these conditions are identical with one another, and I develop an interpretation of what that identity claim means. I do both by offering an interpretation and defense of Hegel's descriptions of the form of speculative cognition.

These descriptions occur primarily in the introductions to the *Science of Logic* and in the final chapter, the “Absolute Idea.” Accordingly, my second chapter is dedicated to unpacking what he says in those places.²³ The “Absolute Idea” chapter is particularly difficult because its terminology is so opaque and its claims are so abstract. To combat this difficulty, I go through different models for how to think about the nature of speculative cognition – models which are very familiar and which are suggested by different things Hegel says. By showing where these models fall short, I gradually work up to an adequate description of speculative cognition, one which takes very seriously the identity of the laws that determine thought and the world.

There are two familiar models that I work through in the chapter. First, I consider the idea that the form of speculative cognition is determining a determinable. On this view, we start with the most generic concept of objective thought (the laws that determine thought and the world), and each new stage consists in a further determination of it. This model is suggested by Hegel's frequent claim that the progress consists in an enrichment of the starting point: for instance when he notes that the progress “begins from simple determinacies and the following become richer and more concrete” (6.569/12.250).

Second, I consider the idea that the progress consists in a form of organic growth. On this view, we start with an “immature” account of objective thought, which is like an immature organism. And, just as the immature organism will mature through its own activity, so too the

²³ I disagree with those scholars who think instead that Hegel did not have a very good understanding of what he was doing: e.g. Henrich 1971 (3rd edition, 2010): 103-6, 114; Hösle 1988: 179-80. My response to this contrasting estimation is to show that Hegel's descriptions are philosophically well-motivated; I do not try to show that Hegel generally does what he says he does (though I do consider some examples).

immature account of objective thought strives towards and eventually attains maturity. This model is suggested by Hegel's claim that the final stage is the "realization" of the first stage (6.554/12.240): for, on the traditional Aristotelian understanding, the immature organism is potentially mature, and in reaching maturity it realizes that potential.²⁴

It is not possible, in an introduction, to attempt to work out the flaws in the two models in any detail. But I can at least indicate the kind of considerations I bring to bear by recalling once again Hegel's claim that the progression is effected by pure thought alone, unaided by anything else: the progression, as he puts it, is "unstoppable, pure, taking in nothing from outside" (5.49/21.38). Each of these models presupposes some contribution from something outside of the progression. The determinations that we add in the first model have to come from somewhere other than the determinable itself, and an organism can only advance to maturity by taking in matter from outside of itself.

The fact that these models requires an appeal to something other than the progression shows that they do not capture Hegel's intention. And it also gets at what is philosophically wrong with thinking about them as models for the progression. For, insofar as it is internal to our account of objective thought that it takes in something from outside of it, it is internal to our account that it might have been determined differently – that we might have been so determined that the forms of our thinking were different. But this means that our conception of thought is parochial: we think what we think not because that is how the world is, but only because that is how the world seems to be to ones who think like us. Both models, then, fail because they render thought parochial by making the account rely on something external to thought alone.

²⁴ A third model that I consider in chapter 4 is that of organic unity. On this view, we start with one form of thought and being (one "organ") which, because it is unintelligible without seeing it in the context of the other forms (the whole organism), leads us to consider more and more forms until we have finally gotten a complete account of objective thought. Against this view I argue that it turns the speculative method into a kind of theoretical cognition and thereby prevents us from understanding our capacity to think by alienating us from it.

The models, despite their flaws, do each capture a significant aspect of Hegel's account of speculative cognition. The model of determining a determinable captures the fact that the progression begins with the most generic concept of objective thought, and that the progression consists in further determining that concept. But in the *Logic* the further determination must lie in the starting point itself: the starting point, as Hegel says, “is not undetermined, but rather *determined in itself [ihm selbst]*” (5.56/21.44). And the model of organic growth captures the fact that objective thought determines itself by incorporating some matter. But in the *Logic* that matter must be generated by the self-determination of objective thought, or our very grasp of objective thought itself: a stage in the *Logic* “*observed in and for itself*, shows itself as the other of its self” (6.561/12.244) and the progression then incorporates this other, thereby further determining itself (cf. 6.569/12.2.50).

Combining the negative and positive conclusions we have drawn from the two models, I argue, entails the transformative view of the *Logic*. First, our thought of a stage, or determination of the nature of objective thought, generates some matter or something which is in tension with that determination of objective thought: something that determination requires but which cannot be incorporated into the nature of objective thought so determined. Second, we think the unity of the determination in the first stage and that with which it is in tension, thereby further determining objective thought. To think this unity is to transform the first stage, such that objective thought is now so understood that it is inseparably combined with the matter in the first stage. Finally, third, the transformation preserves or grounds the determination as it is present in the first stage, such that we grasp the validity of the untransformed stage in grasping its transformation. Since the transformation is grounded solely in the thought of the first stage, the

progression is “uninterruptible,” such that you have not so much as grasped the first stage without grasping the final stage.

This way of thinking about the logical progression is considerably less familiar, and considerably more abstract, than the first three models. To clarify it, I provide a detailed example. Before briefly rehearsing that example here, I want to clarify my use of the term “transformation.” I borrow this term from recent debates around John McDowell’s account of the relationship between mere or non-rational animals and rational animals. On McDowell’s view, our rationality is such that it cannot be factored out of an account of our animality: what it is for us to be an animal is essentially informed and shaped by rationality. Nevertheless, we are still essentially animals, desiderative and perceptive beings. Consequently, we must be animals in a transformed sense, or what it is for us to be animals is a transformation of what it is for a mere animal to be an animal.²⁵

McDowell may or may not be right to claim that our rationality cannot be factored out, but we can abstract from the particular case he is interested in and examine the general idea of transformation. One concept, *B*, is a transformation of another, *A*, when *B* is a way of being *A*, such that what it is for *B* to be *A* is essentially informed or shaped by the further determinations of *B*. We are rational animals (*B*) and, according to McDowell, rationality shapes our animality (*A*) such that we could not make sense even of our animality without grasping its connection to our rationality. But there is another way of being an animal (*A*), which is not so connected to rationality. And so, on his view, rational animality transforms mere animality.

My use of the term “transformation” involves one more feature, which is not found in McDowell’s use of the term. Namely, transformation in my sense involves integrating something

²⁵ Cf. McDowell 1996: 64 and McDowell 1998: 412. The term “transformation” is used more frequently in the McDowell-influenced sense by Matthew Boyle in Boyle 2012; cf. also Gobsch 2017 (and the other essays in this volume).

which resists being integrated with the untransformed concept but which is nevertheless essential or required by the untransformed concept. If we applied this to McDowell's case, my use of transformation would involve the further, non-McDowellian claim that we cannot grasp what it is to be a mere animal without grasping what it is to be a rational animal. And the explanation for the need to advance from one concept to the transformation of it would appeal to something about the being of a mere animal: it requires something, such that understanding how mere animals can satisfy that requirement requires advancing beyond the concept of mere animal.

As an example, consider the transition from teleology to life towards the end of the *Logic*. By teleology, Hegel means instrumental teleology, in which an end is realized through employing something else as means. By life he means a way of being which sustains itself, such that to be a living being or a part of a living being is to be constituted by this activity of sustaining the living being.²⁶ On my model, that teleology is followed by life means that an account of teleology yields something which it needs but with which it is not unified (in short, that teleology is in tension with itself), that life transforms teleology by being the unity of it and that which is in tension with it, and, finally, that the progress to life preserves teleology as a form of thought and being.

Start with the understanding of teleology as an activity that realizes an end by using some means. Within instrumental teleology we essentially distinguish between the means and the end: we only realize our aim in the end; simply having the means is not enough. In particular, the means are a part of the world that can be subjected to our purpose but that is not by its nature determined by our purpose, whereas an end is the realization of our purpose or is our purpose made objective, and so is determined by our purpose. But within instrumental teleology, the

²⁶ As Aristotle said (and Hegel echoed), a hand cut off from the body is a hand in name only – it has ceased to be what it was, because it has become disconnected from the biological activities of the body: cf. Aristotle *Generation of Animals* 1.19 726b20-25 and Hegel EL §216z and PN §350z.

completed end is not *by its nature* determined by our purpose. For instance, suppose my end is to build a clock. A clock is, by its nature, just a bunch of wood and metal, and the parts that make it up are not as such parts of a clock. But that is just to say that the end is no more in the clock than it is in the wood that I sand down to make it. And yet I must be able to distinguish between the end and the means, since my purpose is only realized in completing my end. But if the end is just like the means, how can I think of it as an end?

The tension is that we need to think of the end as realized in what is by its nature a means, but within instrumental teleology we essentially distinguish between means and end. We overcome this tension by thinking of an end that is just as such a means, or of a means that is just as such an end, and this is life. The end of a living being is to sustain itself, its organs, and the means that the living being uses to do that are, in the first instance, just those very organs. Moreover, the organs are by their nature living or are by their nature the realization of the end of sustaining life. So, life is the thought of an end that is realized in its means or of means that are by their nature the realization of the end. Further, we have seen that we must advance to life to make sense of teleology.

In moving to the idea of life we have not changed the nature of the completed end of teleology: the parts of the clock remain merely mechanical and chemical parts, not by their nature the realization of an end. But now we can make sense of this way of being a realized end by reference to life: a clock is a realized end because it can play a role in maintaining a living being, and thus can contribute to the objective and self-determining activity of a higher form of teleology. Lacking the capacity to nest the completed end within the context of a living being's maintaining itself, we would not be able to distinguish between it and a mere means, and so we

would not be able to understand how it can be identical with an end. Instrumental teleology is intelligible only in light of the role it can play in life.

This example illustrates the three features of the transformative view. First, the account of teleology reveals a tension: for teleology is the power to realize an end through means, and yet we cannot make sense of it as able to realize an end. Yet an account of it is contained in the account of teleology, for without a grasp of how one can realize the subjective end we cannot grasp teleology itself. So, the account of teleology leads necessarily beyond it.

Second, the next stage unifies that which resists unity in teleology. In teleology, what needs to be unified is the end and the means employed for the sake of that end. Thought about teleologically, this relation is an external one because the means are essentially different from the end they are used to realize. To make sense of teleology requires uniting the end with the means: thinking of the means as already informed by the end, the end as already realized in the means. But this is life, which is a way of being an end, such that we cannot even make sense of what it is for it to be an end without grasping its connection to the means which realize it. So, life transforms teleology.

And, third, the progression to life is effected to make sense of teleology, and so it preserves the validity of teleology. If, on the other hand, we were to reject teleology as invalid, then there could be no basis for insisting on a means which was as such already informed by an end. Why would that be a valid form of thought and being? Only because teleology is valid, and because the thought of teleology requires the thought of life.

Before turning to explain how the transformative view relates to other interpretations, I want to return to the claim that speculative cognition is an account of the identity of the laws that determine my capacity to think and the laws that determine the world. At the outset of this

section I noted that this claim might seem too strong, and that chapter 3 would provide a further argument in support of it. We are now in a position to understand the further argument: the identity is crucial for the claim that the account of some stage itself generates the matter that needs to be incorporated into the account.

To see this, consider an alternative way of taking the example: it shows that there must be an ineliminably external form supplied by an account of the means that is not available from within an account of teleology itself. The validity of teleology would then be restricted by this dependence, and an account of teleology itself would not be sufficient to explain its validity: it might be a mere form of thought, without any objective validity. We provide it with objectivity by connecting it with the form of the material it works upon: where that matter is present, a presence which cannot be secured by the account of teleology itself, teleology is objectively valid. We would then have to explain how the form of teleology could also be found in the form of the material, without fully determining it. Such an explanation would not require us to advance beyond teleology to life and, even if it did, it could not secure the objective validity of life.²⁷

I believe that the arguments against the other models (especially the organic growth model) suffice to show that this alternative interpretation of the progression cannot be right: it would render thought parochial. But to deny these other interpretations of the logical progression requires thinking that thought, by itself, can validly determine the world. And that means that the thoughts in the logical progression are not only thoughts, they are also valid determinations of the form of the world. Consequently, the laws that determine thought must be the laws that

²⁷ This would be the Kantian way of understanding how one shows that a form of thought is objectively valid: its validity rests upon an appeal to some third thing, the nature of which cannot be completely determined by the form of thought itself. So, famously, an account of the categories rests on an appeal to our forms of sensibility, while the spatio-temporal character of those forms (on which the validity of the categories depends) cannot be grounded in the nature of the categories themselves: cf. B150ff.

determine the world. I will return to this (in §4), but the logical progression requires that we think of something which is identically or inseparably a way of thinking and a way of being, an objective thought the very form of which eliminates any room for the possibility of a parochial determination grounded merely in the nature of thought.

With that I conclude my summary of chapter 3, in which I lay out my explanation and defense of the transformative view. I take up the relation between this view and the interpretations put forward by other scholars in chapter 4. There I argue that almost every interpretation of the method of the *Logic* subscribes to some version of what I call the modification view. I define the modification view as the thought that the progress in the *Logic* consists in part in making some error and then correcting it. By “error” I mean taking a stage to be something that it is not, such that the progress partially consists in realizing that we were wrong or that the stage is not what we initially took it to be.²⁸ Different views are put forth about what the subject matter of the *Logic* is, about what kind of error we make, and about what kind of necessity attaches to the changes – but almost everyone thinks that the contradictions or tensions that we find ourselves caught in at a given stage imply that we have in some way erred in our account.²⁹

On the interpretation I have put forward, the modification view cannot be right. The kernel of my argument is that the intelligibility of making an error rests on cognition in some way needing to be able to be affected by what it is of. Of course, such affection makes good sense in theoretical or everyday cognition, and is of central importance, for instance, to the

²⁸ Treating a stage as complete, determined, absolute, unconditioned, or final when it is not counts as an error. Similarly, taking it that the stage itself has all along been right but my understanding of its significance has been incorrect is also an error, and so a version of the modification view.

²⁹ This view is most famously associated with Theunissen 1980, which argues that the earlier parts of the *Logic* are really criticisms of other philosophical positions (I consider his position in chapter 4 §4). Since Theunissen, some form of the view has been taken for granted by scholars (as Schick, who also accepts the view, notes: cf. Schick 1994: 109).

scientific method of hypothesis testing: I form a hypothesis about my subject matter and then test or check it by comparing that hypothesis to my experience of the subject matter. For instance, I hypothesize that the temperature is rising because of global warming, and then I look at weather patterns to see whether this hypothesis is right or plausible. It may be very difficult to look at weather patterns objectively, without distorting the data by my hypothesis. But the idea that I can arrive at knowledge through hypothesis testing is dependent upon my capacity to examine the data in a way which does not already presuppose the truth of the hypothesis, so that it can genuinely *test* the hypothesis. Where there can be no hypothesis-independent access to data, there can be no hypothesis testing. This feature of hypothesis testing generalizes: the intelligibility of error rests upon the possibility of checking our account against something, ultimately something which can be given to us. It follows that the modification view is theoretical: according to it, we must be able to be given the object in order to test our theory of it. It is essential to the modification view that what we are accounting for is not constituted by the very account of it.

Hegel rejects exactly this view when he notes that the method “is nothing different [*Unterschiedenes*] from its subject matter and content” (21.38/5.50). This comment makes sense, I show, because the *Logic* is an account which rests on nothing other than pure thought alone; consequently, there is no hypothesis testing against experience or anything analogous to experience. The validity of a stage does not rest on a relation between it and something else to which I need to compare the stage. It is in the very thought of a stage that I constitute that stage as valid. And, moreover, the tension does not involve any error: it defines the stage and is rendered at once both intelligible and valid in the thought of the next stage. So the modification view, I argue, is wrong: we do not test the account against anything which can affect us, the

tensions that emerge in the account do not involve any error on our part, and the accounts which give rise to the tensions are in need of no modification.

§4

Now I would like to turn to my final two chapters, in which I take up once again the relationship between theoretical or ordinary cognition and speculative cognition. In the first chapter, I dealt with Hegel's understanding of this topic from within ordinary cognition. In these chapters, I deal with Hegel's understanding of this topic from within speculative cognition. In particular, I explore the debate between Kant and Hegel over what is required to make sense of the validity of theoretical cognition: whether an appeal to speculative cognition is either necessary or possible. And I show that it is necessary and illuminate its possibility by showing the way in which it transforms theoretical cognition.

The easiest, most familiar starting point for Hegel's account of theoretical cognition is Kant's account of it in the first *Critique*: in particular, his account of the nature of the understanding as it is contained in §§15-6 of the Transcendental Deduction in the B edition. There are three points that I highlight. First, as noted throughout, theoretical cognition is of what must be able to affect us or (equivalently) be able to be given to us (cf. Bix-x, A92/B125). This should be familiar by now, but it is linked to Kant's important claim that "through the I, as a simple representation, nothing manifold is given" (B135). This is Kant's way of noting that, when considered by itself, theoretical thought or (to use Kant's term) the understanding is empty: all of the content of theoretical thought arises from being given "a manifold" in sensibility.³⁰

³⁰ Having been given a manifold in sensibility, we can then draw conclusions about objects we have not yet been given. But what enables us to do so is the fact that we have been given a manifold – affected by objects – in the first place.

Second, the understanding, though empty by itself, nevertheless plays a crucial role in theoretical cognition: it combines that which is given under a concept. Indeed, Kant notes that “among all representations **combination** is the only one that is not given through the objects but can be executed only by the self, as an act of its self-activity” (B130). The concept under which the understanding represents that which is given is the “I think”: I combine what is given to me in sensibility through bringing it under the unity of the I think. Thus Kant notes in §16 that for anything to be even a sensible representation for me, it must be able to be combined with my other representations as mine (cf. B132). That is, I must be able to take up what is given to me in thought, and thereby bring it into the unity of thought. So, the same unity must be present in all of my acts of theoretical cognition: the unity of the “I think.” Of course, I think theoretically using general concepts that are much more specific than the “I think” – but the generality of those concepts stems from the fact that the unity of the I is present in them.

According to Kant one can represent the unity of a manifold in two ways: analytically or synthetically. An analytic unity is a one (a unity) that can be contained in many, while synthetic unity is a one that can contain many.³¹ Or, equivalently, analytic unity is a mark, characteristic, or feature that can be *common* to many different representations, while synthetic unity is capacity to combine many different representations into one representation. An example of an analytic unity is the concept furniture in relation to different kinds (or species) of furniture: that is, the concept furniture is contained in and so common to the concepts chair, table, desk, etc. And an example of a synthetic unity is the concept chair in relation to the concept furniture and (let’s suppose) the concept for-sitting: the concept chair is the combination of those two concepts, it contains them.

³¹ In this I follow Engstrom 2013.

Analytic and synthetic unity are forms or ways of relating different representations. A representation considered by itself is neither an analytic nor a synthetic unity – it is an analytic unity in relation to those representations that it is common to, and a synthetic unity in relation to those representations that it contains. Within theoretical cognition, according to Kant, any analytic unity produced by the understanding presupposes an at least possible synthetic unity; or, as he also puts it, the analytic unity of apperception presupposes the synthetic unity of apperception. Or, as Kant puts it, “a representation that is to be thought of as common to **several** must be regarded as belonging to those that in addition to it also have something **different** in themselves” (B133-4). That is, an analytic unity represents something as common to many *different* representations. So, to represent the concept as common rests on the capacity to represent its connection to those differences in a synthetic unity. I can only think generally about red things (I can only employ the concept red) if I can think about red in connection with other determinations (as in: red wall, red cube, red puddle) in a synthetic unity: otherwise, Kant is saying, my representation of red lacks the requisite generality to be an analytic unity.

These points from Kant are relatively uncontroversial. I introduce them because they help us recognize that Hegel makes the exact same points in describing theoretical cognition. To start with, he – like Kant – thinks of theoretical cognition as cognition of what can be given: he notes, for instance, that theoretical cognition acquires its “*content*” from “the presupposed world” (6.498/12.200) and that “the content still has the determination of a *given*” (6.499/12.201). Moreover, he links this point to the fact that at first theoretical cognition is “abstract,” which is Hegel’s way of making the point that Kant makes by saying that nothing manifold is given through the representation of the I alone.

Further, he notes that the role of theoretical thought is to combine that which can be given and to perform this combination through representing what can be given as mine. So he notes that theoretical cognition “comes only to a *neutral* unity or a *synthesis*, that is, a unity of what is originally separated” (6.499/12.200). Kant does not disparage the synthetic unity as “only a neutral” one, but he would agree that the unity is between that which is not in itself combined – that the combination is only effected by the understanding. Or, as Hegel puts it, “this realization of the concept is *theoretical* insofar as it has as *form* still the determination of something *subjective* or the determination, for the subject, of being its own determination” (6.499/12.200). That is, the combination is effected by the subject (this characterizes the form of theoretical cognition) and what is represented stands under the formal unity of being the subject’s own representation. This is Hegel’s way of saying that theoretical cognition consists in taking up what can be given into thought by bringing the unity of the “I think” to bear on it.

Finally, like Kant, Hegel distinguishes between analytic unity and synthetic unity, and he claims (for the same reason that Kant does) that the capacity to represent an analytic unity presupposes the capacity to represent a synthetic unity. He puts the point by noting that the abstract starting point of theoretical cognition, which is an analytic unity, is essentially an “*identity in difference*” and that therefore “the *connection* [Zusammenhang] as well must become for the concept one which is posited by it” (6.510/12.209). That is, to be able to be conscious of different representations as one and all mine, I must be able to be conscious of the connection between what is common to all and what is particular to each.

This understanding of theoretical cognition, common to both Kant and Hegel, is the background in relation to which they pose the problem of the possibility of an *a priori* synthesis. To see this, it will be helpful to say a little bit more about the relation between analytic unity,

synthetic unity, and concepts. Within theoretical cognition, a concept cannot be both analytic and synthetic in relation to the same concept: concepts that contain the concept bird are not, and cannot be, contained in it. This fact illuminates and follows from the emptiness of the I think as the most general analytic unity: the analytic unity of apperception cannot by itself ground (explain the validity of) the synthetic unity of apperception. For the analytic unity of apperception is contained in all concepts, as what they all have in common (they are, one and all, mine). But that means that no connection between concepts, no synthetic unity, can be contained in it. With that in the background, we can ask after the validity of the forms of combination supplied by the intellect – with what right do we represent what is given as combinable according to these forms?

In chapter 5, I present a novel interpretation of Kant's answer to this question, centered on a new reading of the Transcendental Deduction that attends to the roles played by analytic and synthetic unities. These two unities are essentially different. However, Kant sees that to employ these forms of the understanding in objectively valid determinations of objects that can be given to us, one must also conceive of a kind of cognitive ability in which there is an analytic and synthetic unity in relation to the same manifold, and in which these two aspects are essentially united. For the validity of the synthetic unity of apperception turns on grasping it as a common character of anything which may be given to us: whatever is given to us, we can combine it. Consequently, the synthetic unity of apperception must be also be represented as an analytic unity, what is common across a diversity.

Kant locates this unity that is analytic and synthetic with respect to the same manifold within sensibility (it “belongs” to sensibility, as he puts it in §26): the forms of sensible intuition are such that every manifold within them has a common character (they are all spatial, or they

are all temporal), and so the forms of sensible intuition are analytic unities. But I argue that this common character is nothing other than a unity of different manifolds: space is an “infinitely given manifold,” which is to say that its unity (the spatial character common to every manifold within it) lies in its being the combination of those manifolds. Because our forms of intuition have this character, Kant argues, we can make sense of the objective validity of the synthetic unity of apperception.

In chapter 6, I turn to Hegel’s criticism of the Deduction. Hegel argues that by locating this special unity within sensibility, as its form, Kant’s conception of thought is parochial. Specifically, the understanding cannot be responsible for the character common within each of our forms of intuition (the analytic unity of those forms). Consequently, we can think of other forms of intuition, such that we can only grasp our form as a subjective imposition on what appears. That is, we cannot explain our right to represent what appears as in space and time, since those forms stem from the subject and we cannot see our way clear of thinking of them as merely subjective impositions on what appears. Since the synthetic unity of apperception is valid only in relation to these merely subjective forms, it too is rendered a mere subjective imposition on what appears. And so the Deduction fails.³²

I then argue that Hegel’s alternative to Kant’s Deduction is to articulate the synthetic unity of apperception (and, with it, the categories) within speculative cognition, which by its form secures their objective validity. To see this, first, consider the parallel in structure between the account of teleology and the account of theoretical cognition. In the case of the former, we saw that there was an essential differentiation between the means and the end, and that we could not use teleology alone to grasp how the end could be realized in what is by its nature a means –

³² This interpretation of the failure is closest to that offered in Pippin 1989a and McDowell 2009a. I explore the similarities and differences between my account and theirs in chapter 6 §§2-3.

to do that we had to advance to life. Similarly, theoretical cognition contains an essential differentiation between analytic unity and synthetic unity. And we cannot grasp through the understanding alone how the capacity to form analytic unities can ground the capacity to form synthetic unities (that is why Kant is forced to appeal to forms of intuition). This is the *tension*.

If we follow through on the parallel, we need to arrive at a form of *thought* in which analytic unity is as such synthetic unity: that is, we need to grasp a form of thought in which a concept is analytic and synthetic in relation to the same concept. For such a form of thought, there would no longer be any question about how the analytic unity could ground the synthetic unity. But this is just the form of speculative cognition, which Hegel notes is both analytic and synthetic (cf. 6.557/12.242). We can see this in the structure of the logical progression itself. In the logical progression, an analysis produces a manifold the parts of which are in tension with one another. Consequently, we have to synthesize the two determinations, thereby connecting the starting point with something that is other than it: a synthetic unity. So, in relation to the starting point (and the manifold it contains), the second concept is both an analytic and a synthetic unity. In the progression, then, we have a form of synthesis which is, as such, grounded in an analysis – indeed, we cannot even grasp what it is for this to be an analysis apart from understanding that it produces a synthesis. Speculative cognition is, thus, a *transformation* of theoretical cognition.

Moreover, speculative cognition thereby preserves the validity of theoretical cognition. For speculative cognition is a form of thought which is as such valid, in which the very possibility of a mere thought (one which is not objectively valid) is excluded. This follows from the fact that it is both analytic and synthetic: for any connection that I think, employing this form of thought, is, simply in virtue of being mine, a valid way of connecting concepts. And we can readily see that an intellect which possessed this form of cognition would be one in which the

forms of synthetic unity in theoretical cognition would be valid: the validity is ensured by the fact that those forms occur in the logical progression, in a way which excludes the possibility of their being mere forms of thought.

That is, Hegel's alternative to the Deduction involves no appeal to either sensibility or its forms. Rather, it consists in the speculative thought of the forms of theoretical cognition. One can now see why it is so important to oppose the modification view: for on the modification view, the occurrence of a form of thought in a logical progression is not enough to ensure its validity. But, on my view, it is enough. The alternative to the Deduction consists in a proper appreciation of the form of speculative cognition.

With this, we will have returned to our starting point. For Hegel's alternative reveals how speculative cognition makes sense of our capacity to have knowledge of the world.

Chapter 1: Objective Thought

Every account of Hegel's *Logic* should begin with an account of its subject matter and of its task or goal. I argue in this chapter that the *Logic* describes the nature common to thinking and being: it is an account of the conditions on the possibility of thought, insofar as those are also conditions on the possibility of being. Further, I argue that we are driven to the topic of the *Logic* to make sense of the fact that thought is not parochial: that when we think about the world, we are not restricted to conclusions about how it must seem to us, but we can arrive at how it is in truth. One part of its task, then, is to explain how we can think truly about the world.

No doubt the *Logic*'s aim can be described in other ways – for instance, it aims to disclose the nature of God before creation – but the aim of explaining how we can think truly about the world will serve as the guise under which I will approach it. Moreover, Hegel himself uses this guise to introduce his readers to the *Logic* in the opening of the *Encyclopedia Logic*. In the first part of this essay, I will provide a careful reading of these sections (§§19-24). Starting with the initial conception of thought we all share insofar as we are thinkers – that it is a subjective capacity that employs concepts (§20), that it can arrive at the truth about the world (§21), and that it arrives at that truth by actively determining the way we represent sensible/perceptual content (§22) – he shows that we are inevitably led to another conception of thought, objective thought (§23).¹ Objective thought is the nature common to both thinking and being. As an account of the nature of thinking is traditionally called “logic,” while an account of being is traditionally called “metaphysics,” an account of objective thought is both logic and metaphysics insofar as these coincide with one another. We are driven to objective thought to

¹ Hegel describes the kind of active determination as a change, so that thought actively determines sensibility in part by changing the way we represent sensible content. I discuss this more difficult aspect of Hegel's claim (that the kind of active determination in question is change) and the worries that it raises in §3.

make sense of the understanding (explored in §§20-22) we all have of ourselves as thinking beings.

Two interpretive claims distinguish my interpretation of objective thought, of the topic and aim of the *Logic*, from other interpretations: first, the argument I emphasize rests on nothing other than the fact that we thinkers can, through thinking, arrive at truths about the world. Second, on my account Hegel urges that the notion of objective thought is internal to the everyday self-understanding we all have of what we do when we, through thinking, arrive at truths about the world. That is, the notion of objective thought, of “absolute idealism” and “speculative metaphysics,” is implicit in our ordinary understanding of ourselves as thinkers.

The idea of objective thought is hard to understand, and I only introduce the topic in this chapter. In the next two chapters I describe objective thought in detail, in particular how it relates to the so-called strong transcendental arguments criticized by Barry Stroud (chapter 2) and what its form must be like to respond to the worry that thought is parochial.

By way of an overview of what is to come in this chapter, I will briefly sketch the claim of each section of the introduction to the *Encyclopaedia Logic* (§§19-24).² In section §19 the topic of the logic is introduced provisionally as an account of “the idea” insofar as it is thought; what makes this provisional is that Hegel does not yet make it clear what he means by thought. §20 starts to clarify this by giving a gloss on the nature of thinking as a subjective capacity. According to §20, the capacity to think has the form of universality (it employs general concepts, and relates what we think about to what is, in general). §21 argues that, as thinkers, we take ourselves to be able to arrive at the truth through reflecting on the subject matter of our thoughts. §22 then notes that insofar as thought is about something given in perception, thought arrives at

² The introduction concludes with §25. §25 repeats some of what is said in §24 and introduces the topic of the next sections (§§26-78) in which Hegel discusses different views philosophers have had about the relation between thought and what it thinks about. I will not be discussing these later sections, and so I do not discuss §25.

the truth about that through changing the manner in which we represent it. This sets up a worry: first, if thought is active, then how can we avoid thinking that its activity makes its results parochial to it? And, second, if its activity consists in changing the way we represent what we are given in sensibility, then how can we avoid the conclusion that it is thereby limited? Both points lead to the worry that thought arrives not at the truth about the subject matter but only at a truth about how things appear to beings with this kind of capacity, given the change that thought effects. The way to combine §§21 and 22, thought's capacity to arrive at the truth and the fact that it is active and changes the manner in which we represent what is given to us in sensibility, is through noting that thought is self-determining or free (§23) and connecting this concept of freedom to “objective thought,” such that an account of thought (logic) is also an account of being (metaphysics) (§24). So, the activity and the change are no limitations on thought, and do not make thought parochial, because they stem from thought's freedom or capacity to determine itself in accordance with the truth.³ §19 is thus clarified: the idea insofar as it is thought is the self-determination of the conditions on the possibility of thought such that it is also the determination of the conditions on the possibility of being. This is the flow of the argument; now I want to examine it in more detail.

§1

In §19, Hegel claims that “Logic is the science of *the pure idea*, which is the idea in the abstract element of *thought*.” This makes it seem as though logic is not about the nature of thought – rather, it is about something particular (the idea) insofar as it is thought. But Hegel notes in the remark that we can also say that the topic of logic is thought itself, “its

³ This idea is difficult, especially with the invocation of a change, and I say more in response to the worry that Hegel, on my interpretation, falls prey to the Myth of the Given in §3.

determinations and laws” (§19A). What is crucial is that thought figures as the topic of logic, as the idea, not insofar as it is “formal but rather as the self-developing [*sich entwickelnde*] totality of its own determinations and laws – ones it gives its self, does not already *have* and find in itself” (§19A).⁴ This raises a question about what the idea can be, such that it makes sense to describe it as something that can be in the element of thought and also be thought itself (on a certain conception of it). We will come back to this question below; what is important at present, and what Hegel picks up on in the following sections, is the claim that logic is the science of the self-development of thought. What does this mean? Does thought indeed develop itself?

To help us to understand this claim, Hegel directs us to “take up thought in its closest lying representation” – that is, the conception of thought with which we are most familiar (§20). He articulates three characteristics of this representation (from §§20-22). The first characteristic is seen in thought’s “ordinary subjective meaning, as one of the spiritual [*geistigen*] activities or capacities *alongside* others” (§20).⁵ That is, we ordinarily consider thought to be one of the capacities that we possess, in addition to “sensibility, intuition, imagination, etc.; desire, will, etc.” (§20). The activity of thought, Hegel claims, is characterized in terms of its universality (*Allgemeinheit*). As an initial gloss on what he means by this, one can point to the fact that thought employs general representations or concepts. That this is what he means is suggested, for instance, by his contrast between thought and sensibility, which he explicitly links to singularity in §20A.⁶ This interpretation is also suggested by his claim in §20A that representation has the

⁴ Hegel employs the expressions “sich” and “sich selbst” frequently, and at least sometimes the difference between the two expressions is important. To keep track of the distinction while remaining neutral on an account of its significance, I translate “sich” by “itself” and “sich selbst” by “its self.”

⁵ As we will see, the other two characteristics are also grounded in the “ordinary subjective meaning” of thought.

⁶ In §20A he does not further describe intuition and imagination, but in his description of them in the *Philosophy of Spirit* he links both to space and time (cf. §§449z, 455), and in §20A he describes being in space and time (“the *next to* and the *after* one another”) as a form of singularity (in which different singular objects stand in relation to one

form of universality in it insofar as my representations are related to or taken up as mine – a fairly clear reference to Kant’s claim that my representations are mine in virtue of being able to be taken up into thought by me (such that I can append the “I think” to them). In taking up a representation into thought, I give it conceptual or general form.

This is only an initial gloss of what Hegel means by claiming that thought is universal; we will have to return to supplement it with a further characterization after we consider the next claim that Hegel makes. Thought, Hegel claims, is “the *active* [tätige] universal” because it is the activity of producing the form of universality and, thereby, it is distinguished from other subjective activities that we engage in (§20). Moreover, he notes that that it is “self-activating,” or “acts upon *itself*” (sich *betätigende*). He justifies this description by saying that “the act [Tat], what is brought forth, is just the universal” (§20).⁷

This claim is initially puzzling: in what sense is the activity of thought a form of self-activity? For instance, when I think about cats and rocks and most other ordinary objects, my activity is directed towards those objects and not towards myself. I do bring forth the universal, in that I am responsible for the generality of my representations. But what I come to know is not itself universal – as we will see, Hegel thinks that I actively determine my sensible representations, which are singular and not universal. In what sense is thought acting upon itself by determining my perception of a cat, such that I form the general representation cat?

another). The contrast with desire and will is harder to make out; that the contrast would be different, however, is suggested by the use of the semicolon to separate the two series of capacities.

⁷ Hegel uses the term “Tätigkeit” and its cognates to translate Aristotle’s “*energeia*” (cf. §34z) which can be translated into English with either activity or actuality (for an insightful treatment, cf. Beere 2009). (Hegel may not always have Aristotle in mind when he uses the term “Tätigkeit” and its cognates, but the reference to Aristotle at §23A and the resonance of Hegel’s argument with one that he attributes to Aristotle in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* suggest that Aristotle is indeed on his mind in these sections of the EL.) As he notes in his lectures on Aristotle, Hegel wants to keep firmly in view the idea of activity, but he also strongly implies that he thinks of being active in the *tätige*-way as a way of being (cf. LHoP, 237-8 (71-2)) – hence, the connection to actualization should not be lost. I will translate the term and its cognates using “activity” and its cognates, but will sometimes also give alternative glosses as a reminder of the connection to actualization. In this case, since the activity is directed upon itself, the Cambridge translation of “acts upon *itself*” seems apt.

To see the puzzle, note that Hegel's claim is not simply that thought is responsible for the generality of its representations. His claim is rather that that very generality is a way of actualizing the nature of the subject matter, what I am thinking about. The first claim, that thought is responsible for the generality of its representations, is sufficiently conveyed by the idea that it is "the *active* universal." To then say that it is "self-activating" must mean that it actively determines itself in producing the generality of the representation. But what it actively determines is its subject matter, what it is thinking about. How can it actively determine itself in determining its subject matter? That is, how can it actualize the nature of its subject matter by actualizing its own nature?⁸

A helpful way of getting the difficulty in view is to consider another activity: the activity of housebuilding. In building, the house-builder acts upon (say) trees. The wood that she chops down to build the house is, potentially, a house – and in building the house, she realizes or makes that potentiality actual. But the wood is not a house, and in being made into a house the wood does not realize its nature as wood. Similarly, it seems that when I actively determine my sensible representation of a cat, I do not realize that representation by making it into a concept.

What can Hegel mean by saying that?

At this point, it is worth noting that there are at least two different interpretations of Hegel's claim that thought is self-active, corresponding to two different translations of the term

⁸ I include this paragraph to forestall an overly quick response to Hegel's claim that thought is self-activating. The overly quick response is to hear this as a way of putting the Kantian claim that thought determines itself: as we will see, Hegel thinks that thought determines itself, and as self-determining it is always the cause of its own acts and so in that sense always self-activating. This reading of Hegel's claim is right, but it moves too quickly for Hegel's opening argument. In particular, we need to work out how the activity of thought relates to the nature of what it thinks (cats, houses, states of affairs, etc.). Is Hegel's claim that thought actualizes only its own nature (as the quick invocation of self-determination might lead one to think) or is his claim that it actualizes the nature of what it thinks about? I will argue that it actualizes both its own nature and the nature of what it thinks about. But it is not at all obvious how it can be both. The idea of self-determination has its proper place in an explanation of how it can be both – and Hegel is building up to that idea, as the only idea that can respond to the worries about thought that Hegel will try to develop in his readers in §§21-3. My plan is to work up to this more developed understanding of self-determination by gradually building up the sense in which thought is universal and active.

“indem” (the term Hegel uses to link the description and its justification). First, one can take him to mean that thought is self-active only some of the time, whenever it acts upon what is itself universal.⁹ In support of this reading is the idea that we are in the midst of giving an account, or thinking about, the nature of thinking. Since the nature of thinking is to be universal, an account of it would be an account of what is universal. Hence, in giving an account of thinking, we think of what is universal and thereby actualize the nature or character of what we are thinking about.¹⁰

The difficulty with this interpretation is that Hegel seems to be offering a general description of thought, and not specifically a description of thought about thought. Thought is, in general, universal and active. Presumably, it is also in general self-active. This idea suggests an interpretation of “indem” on which it is not circumscribing: thought is self-activating in general.¹¹ But how can that be? After all, thought is not in general about itself: we have concepts of all sorts of things that are not themselves thoughts. So how can Hegel mean the description of thought as self-active to be general?

At this point, it is helpful to revisit the initial gloss on what the universality of thought means. Above I said that this means that it employs concepts. And, I believe, that is still right.

⁹ This is the sense given to the sentence in the Cambridge translation: “the universal that acts upon *itself* in so far as [*indem*] its accomplishment, i.e. what it produces, is the universal.” On this translation, “indem” would be circumscribing. Hegel uses the term unambiguously in this way at the opening of the very next section, where he claims that “Insofar as [*indem*] thought as active is taken in connection to its objects [*Gegenstände*]...” (§21). His point is not that thought is always taken in connection to its objects; rather his point is only to note a consequence of taking it in that way, whenever we do so.

¹⁰ Michael Wolff offers an insightful interpretation of the argument in the “Concept” section of the *Logic* along these lines. The concept of the concept is universal, like every other concept, but its universality is precisely what makes it the particular concept that it is (its defining characteristic). The concept horse, for instance, is no actual horse, in that it is universal and not a particular horse, while the concept concept is an actual concept precisely because of its universality. Cf. Wolff 2013: 92-4.

¹¹ This is the sense given to the sentence in the Hackett translation: “the *self*-actuating universal, since [*indem*] the act, or what is brought forth, is precisely the universal.” Here “indem” just names the condition which warrants the description, where that is generally present. This sense is unambiguously present, for instance, in Hegel’s claim in §20A that “thought is present everywhere in that [*indem*] I am at the same time in all of my perceptions, representations, conditions, etc.” Thought is only present everywhere if the “I” is generally present in my perceptions, etc.; the alternative circumscribing translation (insofar as) makes no sense in this case.

But in addition to that, Hegel seems to have in mind that thought relates its subject matter to what is, in general. This claim is somewhat uncommon or unusual in contemporary philosophy. But it is nevertheless present in our everyday understanding, in a way which Hegel will soon draw our attention to (cf. the examples in §21z, discussed below). We explain things (events, objects, their properties) in general terms, such that we take our explanations to be true in general or without restriction. Water freezes at 0 degrees Celsius – I take this claim to be generally true, and in need of revision or at least further specification if people find water at 0 degrees that is not frozen (perhaps it has not yet frozen, or perhaps it is not really water, or perhaps...). That is, when I think about things – or, at least, when I explain things in thought – I relate what I am thinking about to what is, in general.

That Hegel means to invoke this with his claim that thought is universal is suggested in §20A when he distinguishes between representation and thought: representation, like thought, involves generality, but in representation, unlike in thought, we “isolate” concepts from one another (§20A). The point, I take it, is that in thought we relate our representations to one another and, ultimately, to everything thinkable. This interpretation is also suggested by the way Hegel’s description resonates with Aristotle’s description of thought in *de Anima* 3.4. Aristotle says, first, that “everything is a possible object of thought.” Second, he claims that thought has the nature of everything, in a state of potentiality when it is not thinking and in a state of actuality when it is thinking. For otherwise, Aristotle claims, thought will have a nature particular to it, and this nature will interfere with its capacity to think any object.¹² That is, thought is universal in that its object is, formally considered, identical with what is, such that the form of thought does not impose any limitations on what can be its object. In this it contrasts

¹² Cf. Aristotle 1991: *de Anima* 3.4 (429a10-430a9).

with, for instance, sight: the seeable, unlike the thinkable, is not universal; rather, the seeable demarcates a particular way of being (one which, for instance, excludes sounds).¹³

The two ways in which thought is universal – that it employs concepts and that it relates its subject matter to what is, in general – are intimately related to one another. For all concepts share, as a common feature or mark, that they are concepts of some object. Whatever additional marks differentiate one concept from another (for instance, living or non-living; hard or soft), all concepts share in common that they are concepts of some object in general. Consequently, whenever I think about an object using a concept, part of what I am doing is thinking of that object as an object, and I thereby relate it to objects in general or, equivalently, to what is in general.

Getting this second characterization of the universality of thought in view enables us to resolve the puzzle about what Hegel can mean when he says that thought is self-active. The difficulty that seems to block the second interpretation, on which thought is always self-active, is that we think about other things all the time; that is, it seems like we are only thinking about thought some of the time, and so only actualizing the nature of the subject matter some of the time. There are thoughts that take cats as their subject matter, and there are thoughts that take thought as their subject matter; the characterization of thought as self-active (in acting on its subject matter) only seems to apply to the latter. (This basic picture provides the impetus for the circumscribing reading of thought's self-activity.)

The appeal to the second characterization of thought's universality enables us to avoid this worry by undercutting one of its assumptions. Specifically, both interpretations assume that thought is about itself only when it takes itself as a particular object. But that is a bad

¹³ My thanks to Wolfram Gobsch for helping me to see the significance of the reference to Aristotle, especially as it bears on the nature of thought's universality and the two readings of the claim that thought is self-active.

assumption: thought is, as Hegel notes, universal, and it has no other nature than to be universal. What is, in general, and the thinkable are identical. Further, when I think about cats, I relate them to what is: for instance, in relating a cat to the mat it is on, part of my thought is to think about this cat as part of the world in general. But to think about the world in general, or about what is, is just to think about what is thinkable. So, when I think about the cat, I relate it to what is thinkable, in general, and therein I relate it to the nature of thought. The nature of the object in general is the nature of thought in general, as Aristotle's claims about thought and our everyday understanding of explanation bring out. Thought always actively determines itself, in that it always takes itself as its object. Not in the sense in which it takes cats and rocks and other singular things as its objects; rather it relates these things to thought. It is self-active in that it always relates its subject matter back to itself.

We can see a little bit better the way in which thought is the self-active universal if we, with Hegel, consider that our acts of thought are not isolated from one another. Rather, we relate our thoughts to one another, paradigmatically in inference. And these relations are not only ways in which we determine what is, drawing new conclusions from antecedently known premises, but also ways in which we determine thought, as I now think something I did not think before. So, in the act of drawing the conclusion I am not only acting on the object, by determining it; I am also acting on myself as a thinker, by determining what I think.¹⁴

¹⁴ Hegel's claim that thought is self-active is, I have argued, an implicit reference to Aristotle's description of thought's nature in *de Anima* 3.4. It is also an implicit reference to Kant's claim in §15 of the B-Deduction that combining representations is an act of thought's "self-activity." Kant links this claim to the representation of the "I think," and claims against Descartes that the I think is not something I represent as an object, one among many; rather, I represent the I think insofar as I combine representations and take them up into thought. This is, at root, the same point that Hegel is making.

It is worth noting that Hegel disagrees with some of the implications that Kant draws from this anti-Cartesian point, specifically his conclusions in the Paralogisms about the unknowability of the I as a substance. And this disagreement is implicit in his claim in §20 that thought is one capacity among others: that is, though thought is indeed universal, its way of being universal involves its being particular, and our representation of this universal as

§2

So far, our account of thought involves the fairly straightforward claim that it is a subjective activity (one among many), and the somewhat more complicated claim that it is universal or general in that it employs concepts and relates its subject matter to what is in general. We have also seen that it is self-active or self-determining, with the suggestion that this has something to do with the fact that its nature is one with the nature of what is. This last claim needs to be developed further; I propose to do so through an examination of §§21-3.

In §21, Hegel turns to an account of the activity of thought in relation to its “subject matter” or “object” (*Gegenstand*). He calls the activity of thought in relation to its subject matter “*reflection on something* [Nachdenken über *etwas*]” (§21). He introduced the term “Nachdenken über” earlier, in his introduction to the entire *Encyclopedia*, where he notes that there is an “*old prejudice*” that we need to reflect in order to arrive at what is “*true*” “in the objects [*Gegenständen*] and events, also feelings, intuitions, opinions, representations, etc.” (§5). By “prejudice” (“*Vorurteil*”), he seems to mean something that we take for granted when we think, or something that is prior (“*vor*”) to our judgments (“*Urteil*”); he does not mean that it is for that reason wrong or to be rejected. This comes out in §21 when he describes the same point not as an “old prejudice” but as an “old belief”: “the universal as the product of reflection’s activity contains the value of the *Sache*, the *essential*, the *inner*, the *true*”.¹⁵

a particular (both as the principle of a particular kind of being – the rational animal – and as a particular capacity of such a being) enables us to go farther than Kant in our account of its nature (Hegel thinks).

¹⁵ Similar passages can be found in the *WdL*: cf. 5.25-6/21.14-5, 5.38/21.29, 5.44-5/12.34-5. I leave the term “*Sache*” untranslated, because how to translate it is a matter of some controversy. Pinkard, for instance, thinks of it as meaning something like “the heart of the matter” (cf. Pinkard 1994: 119). As Wolfram Gobsch pointed out to me, in §21 at least “*Sache*” means something like “thing” or “objective” – and Hegel is saying that this thing (*Sache*) that the universal gets at its value, which is to be the essential, true, or heart of the matter.

With this claim Hegel suggests that it is internal to the activity of thinking that it takes itself to be able to know the world. That is, considering the subjective activity of thinking from the side of what it is about, it is distinguished as the activity which can arrive at the truth. The sense of truth that he means is richer than the truth found in my judgment that I ate an apple yesterday (the greater richness is suggested by the series of italicized terms in the prior quote). We can begin to get at the kind of truth he is talking about with the idea of an explanation or account of the subject matter: he gives as an example the explanation for why thunder follows lightning (cf. §21z). We perceive that it does, perhaps we do so several times. In the infinitely diverse details of our perceptions of these events, we seek order through reflection. We find that order when we find the cause for why thunder follows lightning.

The most general way of putting what kind of account Hegel is talking about is that we account for the singular through a general concept or claim. So, for example, he describes the activity of children who know a grammatical rule and are trying to apply it in various cases: the rule, he notes, is general, and they are trying to apply it to individual cases (cf. §21z). This also explains the example he gives of employing a means to an end: we reflect on the “means and tools” we have at our disposal, and we determine what we should do with those particular objects according to our end (§21z). The end is “the universal, the governing” in that it is through the end that we organize the individual means and tools we have available (§21z). I set aside the nail and pick up the screw because that is what will enable me to build a more durable chair, so that I might rest in it for longer. My aim is to build a durable chair, which is a general end that can be realized in a variety of different ways. Here the kind of account I give of the singular (the nail and the screw) is not an explanation of why it is the way it is; rather, I create the order I represent (I build the chair, using the means) through a practical representation of the end. But in all of the

cases Hegel describes we have the idea (emphasized in each) of arriving at an account of the singular through a general concept or claim.

Hegel's claim, then, is that thought can give an account of the world: the world is such that thought can know it. Or, to use the traditional terminology, the world has a *logos*, “*nous, thought* is the principle of the world” (5.44/21.34). It is crucial, on my interpretation of Hegel, that this grand-sounding metaphysical claim is present in the everyday understanding of thinkers – it really is an “old belief” that we all have.¹⁶ We all, for instance, take it that there is some explanation for why thunder follows lightning, and that we, or at least some scientist with the relevant expertise, can figure it out. We all know that there are rules for grammar, and we can all follow or recognize them in indefinitely many different cases. We may not be able to articulate them, but we take it – we *know* – that there are such rules.¹⁷

The idea in §21 explains in somewhat more concrete terms what Hegel means when he claims in §20 that thought is the self-active universal. This initially seemed strange, at least if it was supposed to be generally true of thought, because we obviously think about non-universal things all the time. And §21 emphasizes that – we think about singular objects like this nail and about singular events like this flash of lightning. Part of his point in §21 is that our capacity to give an account of such things, to explain them through general concepts (like nail and

¹⁶ James Kreines has recently defended something like this view in his account of Hegel's “metaphysics of reason”: cf. esp. the arguments against “humeanism” in Kreines 2015: chapter 2 as well as his discussion of the error of “sensibilizing reasons” in chapter 1. We take this commitment to very different conclusions, based on different interpretations of what Hegel thinks is required to sustain it, but I have learned from Kreines's articulation of this commitment (and his attempt to ground it in our ordinary understanding of explanation).

¹⁷ This is not to say that, when trying to articulate their nature, we do not often get very confused – the nature or form of these rules is not something we tend to think about and it would not be at all surprising if we became confused when we did so. Such confusions might then be responsible for a radical misunderstanding of our own linguistic capacity, in which we confusedly assimilate the nature of that capacity to something with a more familiar but very different logical form; or they might be responsible for a less radical misunderstanding of our linguistic capacity, in which we give an account of the rules at play that has the right form but gets the particular rule wrong. None of this tells against Hegel's claim that even children can recognize general rules of grammar and can learn how – come to know how – to apply those rules to a host of cases.

lightning), reaches the truth about them. Consequently, it must be that what is universal constitutes their nature. And, indeed, that must be part of our everyday understanding: we take it that we can explain why the world is the way it is through appealing to general concepts which the objects and events in the world instantiate. If we tie the idea of what is true or essential in something to the idea of an explanation for why it is the way it is, then we can see what it means to say that the universal is the truth of the particular and, consequently, we can unpack another aspect of what Hegel means when he says that thought actively determines itself. The matter of thought, what it thinks about, is itself universal, present in these objects and events. When we sense these things, the nature of what we are sensing is universal, but it is not present to us (in sensation) in a universal form.¹⁸ Thought then acts upon our sensible representations of these things, producing universal determinations of them, and thereby realizes their nature. (Contrast this again with the case of housebuilding, in which we do not realize the nature of the wood by shaping it into a house.)

At this point, it should be relatively clear that the way in which thought is one with the objects thought about, such that in determining them (in thought) it determines itself, takes place at the level of the natures of thought and things. That is, the laws that explain the objects that we think about are, on Hegel's view, general – in that sense, the nature of these objects is general. Moreover, the acts of thought employ concepts, or general representations – in that sense, the nature of our thoughts is general. Since we take it that we arrive at the truth about objects in thought, this means that the laws – as opposed to the individual objects or the individual thoughts – that explain the objects thought about and the laws that explain our thoughts are what are supposed to be one or identical.

¹⁸ This might raise the worry that Hegel's conception of sensation is mythical, made to play a cognitive role that his account of it makes it unfit to play. I will respond to this objection at length in the next section.

This does not mean that what we sense is not really singular; nor does it mean that we can arrive at a complete concept of what we sense such that we can completely account for it in thought. Both of these commitments go beyond anything Hegel says in §§20-1. His starting point is the fact that we all take ourselves to be able to arrive at the truth about singular things through thinking about them, employing general concepts in an account of them. If we can do that, if we can arrive at the truth about singular things in thought, then the antics and characteristics of those singular things must be what they are in virtue of general causes and explanations. This is not to say that there is nothing genuinely singular: the singular is precisely what those causes cause and what those explanations explain. Nor is it to say that we have the capacity to exhaustively account for their antics and characteristics – perhaps we can never finish an account of them, perhaps there is something wrong with the very idea of finishing an account of them. Both of the commitments – that there are no singular things, that we can have a complete concept of the things we sense – might well be things we say to make sense of or explain the old belief that Hegel articulates. But Hegel does not here commit himself to either claim as a way of making sense of that old belief and, I would argue, he elsewhere denies both claims.

So, thought (as we customarily understand it) can arrive at the truth. Next Hegel claims that it must change the sensible representations, or whatever representations it works on, to arrive at that truth: “Through reflection, something is changed in the type, how the content initially is in perception, intuition, representation; it is thereby only *by means of* a change, that the *true* nature of the *subject matter* comes to consciousness” (§22; cp. §50A)¹⁹. Here Hegel describes the activity of thinking as producing a change – whatever the change is between something’s being perceived or intuited and it’s being thought. §20A tells us that what distinguishes thought from perception is that thought has the form of universality whereas perception has the form of

¹⁹ I consider further evidence that Hegel thinks reflection produces a change in the next section.

singularity. So, Hegel says, thought must change the type of representation from something singular to something universal. Only thereby does it arrive at the truth.

The claim that thought produces a change is quite difficult, and I will consider it at length in the next section. In this section, I just want to focus on the claim that thought is active in determining sensation, abstracting from the specific claim that this activity of determination involves a change. This point by itself is worth getting into focus, because its import is not always appreciated.

Consider, for instance, Robert Stern's interpretation of §§21-2. He sees Hegel as affirming that thought can reach the truth about singular things and events, and that these truths are expressed using concepts. He understands this to express Hegel's commitment to conceptual realism, the view that the objects in the world are constituted by universals or kind-terms. If all Stern were to mean by conceptual realism is that we arrive at the truth through thinking about singular things and events using concepts, then that is indeed justified by §§21-2. However, Stern thinks of this realism as incompatible with thought playing a determining role in its activity: so, for instance, he says that "the unity of the object is derived from the embodiment of a universal substance-form, and is *not* grounded in the unity of the subject."²⁰ This passage reveals that Stern thinks of the activity of thinking as a kind of finding, and not as a kind of determining of what is given to sensation. Precisely not, he thinks, for otherwise the concept could not be real, could not really characterize the singular event and thing. Stern acknowledges that thought, "Mind," must be active in some way – he insists, for instance, that we have to "go further" than what is given in sensation and perception.²¹ But he does not appreciate what it would be to go further: going further requires actively determining the representations given in

²⁰ Stern 1990: 111-2.

²¹ Stern 2008: 164; cp. Stern 1990: 117.

sensibility and perception, as noted above. Specifically, going further requires understanding the form of thought to be responsible for the generality of our representations. Perhaps one thinks that that generality needs to be in some way already present in sensation (Hegel thinks this, as we will see); nevertheless, the source of the generality is our capacity to think, and so the concepts that are really present in the objects are determined by the unity of the subject. Or, at least, this is what Hegel is arguing for. Stern might retort that the generality must be grounded in the nature of what we are thinking about – and I do not want to deny that. But he wrongly understands this to imply that it is not grounded in the nature of our capacity to think.

Stern’s view is distorted because it is structured around a refutation of the view that Mind gives unity to objects through imposing that unity on those objects, in such a fashion that the unity does not characterize what the objects are in truth.²² Hegel would reject any such view, as Stern sees. But Stern’s focus on that rejection leads him to think that Hegel, affirming that the unity of the concept is in the object, denies that it is the result of the activity of the subject. But that exactly misses Hegel’s thought, which is to insist *both* that the unity of the concept is in the object *and* that it is the result of the activity of the subject. It is difficult to make sense of this position, especially if one does without Kant’s appeal to pure forms of intuition; we will have to see slowly what the position comes to. But Hegel’s commitment to it is clearly expressed in a passage which illuminates exactly what goes wrong with Stern’s interpretation: in his account of theoretical cognition within the body of the *Logic*, Hegel claims that it is “just as one-sided” to think that the subject imposes (*hineinlegen*) its unity on the object as it is to think that the subject

²² This contrast is grounded on a bad reading of Kant’s idea of the synthetic activity of the subject, to which is coupled the idea that Hegel rejects Kant’s account of the role of that subject in experience. I will offer a different interpretation of Kant and of Hegel’s relation to Kant in chapters 5 and 6. There I argue that Hegel thinks of the nature of thought’s activity in reflecting on sensation in quite a Kantian way: that it involves the necessity of a synthesizing activity on the part of the subject. Further, I describe the nature of that synthetic activity in a way very much at odds with Stern’s description.

merely takes that unity from (*herausnehmen*) the object. The former position does indeed result in a “subjective idealism,” as Stern contends, but the latter position results in “the so-called realism” and is just as objectionable to Hegel (6.503/12.203).

To return to Hegel’s argument: we have seen that thought arrives at the truth by actively determining what is given to it in sensibility. The fact that the determination is effected by thought raises an immediate worry: how can it also capture the nature of what we are thinking about? Given that thought – not the object thought about – is active, how can the result of the activity be valid? How can the idea that thought arrives at the truth be combined with the idea that it actively determines its object?²³ Let’s call this worry, or threat to the validity of thought, the worry that thought is parochial: the most that thought can do is arrive at how the world seems to ones like us, where this is understood in a way which leaves it open whether that is how the world is. To conclude this section, I want to say a bit about the worry.²⁴

First, the worry is a threat that arises from within our understanding of ourselves as thinkers: for we are all cognizant of the fact that we do not know the truth simply in sensing, but must actively determine what we sense so as to reach the truth. This activity does not come from

²³ This will only emerge as a problem once we properly appreciate the fact that thought, on our everyday understanding of it, is active. If we miss this, then we will fail to see any reason to be worried about a possible gap that might open up between how the world must seem to us and how it is in fact. Consequently, a preoccupation with revealing that putative gap to be “*senseless*” will appear unmotivated, and we will see no reason to interpret Hegel’s idealism in relation to dissolving that gap (Stern, “Hegel’s Idealism,” 142). This is exactly how Pippin’s understanding of Hegel seems to Stern; Stern misses that the apparent gap arises in virtue of our understanding of thought as determining sensibility (another symptom of what goes wrong with his affirmation of conceptual realism and his rejection of Kant). The only way to dissolve the appearance of this gap is to make sense of the activity of thought as no imposition (cf. Pippin 2013: 376 and Pippin 2005b: 212). I will argue that doing that will turn out to require rendering the very thought that there is such a gap unintelligible (“*senseless*”). Stern is not wrong to insist that we need a reason to take the worry about a gap seriously; but we have such a reason, a reason arising from our everyday understanding of ourselves as thinkers.

²⁴ In conversation, Tom Evnen pressed upon me the difficulty of making sense of Hegel’s claim that thought produces a *change*; the use of that word (“*verändern*”) in particular (as opposed to the term used in §20, “*betätigen*”) makes the worry that thought is parochial particularly pressing (as I will try to show in the next section). Appreciating this difficulty led me to realize the centrality of the worry that thought is parochial to the argument in §§19-25. In the next section, I try to explain Hegel’s response to this worry, and thereby to explain why he uses such the term “*change*” in §22.

sensation itself: it comes from our thinking about, or reflecting on, what we sense. Hence, we all know that we produce the concepts we use to think about the world. But that means that I am cognizant of the fact that this concept is not simply passively received from the world itself – and so how can I take myself to be able to arrive at the truth about the world by employing it?

Second, the worry about parochialness can be directed at some particular act of thought, or some region of thoughts, or at the capacity to think itself. In the first two cases, the worry is that I think what I think not because it is true but because, say, I have bad eyesight, and so I misread a sign. Or I think what I think not because it is true but because I believe in ghosts, and so I see supernatural causes in many places where merely natural explanations in fact suffice. Raised in this way, the worry leaves the capacity to think itself in good standing, such that it can issue forth in thoughts that are not parochial (as when we correct an error by rereading the sign from closer up). This, though, is not the way in which the worry is raised by the considerations Hegel brings to bear in §21 – for this is a worry about the very capacity to think, or about how thought as such can arrive at the truth. If the laws that determine the nature of thinking are such that, in actively determining our sensible representations, they simply cannot arrive at the truth, then thought as such is parochial. In the best cases, we would think what we think because of the nature of thought, and this would leave it open whether it was true or not. That I am a thinker would be a fact about me on a par with my bad eyesight in the above example.

Third, the worry that thought as such is parochial might seem like a Cartesian worry about the possibility of knowledge, but it is not. The Cartesian worry is that the most that I can do is have thoughts about the world, but I can never know anything about it. This worry is not unrelated to the worry that thought is parochial, but it is a mistake to identify them. In particular, the Cartesian skeptical worry has a completely different origin from the worry that thought is

parochial. The former worry is generated by the fact that, in what look like best cases of possible knowledge of the world, we can be deceived and so do not in fact have knowledge. The worry that thought is parochial is generated by the fact that something about the form of our ordinary knowledge has its source in the activity of thinking, an activity that is not shared by the objects we are thinking about, such that it becomes difficult to grasp how the form produced by the activity of thinking can be rightly employed in cognition of those objects.

Finally, fourth, though I have introduced the worry that thought is parochial as though the worry were intelligible, we should not assume that the picture of thought as parochial in fact makes sense. For if thought is parochial, then we cannot even make sense of knowledge. And it might be that, since thought as an activity aims at knowledge, we cannot make sense of a conception of it on which knowledge is unintelligible. (I argue for this conclusion in chapter 2: the idea of a capacity to think which is as such parochial is not intelligible, in fact or for Hegel.) That the worry might ultimately be unintelligible, however, does nothing to dislodge the difficulty which it expresses: namely, making sense of the capacity to arrive at knowledge, on a conception of thought on which it is responsible for the form of that knowledge. If we cannot make sense of thought as parochial, that would not make this difficulty go away: it would simply give us the task of making sense of how thought can be non-parochial.

§3

Now I want to turn to Hegel's claim that thought determines what is given in sensibility by changing it: "Through reflection, something is changed in the type, how the content initially is in perception, intuition, representation; it is thereby only *by means of* a change, that the *true*

nature of the *subject matter* comes to consciousness” (EL §22).²⁵ This claim says more than that thought arrives at the truth by actively determining sensibility – it describes this determination as a change.²⁶ And this should raise worries that Hegel’s conception of sensibility and of perception falls into the Myth of the Given.

Taking our cue from McDowell, we can say that a thinker falls prey to the Myth when she offers an account of a capacity through which something is available for us to know where that availability does not involve attributing to the subject the various capacities required to know it.²⁷ This is a Myth, because I can know whatever is available (that is what it means for it to be available for knowledge) without being able to know it. The Myth occurs in accounts of sensibility when sensibility is understood to make the world available for knowledge while nevertheless the “deliverances” of sensibility are not understood to already involve the “capacities that belong to our rationality.”²⁸ For then what we sense would not simply as such be able to be thought. And it follows from this that an account of how we could think about the world on the basis of sensibility would not be an account available to us simply in judging about the world on the basis of sensibility, since there would be in sensibility that which is not as such there for thinking in judging on the basis of it. This would make it unintelligible how we could take it to be rational to judge in that way: for our entitlement to the judgment would have to appeal to the legitimacy of the process by which what we sense is taken up into judgment, and

²⁵ “Durch das Nachdenken wird an der Art, wie der Inhalt zunächst in der Empfindung, Anschauung, Vorstellung ist, etwas verändert; es ist somit nur vermittels einer Veränderung, dass die wahre Natur des Gegenstandes zum Bewusstsein kommt”

²⁶ In this passage, Hegel talks indifferently of perception, intuition, and representation: thought (apparently) acts by changing each of these. In what follows I will talk about sensibility, in order to simplify the presentation, but it should be kept in mind that what I say will also hold good of Hegel’s account of perception and of representation.

²⁷ As McDowell puts it “Givenness in the sense of the Myth would be an availability for cognition to subjects whose getting what is supposedly Given to them does not draw on capacities required for the sort of cognition in question” (2009b: 256).

²⁸ McDowell 2009b: 257.

we do not know the legitimacy of this process in judging. Since taking our judgments to be rational or at least to be able to be rational is internal to the activity of judging, this account makes the idea of judgment on the basis of sensibility incoherent.²⁹

Given this account of the Myth, it is easy to see why Hegel's claim that thought changes sensibility raises the worry of Givenness. If thought changes our sensible representations, then it seems that those sensory representations must have a kind of content that is not already informed by thinking, such that we can then ask about the validity of the change that thought effects on that kind of content. To describe it as a change, after all, we must have some way of grasping what is changed prior to its change (sensible content uninformed by the capacity to think). And, having grasped it in that way, we can ask after the legitimacy of the change: does this change get at the truth? But this question could only be answered from "sideways on," from a vantage point outside of the activity of thinking about the world conceived now as changing the sensible representation. For the unchanged content is not grasped from within the very activity of thinking about the world: the content that we think is only the result of the change. It would follow that in judging on the basis of sensibility we cannot make sense of the legitimacy of our judging as we do. And this is just a version of the Myth of the Given.

As a first response to this problem, a reader might want to see whether we really have to take Hegel's talk of a "change" seriously. After all, the passage I have quoted comes from introductory material that is designed for use in lectures – perhaps Hegel is using the word

²⁹ This account of the Myth is quite compressed, and one might question it at various steps (and many have). I will take the argument for granted here, as it will turn out that Hegel agrees (or at least wants to agree with) all of it. Below I say more about the way in which taking our judgments to be rational is internal to the very activity of judgment (or, as McDowell puts it, the "exercises" of the faculty of reason "include vindicating one's entitlement" to those exercises (2009b: 256)), in connection with Hegel's claim that thought is free (cf. §5).

“change” just to emphasize that thought is active, as a way into the topic of objective thought, but not as a description he wants to rest any philosophical weight on.³⁰

This response might be motivated by charity in reading Hegel, and the charity might seem warranted if one takes into account the insistence with which Hegel rejects the Myth of the Given. For it is abundantly clear, just from the introductory materials in the *Encyclopedia Logic*, that Hegel thinks that sensibility as such is informed by thought. So he says in his discussion of the differences between intuition, representation, and thought that thought is present in all of my capacities: “Thus, the I is *thought* as *subjective*, and as I am at the same time in all of my sensations [*Empfindungen*], representations, states, etc., thought is present [*gegenwärtig*] everywhere and pervades all of these determinations as category” (§20A). And he repeated this point in his lectures in even stronger terms: “thought is the universal in all representations, memories, and in general in every spiritual activity, in all willing, wishing, etc. These are all only further specifications of thought” (§24z1).³¹ So, there is good reason to attribute to Hegel commitment to an understanding of sensation as already involving thought, and thereby avoiding the Myth.

Moreover, he makes the point against the Myth of the Given very clearly in his discussion of theoretical cognition in the *Philosophy of Spirit*. There he discusses different component forms of theoretical cognition (intuition, sensation, representation, memory, thought), and he describes them as different activities. However, he notes that this description can mislead insofar as it is thought that we could isolate the activities we have differentiated, give an account of them as isolated from one another, and then in a second act describe the way they all come together. He writes, “What in spirit’s activity can be *differentiated* [*unterschieden*], is held onto

³⁰ This possibility was suggested to me by John McDowell in conversation.

³¹ Later in this same addition he notes that “The human is thereby always thinking, also whenever he only intuits” (§24z1).

as a *self-standing determinacy*, and in this way spirit is made into a fossilized, mechanical *collection* [Sammlung]" (§445A). This view is "without reason [*Vernunftlose*]," he claims. In its place he argues that we should think of these differentiated activities as moments in the realization of cognition, and so not intelligible apart from their role in the overall activity of cognition ("Erkennen") as producing knowledge ("Wissen"): "The moments of cognition's realizing activity are intuition, representation, memory, etc.; the activities have no other immanent sense; their end is only the concept of cognition" (§445A).

These passages all strongly suggest that thought is internal to sensibility itself, or that thought is "operative" in sensibility (to use one of McDowell's glosses). Indeed, in the absence of any conflicting evidence, they do not merely strongly suggest it: they assert it vigorously. So, it might seem like we shouldn't rest much weight on Hegel's claim that thought changes what is given in sensibility, and thereby avoid attributing the Myth to him.

But it turns out that Hegel's claim that thought arrives at the truth by changing what is given in sensibility is not just found in EL §22. It recurs in many of his discussions of sensibility. So he says in his discussion of Kant in the *Encyclopedia Logic*:

To think the empirical world means much more essentially to change [*umändern*] its empirical form and convert [*verwandeln*] it into a universal; thought carries out at the same time a *negative* activity on that foundation; the perceived stuff, if it is determined through universality, does not remain in its first empirical shape. The inner *content* [Gehalt] of the perceived is lifted out with removal [*Entfernung*] and *negation* of the husk (§50A; cf. also §47A).³²

Moreover, in the *Philosophy of Spirit* he also describes the activity of thinking in terms of effecting a change in the intuition. Indeed, his picture seems to be that the way in which cognition realizes itself through its different activities, all understood to be only moments of the one activity of cognition, is through change, with each moment in the realizing of cognition

³² Perhaps the most natural translation of "verwandeln" is "transformation." But because I use that word in a technical sense later, I have decided to translate it by "convert" in what follows.

effecting a change on what we might describe as a “less realized” moment of cognition. So he notes, by way of a general overview of the activity of spirit, that “[t]he content [*Inhalt*] that is raised to intuitions, are *its* sensations, as [are] its intuitions, which are changed [*verändert*] into representations, and so on, representations, that are changed into thoughts, etc” (§440A).³³ And as he notes a few sections later, the different moments of the activity are different moments in the “sublation of immediacy or of subjectivity” such that “the so-called capacities of spirit in their differentiation [*Unterschiedenheit*] are to be observed only as stages of this freeing” from immediacy and subjectivity (§442A).

So, the evidence suggests that Hegel thinks there is something important in the idea that the activity of reflecting on something given in sensation involves change, a *Veränderung* or a *Verwandlung*.³⁴ Indeed, what is perhaps most striking is that he thinks of this changing as importantly involved in explaining the way in which sensibility is already informed by thought, and so as essential to his version of resisting the Myth of the Given. So, my first, exegetical point is that any attempt to be charitable to Hegel’s position needs to combine rejecting the Myth with taking seriously the idea of changing what is given in sensation.

But how can we do that? What can Hegel have meant by insisting on these two points together? To get at this, it is important to return to the way in which the Myth is supposed to be generated by invoking a change. If there is a change, the argument ran, then there must be that which is changed. And so we can ask whether that which is changed is truly represented through the change. This question indicates the presence of the Myth because and insofar as it can only

³³ The German is quite abbreviated, which is reflected in my translation: “*Der Inhalt, der zu Anschauungen erhoben wird, sind seine Empfindungen, wie seine Anschauungen [es sind], welch in Vorstellungen, und so fort Vorstellungen, die in Gedanken verändert werden usw*” (§440A; the material in the brackets comes from the editors in the Suhrkamp edition).

³⁴ Further evidence occurs in his description of theoretical cognition within the *Logic* proper, in which he describes analytic cognition as “the conversion [*Verwandlung*] of the given stuff into logical determinations” (6.503/12.203).

be asked from outside of the very thought in question: that is, sensibility is Mythical if in changing it we do not take up into thought what we sense as such but only the product of the change. The Myth transpires, then, insofar as the content of the sensation is changed, such that that very content is not understood to be already informed by thought (but rather is understood to be outside of the “space of reasons,” incapable of making it rational for me to judge on its basis).

If we look closer at the passages in which Hegel claims that thought effects a change in what is presented to me in sensation, we see that the change is made not on the content of that sensation but rather on its form. So he says in EL §22 that what is changed is something in the “type” (“*Art*”) of our representation, or something in “how” (“*wie*”) the content is represented. And he claims in his discussion of Kant that it is precisely the content (“*Gehalt*”) that is lifted out (“herausgehoben”); what is changed is its “shape” by removing that content from the “husk” of its “empirical form” (EL §50A). And in the *Philosophy of Spirit* his claim is that the “content” (“*Inhalt*”) is “raised up” (“*erhoben*”) (PG §440A). Moreover, he insists at the outset of the *Encyclopedia* as a whole that “the true *content* [*Inhalt*] of our consciousness is *maintained* in the translation of it into the form of thought and the concept” even while insisting that reflection on that content “converts [*verwandeln*] feelings, representations, etc. into *thoughts*” (EL §5). That is, his point is that the content remains the same through the change from one activity to another.

This important specification of the change should help allay the worry that Hegel’s conception of sensation is Mythical. In particular, his point is compatible with thinking that thought is operative not just in sensibility in general but even in the content of sensation itself – that content is informed by thought, such that the capacity that we use to think it is already operative in that very sensation. Only it is not operative in its conceptual form – it is operative rather in its sensible form.

As Hegel attempts to spell this out, that means that the same content is present in sensation in the form of “singularity” and of its being “outside of one another,” such that one bit of sensible content stands “*next*” to other sensible content and “*after*” or “*before*” other sensible content (§20A).³⁵ By contrast, the content is present in thought in the form of universality, which I have tried to explain as lying in its generality and as lying in its being related to what is *überhaupt*. These are two contrasting forms of the same content; and it is to emphasize the contrast between them that Hegel talks about the activity of thought as involving a change. So I sense singular objects and events unfolding in space and time. I take up what I sense into thought by isolating determinations, which involves ignoring a mass of explanatorily irrelevant details, and thereby relate what I sense to what is in general (for instance, by subsuming these events under general laws).³⁶

It might help to unpack Hegel’s point about change if we compare it to McDowell’s position in “*Avoiding the Myth of the Given*.” In this later work, McDowell still maintains that thought is already operative in intuition, but he no longer claims that it is operative in “propositional” or “discursive form.” So, after noting that we should “centre our idea of the conceptual on the content of judgments” or, equally, “on the content of discursive activity,” he goes on to describe the way in which the form of judging and of discourse differs from the form of intuition.³⁷ In particular, he notes that discursive content is “*articulated*” while intuitional content is not, and clarifies this by describing articulation as an activity of “*putting significances together*.³⁸ And then he notes that to put one significance together with another, “one needs to carve out that content from the intuition’s unarticulated content.... Intuiting does not do this

³⁵ At EL §42z1 he describes this as the “properly fundamental determination [*Grundbestimmung*]” of the “sensible”; cf. also PG §§441z, 443z, 444z.

³⁶ For Hegel’s most thorough discussion of this, cf. PG §§446-468.

³⁷ McDowell 2009b: 262.

³⁸ McDowell 2009b: 263.

carving out for one.”³⁹ Further, McDowell explains the sense in which intuitional content is still conceptual by noting that “every aspect of the content of an intuition is present in a form in which it is already suitable to be the content associated with a discursive capacity.”⁴⁰ Or, as he puts it a little later, “an intuition’s content is all conceptual, in this sense: it is in the intuition in a form in which one *could* make it, that very content, figure in discursive activity. That would be to exploit a potential for discursive activity that is already there in the capacities actualized in having an intuition with that content.”⁴¹

This picture is at least parallel to the position I attribute to Hegel: for McDowell, as for Hegel, there is a description of the form of the content of intuition (or sensation – I am here ignoring any differences one might want to establish between these notions) that contrasts with the description of the form of thought. In Hegel, the contrast is between the singular and the universal, while in McDowell it is between the unarticulated and the articulated.⁴² And for McDowell, as for Hegel, it is the very same content that figures in these two forms. Finally, for McDowell as for Hegel, one way of describing this change in form that focuses on the identity of the content is by exploiting Aristotle’s notion of an activity: the different forms are different stages in the realization of the content, as Hegel puts it; or, as McDowell puts it, discursive activity makes actual something that is already there *in potentia* in the intuition.

So much by way of a comparison to McDowell, and by way of an explanation of how Hegel invokes a change to avoid the Myth of the Given.⁴³ What I want to do now is to explain

³⁹ McDowell 2009b: 263-4.

⁴⁰ McDowell 2009b: 264.

⁴¹ McDowell 2009b: 266.

⁴² This difference is why I say that their positions are parallel and not identical. This difference in understanding the logic of sensible content and the logic of discursive content may or may not be important; exploring it and its significance lies outside the bonds of my concerns in this dissertation.

⁴³ It is perhaps worth noting that this parallel, if apt, will only convince someone that Hegel’s position fares as badly or as well as McDowell’s in responding to the Myth of the Given. One might think this is all the worse for Hegel.

the significance of Hegel's claim that the activity of thinking involves a change for his overall argument in the opening of the *Encyclopedia Logic*. To do that I will first articulate the way in which the change is present to us in everyday consciousness and then explain how invoking it rules out a potential response to the worry about parochialism.

Remember that Hegel's description of this activity as a change is meant to be present to all of us as a fact we can recognize simply by reflection on our own activity of thinking. A way of seeing its presence is by noting that we can reflect on the difference between the thought I have of an event, say, and the perception I have of the event: consider the event of lightning striking. I am aware, for instance, that my perception is filled with a great many details that I leave out when I form thoughts about the event, and indeed that the content as it is present to me in perception is of a singular event while the concepts I employ in thinking this content are general. I am also aware that the content of the perception is spread out in space and time in a way that the content of my thought is not. What I mean is that within perception I distinguish between that which comes after the lightning strike and that which comes before, and I distinguish between that which is to the left of it from that which is to the right of it. I can make all of these distinctions in thought too, but my judgment that a lightning bolt struck the field does not figure to the left or to the right of my other judgments and thoughts. And while I may have formed this judgment after I formed a judgment about, say, the purpose of the field, those two judgments do not exist in me one after another but rather in a logical relation, such that I can draw conclusions on the basis of the way they are together (e.g., the lightning bolt struck a field for grazing cows). Indeed, thought has the power to unite a manifold of spatially and temporally distinct objects, for instance by thinking in general about lightning strikes, and it is in virtue of

having this power that thought can explain what we perceive. But this means that the fundamental determination of our thoughts cannot be to be next to or after other thoughts.

Further, we are aware that the form that the content has in our thinking comes from us, from our nature as thinking beings, and not from perception. That is, we are aware that our thoughts are the product of a particular subjective activity – not intuition, not perception, but thinking (Hegel already noted this in §20). Sensation, perception, intuition – these are the activities in which we are determined or affected or receive the world. If we are changing the form of their content, and we are not doing so by another affection from the world, then it seems like the change that thought effects must prevent us from arriving at knowledge of the world. Or, as Hegel is reported to have said in his lectures, the fact that “our subjective activity” “reshapes [*umgestaltet*] the immediately at hand” “seems now at first glance totally perverted [*verkehrt*] and to contradict the end that concerns cognition” (EL §22z).

This is a version of the worry that thought is parochial. To see what work this specific version is doing, I want to consider one response to the worry about parochialism. The parochialism worry, generically stated, is the worry that thought is only capable of getting at how the world seems to me. One might think that to resolve this worry all one has to show is that the deliverances of sensibility are as such already informed by thought. I have tried to argue in this section that Hegel thinks that to even so much as possess the deliverances of sensibility, those deliverances must already be in some way informed or shaped by our rationality. And, if that is so, then how could the worry that thought imposes its merely subjective form even get off the ground?

The worry would get off the ground if there were reasons to worry that sensibility itself might be parochial. Such a worry would then raise questions like those raised about the parochial

character of thought: With what right do we think of these forms of sensibility as genuinely enabling us to think about the world, and not just how the world seems to ones like us (beings with sensible natures, or beings with this kind of sensible nature)?⁴⁴ This is the same worry about the parochial nature of thought, now focused on sensibility-enabled thought. And Hegel's claim that thought effects a change in the form of what is given to us in sensibility raises the worry about parochialism in a way which cannot be answered simply by the claim that our conceptual capacities are operative in sensibility. To make sense of the validity of sensibility-enabled cognition, we need to be able to think the identity of the way in which what we sense is in itself and the way in which it is for us, an identity which is present despite the change produced by thought. The thought of this identity cannot itself be theoretical: for any thought with a theoretical form will itself work only by effecting a change in the way its subject matter is given to it, and so will itself raise the very same question it is meant to answer. Hence, the worry about parochialism cannot be answered from within sensibility-enabled thought.

That is, Hegel's claim reveals that we cannot understand sensibility-enabled judgement to be that form of judgment that we can use to respond to this worry. For any judgment that is enabled by sensibility, we will be cognizant of the fact that there is something in our thought (its form) which is not supplied by sensibility, and so it will be intelligible for us to ask after our right to employ that form on this content. The right cannot come from sensibility itself – it must come from the way in which employing this form enables us to arrive at the truth about the world. But, within this form of cognition, our judgments are mediated by sensibility, and so the world can figure only as affecting us in sensibility. Hence, we cannot grasp the world as what we know from within this form of cognition. To validate judgments about the world that are enabled

⁴⁴ Hegel raises just such a worry about Kant, a worry I discuss in some detail (and in connection with both Pippin and McDowell) in chapter 6.

by sensibility, the world must be able to figure for us in a form of cognition that is not enabled by sensibility. If we only had the claim that thought is active in determining sensibility, but we lacked the specific claim that this activity involved a change in the form of sensibility, then we would lack a reason to think that we must go beyond sensibility-enabled cognition.

Another way of making this point is implicit in my response to the Myth of the Given above. The character of sensibility prior to the change lies outside of the activity of thought. In response to the Myth I argued that the character in question does not concern the content but rather the form of the content. But we must still wonder about the form: with what right do we think of the form of sensibility, singularity and being outside of one another, as enabling cognition of the world? Our right to do so cannot be understood within the activity of forming judgments on its basis. At least, it cannot be so understood if we are confined to sensibility-enabled cognition. And so to make sense of the validity of sensibility-enabled cognition we must have a form of cognition that is not enabled by sensibility.⁴⁵

The claim that sensibility-enabled knowledge cannot be the ultimate form of knowledge will recur throughout this dissertation (especially in chapters 5 and 6). What I hope to have done in this section is merely to introduce the idea of the change as one that is not obviously Mythical and as one that has important ramifications for how we are to understand the proper response to

⁴⁵ This argument is intimately connected to a point that Paul Franks has thematized in his work on Kant and early German Idealism: namely, that knowledge of the world that is enabled by sensibility is subject to ancient skepticism (specifically, the Agrippan trilemma). Franks has argued persuasively that the German Idealists all thought this and all concluded that the only way to explain the non-parochial character of sensibility-enabled knowledge was to appeal to a form of non-sensibility enabled knowledge that would explain it cf. Franks 2005: 80-3; for more discussion, cf. my introduction footnote #3. In lectures Hegel himself invoked the claim that sensibility enabled knowledge is subject to ancient skepticism (cf. EL §24z3; also §45z and compare §39A). The connection between the two points is as follows: sensible content is dispersed in space and time, and this is responsible for the inescapability of the Agrippan trilemma (nothing in space and time has its ground in itself, nor can there be a final ground within space and time, and a circle is at odds with the infinite dispersal of space and time). Sensibility-enabled thought can never by itself overcome the trilemma, since it will always have part of its ground in this dispersal. Hence, sensibility-enabled thought cannot by itself explain the character of space and time, and so the only way we can conceive of its activity on sensibility is as a change.

the worry about parochialism. But I want to turn now to a consideration of Hegel's attempt to respond to the worry.

§4

Now I want to turn to Hegel's response to the worry that thought is parochial. Hegel explicitly raised the worry in his lectures, according to student notes, and his account of thought's freedom in §23 is implicitly a response to it.⁴⁶ He introduces the idea of freedom in §23 on the basis of combining the idea that thought arrives at the truth (§21) and that it does so as “*my activity*” (§22), the same two thoughts that combine to produce the question about the possibility of the validity of thought. And when he gives his account of the freedom of thought he describes it as “a being by itself, determinationless as to [*nach*] subjectivity, which, as to [*nach*] its *content*, is at the same time only in the *Sache* and its determinations” (§23A). This description focuses on the claim that the freedom of thought, the appeal to the nature of the thinking subject, does not prevent thought from arriving at the truth. This is made even more explicit a little further down, when Hegel notes that “consciousness” can only arrive at the truth when it “*frees* itself from *all particularity*... and only makes [*tut*] the universal, in which it is identical with all individuals” (§23A).⁴⁷ That is, we have to understand the freedom of thought to consist in the capacity for a thinking being (consciousness) to arrive at the truth through freeing herself from everything particular about her, everything in her which does not flow just from her being a thinking being. This strongly suggests that Hegel introduces the idea of thought's

⁴⁶ Here's what Hegel is reported to have said: “one can say that it has been the conviction of all times that the substantial is reached first through the reworking [*Umarbeitung*] of the immediate,” what is given in sensation, perception, desire, “effected by the mediation of reflection,” the change effected by thought to arrive at the truth. “Against this, doubt is aroused then above all first in recent times, and the difference between what are the products of our thought and what are the things in themselves is held fast to. One has said that the in-itself of the things is something completely other than that which we make of it” (§22z).

⁴⁷ The same point is also made at §24z2, and is implied at the end of §22z.

freedom as a way of explaining how thought can actively determine sensibility without interposing between the subject matter and our thought of it a determination from a nature which is alien to the subject matter: freedom is the principle of the activity by which thought actively determines what is represented in sensation, the principle by which it can arrive at the truth.

How can freedom answer the worry about parochialism? To arrive at the truth about its subject matter, thought of course needs to be determined by it and its nature – as Hegel puts it, “thought as to its content is only truthful insofar as it is immersed in the *Sache*” (§23A). But the nature of the subject matter must be one with the nature of thinking – otherwise, the active determination of the subject matter by thought would be alien to the subject matter, and so could not result in the truth about it. Since the subject matter and the subjective capacity have the same nature, to be determined by the subject matter is to be self-determining, free: thought can arrive at the truth only insofar as it “frees itself from *all particularity*... and only makes the universal” – that is, only realizes its nature as thought. This, in brief, is how freedom is a response to the parochialism worry.

This claim can sound very strange, perhaps even ludicrous. Thought is of course active in arriving at the truth, and so in that sense “realizes its own nature,” but how is this a kind of freedom? Thought is determined by what it thinks about, ideally. It does not think about itself. How can it determine itself? Whatever is meant by the very abstract claim that the nature of thought and the nature of its subject matter are one, it cannot mean that the subject matter just is thought, a subjective capacity. And so, the objection goes, the nature of that capacity cannot be identical with the nature of what it is about, and if thought is free that must mean it is parochial.

We have seen a version of this objection already in our attempt to unpack what Hegel means in §20 when he says that thought is the self-active universal. And I want to make the same

kind of point here that I did there: the claim that thought determines itself is implicit in our everyday understanding of it. Suppose, in reflection, that I take myself to arrive at the truth about my subject matter. That is, I take my thought to be determined by the truth of the subject matter. As a thinker, this is how I determine myself to think. I may be mistaken, in which case my thought is determined by something else (e.g., my bad eyesight) – but then, in realizing that I am mistaken, I once more determine my own activity of thinking to be determined by my subject matter. My capacity to determine my activity in this way, so that I arrive at the truth, is my freedom: my understanding of my activity, as valid or as needing revision, determines my activity. I can arrive at the truth through and in my understanding of my activity: this is what Hegel means by freedom.⁴⁸

The claim that the nature of thought is the nature of its subject matter expresses something that is implicit in my self-understanding as a thinker: namely, that the change I effect on what I think about is a change determined, at one and the same time, by the nature of thought and the nature of its subject matter. That it is determined by the nature of thought is implicit in my recognition that, in reflection, I work on what is given to me – I isolate determinations from within the dispersed content of perception. That it is determined by the nature of my subject matter is implicit in the aim of my reflective activity, to arrive at the truth about the subject matter: I effect these changes so as to arrive at the truth. In my activity of reflection, I am

⁴⁸ My understanding of thought's freedom is deeply indebted to Pippin's work on the topic: he emphasizes this conception of freedom and links it to the worry about parochialism in much of his work. For one recent exposition, cf. Pippin 2015: 163–5. I should further note that there is much more to say about Hegel's view of freedom, even as it is implicit in §23, than I will be able to say here. In particular, that thought stands alone by itself, or has no determinations, implies a significant moment of what we might call negative freedom, in which thought is opened up to a certain kind of arbitrariness (manifest not only in the fact that we sometimes err in our thinking, but also in the fact that we sometimes despair about our capacity to think at all). Taking up this issue, and its relation to the positive moment of freedom in which thought determines itself in knowledge, would require going well beyond both my present understanding of Hegel and what is required for the point I want to make about §23. (My thanks to Wolfram Gobsch for drawing my attention to this aspect of Hegel's conception of freedom.)

committed to my capacity to arrive at the truth, and so am committed to the claim that the nature of my activity and the nature of the subject matter are the same. The order which I impose on what I perceive is *its own order*, an order present in the nature of what I perceive (cf. 6.503/12.203). My subject matter, of course, is not thought itself. Nevertheless, in my activity of reflection, I arrive at the truth about my subject matter through my understanding of my own activity as arriving at the truth. Hence, in my activity of reflection, I am free.

So, we have established that, according to my self-understanding as a thinker, the nature of thought and the nature of what is are the same. That means that an account of thought is an account of what is, and that an account of what is is an account of thought. Or, to put the same point differently, the conditions on the possibility of thought are the conditions on the possibility of being. This is the conclusion Hegel draws in §24: “Thoughts could, according to these determinations, be called *objective* thoughts.... *Logic* coincides with *metaphysics*, the science of *things* grasped in *thought*.”

At this point, we can return to the two claims made in §19 that the subject matter of the *Logic*, the idea, is considered in the element of thought and that it is thought itself. Hegel describes the idea as “thought not as formal, but rather as the self-developing totality of its own determinations and laws, which it gives itself” (EL §19). We are considering the nature of this self-developing totality within the element of objective thought: starting with a conception of thought as a subjective capacity, we have seen that to make sense of that we need to advance to a conception of thought as itself objective, and it is within this element (objective thought) that we consider the idea in the *Logic*. But what we are considering is also just the nature of thought, insofar as it, in its freedom, can arrive at the truth: insofar as its nature is also the nature of what is. We will see in more detail in chapters 2 and 3 how to make sense of the difficult claim that

the nature common to thought and being is “self-developing” and in some way productive. But the account offered so far explains how the idea can be both something we consider in the element of thought and thought itself.

The point that logic coincides with metaphysics, or that the conditions on the possibility of thought are the conditions on the possibility of being, often gets touted as Hegel’s Absolute Idealism. It will certainly not be news to anyone familiar with Hegel that he thinks thought unlimited, or that he thinks an account of thought is also an account of what is.⁴⁹ Two points are distinctive of my interpretation of this: first, I have emphasized that the move to the unlimited nature of thought is grounded in the fact that we thinkers can, by thinking, arrive at knowledge of the world. This is not the only basis Hegel has for maintaining that thought is unlimited, but it is one he uses to introduce people to his conception of logic. Second, I have explained this thought in a way which reveals it to be nothing monstrous, but part and parcel of our everyday self-understanding of ourselves as thinkers, and I have shown that Hegel himself urged this. Thought, we all recognize, has the capacity to determine itself and, we also all recognize, it is thereby capable of arriving at the truth: hence, we all implicitly recognize that thought is not parochial, that it is unlimited.

To reinforce the second point, it is worth noting that Hegel emphasizes the fact that this account flows from the understanding we all have of our own capacity to think several times. In §20A, for instance, he notes that the determinations he gives of thought “may be regarded as *Facta*, so that in the consciousness of each [*eines jeden*], if he has thoughts and considers them, it is to be found empirically that the character of universality and so, in the same way, the

⁴⁹ Versions of this view can be found in: Franks 2005: 144; Yeomans 2012: 38; Pippin 1989a: 98; McDowell 2009a: 80; Bristow 2007: 36-8; Houlgate 2006: 117-8, 128-9; Hartmann 1999: 9, 12; Theunissen 1980: 139-40; Bowman 2013: 28ff. Of these scholars, my position is closest to that defended by Franks, McDowell, and Pippin.

following determinations are at hand in them.”⁵⁰ This fact was also apparently emphasized in his lectures, when he is reported to have said that “the business of philosophy consists only in bringing explicitly to consciousness what has been valid in relation to [*rücksichtlich*] the thinking of humans from time immemorial. Philosophy presents thereby nothing new; what we have brought forth here through our reflection is already the immediate prejudice [*Vorurteil*] of each” (§22z; recall also the discussion of the “old belief” that thought can arrive at the truth at §§5, 21A).⁵¹

However, the fact that Hegel’s account emerges from a reflection from within our ordinary understanding of ourselves as thinking beings raises a worry. For how could an account that appeals to that possibly assuage someone worried that thought is parochial? What Hegel says in §§19-24 articulates how it is for me, as a thinker. Even if he is right about all of it, the most that establishes is what I, as a thinker, believe (perhaps even must believe) to be true. But then my belief is grounded in my nature as a thinker. And isn’t that very ground being called into question by the worry that thought is parochial? In chapter 2, I address this question, through an examination of what Barry Stroud has said about the limits of transcendental arguments. Thereby I will not only respond to this worry, but also substantially clarify Hegel’s absolute idealism,

⁵⁰ Importantly, he thinks this appeal to “Facta” is a limitation of the account generated by the introductory character of his remarks: in the systematic philosophy to which we are being introduced (which includes the *Logic*, but also the *Philosophy of Nature* and of *Spirit*), we will see some kind of “derivation” or “proof” of these claims (§20A). So, from what he says in §20A, it is possible that he will leave behind the everyday self-understanding of thinkers once he arrives at systematic philosophy (this is one of the primary arguments made by Sedgwick 2012). I will show at more length why that cannot be true either in chapter 3. We can see already that the starting point for the proof has to be from within what he takes to be something we all implicitly recognize in our understanding of ourselves as thinkers. If we add to that the thought that the proof does not bring in any other considerations outside of that very starting point (a claim I will advance and explain in chapter 3), then we can see that even the account in the systematic philosophy (for instance, the entire *Science of Logic*) must develop what is implicit in our everyday self-understanding as thinkers.

⁵¹ Compare also EL §7A, which ascribes “infinite importance” to the claim that “for accepting and holding true some content, humans themselves [*der Mensch selbst*] must be in it”.

what it means to think that the conditions on the possibility of thought are the conditions on the possibility of being.

Chapter 2: Hegel Against Stroud

In this chapter, I begin to clarify objective thought by relating it to Barry Stroud's criticisms of a form of transcendental argument. Objective thought is supposed to contain claims about the nature of the world. And yet it is supposed to be grounded in what we believe in virtue of our understanding of ourselves as thinkers. According to Stroud, such an argument cannot answer a skeptical challenge to our right to draw conclusions about how the world in fact is from how we think it is in virtue of the nature of thought. Stroud's understanding of a skeptical challenge is closely linked to the worry about parochialism. I will argue that the link is close enough that we can see Stroud as saying that such arguments cannot respond to the worry that thought is parochial: the best such arguments can do is show how the world must seem to us, where that leaves it open whether the world is indeed as we must think it to be. By answering Stroud's challenges to such argument, we can develop further the worry about parochialism (and its relation to skepticism) and we can also understand better the nature of Hegel's response to the worry. I contend that Stroud's arguments do not work against Hegel: for they presuppose that we can form the thought of a world which does not conform to the conditions on the possibility of thought. But that would be an unthinkable world, and so the attempt to think it falls apart.¹

The response to Stroud illuminates what objective thought must be like. First, we can rule out interpretations of the *Logic* on which it appeals to the necessary conditions on thinking where these are understood as intelligible independently of the nature of what is. The kind of thought on offer in the *Logic* does not consist in inferences from how we must think to how the

¹ My treatment of Stroud is instrumental. I think that Stroud's arguments – which he never addresses to Hegel or objective thought – are useful for two reasons: first, it seems like some version of them should apply to Hegel's account, and so it is good to respond to it; second, the response sheds light on just what the worry about parochialism is and on what objective thought is (for instance, on the relation between it and transcendental argument). It may well be that Stroud's arguments are effective against his actual targets – I take no stand on that here.

world must be – that interpretation does indeed fall afoul of Stroud’s criticism of transcendental arguments. Second, objective thought avoids Stroud’s objection because it tolerates no separation between the thinking and what it is of: that is, it describes a form of thinking/being in which being is being known, in which there is no separation between the being-side and the thinking-side.² Third, the claims of the *Logic* are supposed to be without alternatives, such that what seem to be denials of them fall apart in just the same way that the idea of an unthinkable world falls apart. These three claims just begin to articulate the nature of objective thought. But the comparison to Stroud also sets the task for the next chapter, which attempts to give a more complete account of the form of objective thought: what must that form be like, if it is to dispel the illusion that our subjective capacity to think is parochial?

§1

The argument that the parochial nature of thought cannot be disproven by arguments which appeal to how things must seem to a thinking being has been advanced quite powerfully by Barry Stroud in his treatment of transcendental arguments. Stroud does not advance these arguments against a specifically Hegelian position. By redirecting Stroud’s arguments, then, we will be doing them somewhat of a disservice. But that should be alright, since we will confine ourselves to trying to better understand Hegel and not to evaluating Stroud’s arguments in their original context. Our aim will be to defend Hegel’s position against a Stroud-like objection and to clarify his position in relation to Stroud’s understanding of transcendental arguments.

² The claim that there is no separation between the thinking and the being which it thinks can sound insane: am I saying that Hegel thinks that my thought that the copper is expanding just is the copper expanding? That is ludicrous. (I owe the example and the objection to Robert Pippin.) My thought that the copper is expanding is not objective thought as Hegel uses that term: it might be objectively valid, of course, but it is not the kind of thought Hegel is referring to with the term “objective thought” (in the terms I will use later: the thought about the copper is theoretical not speculative). If we could have an objective thought (in Hegel’s technical sense) of copper, then that just would be the copper. That is why I claim there is no separation within objective thought.

Stroud defines transcendental arguments in relation to their aim or goal: they aim to prove that something is a necessary condition on our activity (“something we do”), and in particular the activities “of our thinking and experiencing things.”³ In his famous early essay on the topic, he described a similar idea in terms of a class of “privileged propositions,” such that a proposition belongs in this class if its truth “is a necessary condition of there being any meaningful language, or of anything’s making sense to anyone.”⁴ One kind of transcendental argument, Stroud maintained, seeks to establish that a proposition belongs to this class. In the earlier essay, rather than adverting to the activity of thinking or experiencing, Stroud adverts to the activity of making sense to one another, in particular in language. But in both cases, Stroud thinks of the activity in question as necessary for having a conception of the world at all.⁵

About transcendental arguments, so defined, Stroud argues that the conclusions which they establish are not necessary. Here’s what he says for the case of making sense to one another and using language: “It could have been, and undoubtedly was, the case at one time that there was no language, and it probably will be again. Although it could not be truly denied, still it might have been, and might yet become false.”⁶ That is, the conclusions established by a transcendental argument are not necessary because the activities for which those conclusions are necessary – e.g. speaking a language – need not be activities that any existing being could perform. All speaking beings might die someday, and of that time any conclusion that is a

³ Stroud 2000c: 206-7.

⁴ Stroud 2000a: 21.

⁵ He describes a different kind of “invulnerable proposition” too: while one might be able to have some conception of the world without believing in this proposition, one could not have beliefs about a certain region of the world without believing in this proposition. He gives as an example propositions about the reality of colors: one might think that to be able to attribute or have beliefs about colors requires believing that colors exist, and so one could not intelligibly contend that colors do not exist (since to do that is to have beliefs about colors, and so presupposes that one believes they exist). Stroud does not think that having beliefs about colors is essential to having beliefs at all, however. (For a brief treatment of the example, cf. Stroud 2000c: 221-2.) In what follows I will only be concerned with the kind of invulnerability which comes with having beliefs in general, and not that which comes with having beliefs of a specific type which we need not have at all.

⁶ Stroud 2000a: 22-3.

condition on that activity need no longer obtain. For, at that time, the world might be so altered that language and communication are impossible, that no speaking being could come to be in that world. Similarly, he notes about the possibility of thought and experience that the transcendental argument does not establish their necessity since thought or experience might be impossible. Obviously, thought and experience cannot be impossible while we thinkers and experiencers exist, but someday we might pass out of existence and the world might change sufficiently that it is no longer even possible for a thinker or an experiencer to exist.⁷ Consequently, transcendental arguments do not establish the necessity of their conclusions: for all they establish, there are some worlds in which they might be false.⁸

Further, he argues that transcendental arguments, so defined, cannot in fact establish that a proposition belongs to the privileged class, and so cannot prove the truth of that proposition.⁹ All they can really establish is that a thinking (communicating, speaking, experiencing) being must believe that they are true – but that is compatible with their still being false. Stroud's thought appears to be that we start the transcendental argument from, say, some question (or a doubt or belief) about our activity of thinking. A transcendental argument might show a connection between that question and some belief, a connection established simply in virtue of the fact that the question is an activity of thought. Such a connection would then be shown to be

⁷ cf. Stroud 2000c: 207-8. Stroud says that these conditions “must be true if thought, or if anything is thought.” I think the most natural way to take this is to read the clause after the comma as a gloss on the clause before it (since “if thought” seems elliptical for something). If that's right, then he's saying that these conditions need no longer be true if no one thinks anything, or all thinking beings pass out of existence. He also notes that “any conditions under which they [the conditions necessary for thought and experience] would be false would also be conditions under which thought or experience would be impossible.” Hence, it seems that we must not only pass out of existence, but the world must be so altered (either after we pass out of existence, before we come into existence, or possibly just in some imagined alternative world) that no thinking or experiencing being could be in that world.

⁸ The claim that the conclusions are not necessary is not something a defender of transcendental arguments need deny, and Stroud does not make the claim as a criticism of transcendental arguments. I note this claim now only because Hegel's idea of objective thought will turn out to establish the necessity of its conclusions.

⁹ My thanks to Simon Schüz for this way of formulating Stroud's point. In general, I have benefited in my thinking about Stroud from conversations with Simon.

a condition on the possibility of our activity. So, a transcendental argument can show that I am committed to this belief simply in virtue of being a thinking being. But that does not mean that the belief is true. What moves me beyond my starting point is something I am committed to in virtue of being a thinking being; but one might ask whether what I am committed to is true, and no transcendental reflection can arrive at an answer to that question.

Stroud puts this point in terms of responding to a sceptic: “the sceptic can always very plausibly insist that it is enough to make language possible if we *believe* that *S* is true, of it looks for all the world as if it is, but that *S* needn’t actually be true.”¹⁰ It will always be plausible to insist that the transcendental argument merely reveals that I have to believe that *S* is true because the basis of the reflection is in my nature as a thinking (or speaking) being. That basis might be called into question (by a certain kind of skeptic) as insufficient to establish *S*, a claim about the world and not about what I must believe. A transcendental argument, since it bottoms out in conclusions that rest on my being a thinking (or speaking) being, cannot establish the legitimacy of beliefs had on that basis. But the conclusion of a transcendental argument goes beyond making claims about what it seems like to a thinking being – a transcendental argument makes claims about the nature of what is, or possibly claims which relate my nature as a thinking being to what is. Consequently, no transcendental argument can establish the conclusions it purports to establish.

Consider, for example, this transcendental reflection: Can thought arrive at the truth? To even so much as ask the question, I must have beliefs about what truth is (otherwise, my question lacks sense); indeed, more generally, to perform any act of thought requires having beliefs about the nature of the concepts contained in the thought. In having those beliefs, I take them to be true (this is a point about the nature of belief). Finally, in taking them to be true, I take it that thought

¹⁰ Stroud 2000a: 24.

can arrive at the truth. Supposing this argument is sound, then it shows a connection between being able to perform any act of thought (including raising a question) and the capacity to think truly, such that one cannot intelligibly wonder or doubt whether thought can arrive at the truth. That is to say, again if the argument is sound, it shows us that, in virtue of forming thoughts (even questions), we must believe that thought can arrive at the truth. But the truth concerns not my nature as a thinking being, but the relation between thinking and what is. Consequently, the inevitability of my belief is not enough, cannot suffice to prove that thought can arrive at the truth: it only shows that I must believe that thought can arrive at the truth. I might after all be wrong in my beliefs about the concepts contained in some act of thought, though in thinking it I can only believe that I am right.

Stroud concludes that transcendental arguments cannot do what they originally set out to do (much of his work explores what weakened versions of those arguments can accomplish). The basis for this conclusion, as we have seen, rests on the claim that one cannot conclude from a claim about what one must believe in virtue of being a thinker to a claim about what is. This point can be put into the terminology I used in chapter 1: Stroud's objection to the validity of transcendental arguments is that, for all we know according to the starting point of such an argument, thought might be parochial. It might be the case that the best that we can achieve as thinkers is to arrive at how the world seems to us, not how it is in fact. We cannot, it seems to him, rule out that possibility through reflecting on our nature as thinkers, since the most such reflection could yield are further conclusions about how it must seem to us. And yet Hegel thinks that we can rule out that possibility, through just such reflection. What was Hegel thinking?

One might think that any absolute idealist position would be committed to comparing our thought of the world to the world itself from a standpoint outside of our capacity to think. From

that putative standpoint, we could then determine that thought was not parochial. But, first, it is not clear how we could even make sense of such a standpoint, since to occupy it would just be to think about things from it, which would imply that the standpoint is not really from outside of thought.¹¹ And, second, Hegel accepts that the reflection must come from within our conception of ourselves as thinking beings. Indeed, as I have shown, Hegel insists that his arguments be grounded from within our understanding of ourselves as thinkers, and so does not pursue any route to a destination beyond that understanding. How, then, can he show that the conditions on the possibility of thought are conditions on the possibility of being? Aren't our reflections from within our nature as thinkers limited to establishing conclusions about how it seems to ones like us?

§2

The response to these questions is relatively simple, though appreciating the consequences of it and so getting it fully into view is a different matter. In this section I will explain the response, and then in the following sections I will draw the consequences. It is worth noting, before responding to Stroud, that Hegel to my knowledge never considers Stroud's objection: the closest he comes to responding to Stroud's objection is in §§22-3, when he explains (by appeal to freedom) how thought can arrive at the truth.¹² But this does not exactly respond to Stroud's objection, because it does not explain why the arguments in those sections

¹¹ Hegel frequently makes a version of this point in responding to Kantian claims about things in themselves: cf. EL §§44A, 22z; WdL, 5.60/21.48. Stroud himself insists on this point in his reflections on skepticism: cf. his extended treatment on the distinction between the internal and the external in Stroud 1984.

¹² Paul Franks has suggested to me that Hegel's response to Schulze (cf. Franks 2005: 244ff.) might contain a response to a Stroud-like objection. I hope to pursue this in future work.

can establish conclusions about thought's capacity to be valid.¹³ It does, though, suggest a response to Stroud: that the idea of parochial thought falls apart, or can get no grip on our conception of thought. In this section, I pursue this suggestion to provide a "Hegelian" response to Stroud: not something I take Hegel to have actually said, but something that I think follows from what he says (in EL §§20-4). In the next section, I will reinforce this suggestion by considering further evidence that seems intimately connected with the argument I attribute to Hegel in this section.

Stroud argues that we do in fact know the world. But he accepts that the thought that the world is unknowable is coherent. For him, we do in fact have knowledge of the world, and so can know that thought is not parochial. But this knowledge is consistent with the fact that we can form the thought of an unknowable world. The thinkability of an unknowable world plays an essential role not just in Stroud's picture of knowledge, but also in his conception of transcendental argument, since the gap that dooms transcendental arguments rests on the fact that we can form just this thought (a thought which the transcendental argument then tries, lamely, to prove false). This requires that Stroud formulate the thought that the world is not how it must seem to us – not to assent to it, but to claim that what we know does not make it unthinkable.

¹³ One might think that Hegel does respond to Stroud's objection when he considers Kant's account of things in themselves, of which we can form a concept but about which we can know nothing: cf. EL §44A. Hegel responds to this by noting that because the thing in itself is a concept, and so produced by thought, we can of course know about them, which closely mirrors the response to Stroud that I give in this section.

However, the surface level similarity between Stroud's objection and Kant's position on things in themselves masks deep and important dissimilarities. Most saliently, Kant seems to think of things in themselves precisely as that in virtue of which thought is not parochial. Hegel, moreover, was aware of this, and (though this is contentious) he does not seem to think his claim that "there is nothing easier than to know" "what the *thing-in-itself* is" is a response to Kant: as I read Hegel, this is something with which he thinks Kant would agree.

The issues that surround Hegel's discussion of things in themselves seem to me to be importantly different from the issues that surround a response to Stroud's argument, and so I will not treat them here. Even if I am wrong about that, and we should assimilate the two, then that would just provide further exegetical evidence in favor of the argument I make in this section.

I contend that this apparent thought falls apart, such that we cannot even entertain it. On the claim that the world is unknowable, we lose our grip on the idea of the capacity to think as a capacity for knowledge. We are left, supposedly, merely with the capacity to think. But this idea, that the capacity is merely a capacity to think, is one that must become our own understanding of our capacity to think. For recall the claim from the first chapter that the capacity to think is self-determining or free: that is, that I judge what I do because I take my judgment to be true and, in the basic case, I take it to be knowledge. (I do not take it to be an accident that my judgment is true: if it is revealed to be at most accidentally true, I take it that I should not judge as I do.) The intelligibility of the thought that the world is unknowable has as a consequence that I can no longer exclude that it is a mere accident that I judge as I do. For all that I know, this judgment does not amount to knowledge – indeed, for all that I can know, it may not even be possible for this or any judgment to be knowledge. Consequently, I no longer understand my capacity to think to be a capacity for knowledge, for arriving at the truth. And so I must understand it to be a mere capacity to think.

But if I understand my capacity to think to be merely a capacity to think, then I cannot understand its object, what I think about, to be the world or what is. For I cannot understand with what right I would take my thought, what is thinkable by me, to determine what the world is like. In letting go of the idea that my capacity to think can arrive at knowledge, I also let go of the idea that the nature of my thinking is (except perhaps by accident) the nature of the world. For with what right could I possibly claim that the world must be so structured that I can think about it? And if I have no right to that conclusion, then I have no right to claim that the world is even so much as thinkable by me. An unthinkable world is nothing to me. And so the very idea of the world about which I form thoughts disappears. And so the thought that the world is unknowable

disappears – for that world would no longer be a world that I could understand myself to have access to in my thinking (not even to think about it).

It might seem like what explains my capacity to think about the world could be something that is not contained within my understanding of the capacity to think – that the world itself secures that I can think about it, even though I cannot understand my right to do so just from within my thought of the world. But that does not make sense: for if it is not intelligible *to me* that the world is thinkable, then I cannot understand how I can so much as form thoughts of the world. Nothing in the world can help me understand this, for it is internal to my understanding that I think as I do because I can make such thinking intelligible to myself. Thought, as I understand it, is free. If an unknowable world were so much as thinkable, then the freedom of thought would be abyssal: I could not make sense of how I can so much as think of the world. Perhaps the result of this is to strive for *ataraxia*, a peacefulness that comes with the cessation of attempts to think or to make sense of oneself and the world. Nothing that I have said suffices to show that this is not the right reaction. What I have shown, rather, is that the thought of a thinkable but unknowable world falls apart. The claim that the world is thinkable no more – and no less – mysterious than the claim that the world is knowable.

It should be apparent that there is no room for the thought that the world is unthinkable. For what is supposedly unthinkable would be something we would have to think in order to then think that that is unthinkable. But if we can think it, then it is not unthinkable. So the thought of an unthinkable world (or an unthinkable anything) is incoherent. This argument should not *satisfy* us, for it does nothing to explain why or how its conclusion can be true. That is, for everything this argument says, the fact that we cannot think something still appears to be a *limitation*. To find satisfaction on these points we have to win our way to a conception of thought

on which this is no limitation: it is no *inability* to be unable to think an unthinkable world. I say more about this in §§3-5.

The apparent thought that Stroud accepts as a genuinely thinkable is that the world is unknowable. The starting point for showing that this thought falls apart is just that the world is thinkable. The thinkability of the world is implicit in the thought that we cannot know it – for understanding that thought requires that we have a thought of the world, and so it requires that the world be thinkable. And so in showing that we cannot make sense of a thinkable but unknowable world I have shown the skeptical set up, the kind of transcendental argument Stroud considers, and Stroud's own understanding of what goes wrong must all be given up.

Stroud's commitment to the thinkability of an unknowable world, and the consequent confusion, comes out at one point in his discussion of Kant. There is a gap for Kant, Stroud says, between what we must believe and what is the case, and if we are to establish conclusions about the world transcendently than we must find some “bridge” to cross it:

Even if we allow that we can come to see how our thinking in certain ways necessarily requires that we also think in certain other ways... how can truths about the world which appear to say or imply nothing about human thought or experience be shown to be genuinely necessary conditions of such psychological facts as that we think and experience things in certain ways, from which the proofs begin? It would seem that we must find, and cross, a bridge of necessity from the one to the other. That would be a truly remarkable feat, and some convincing explanation would surely be needed of how the whole thing is possible. Kant's answer was transcendental idealism.¹⁴

I do not here want to talk about the merits of this as a description of Kant. But of course there is a temptation to see Hegel's absolute idealism as another attempt to throw a bridge across the gap between how the world must seem to us and how the world in fact is. And if one has that conception of his project, then it will seem as hopelessly obscure as Stroud's Kant.

¹⁴ Stroud 2000b: 158-9.

But in fact the initial setup, on which there appears to be a gap in the first place, is a confused picture – and, I will show, a confused way of thinking about absolute idealism. For it supposes that we have access to the world as thinkable on the other side of the chasm, the so-called mind-independent world. In setting the problem up as one of forming a bridge between how it seems to us and how the world is, the mind-independent world needs to figure both as something we can think about but not know, and as something we cannot even think about. It must figure as something we can think about but not know, since we are supposed to be able to make sense of transcendental arguments as attempting to but failing to establish conclusions about it: we have to form a thought of it, but we cannot in the end know it, trapped as we are on the minded side of the bridge.

But it must also figure as something we cannot even think about. For the transcendental arguments fail precisely because any conclusions we draw about what we must think (believe) do not suffice to establish conclusions about how it is in the world. But then how can we make sense of our capacity to think about this world at all? For our thought of it has a certain form, a certain nature, one which springs from our capacities. And the capacity to think has to be on the same side of the chasm as the capacity to know. Given that set up, what could possibly entitle us to think that the world must be thinkable by us? Any such entitlement would have to flow, on this way of understanding things, from an appeal to our nature as thinking beings. But we are drawing a conclusion about the world (namely, that it must be thinkable). Of course, this is not a substantive conclusion, in that we could not intelligibly deny it; but it is a substantive conclusion in that we are asserting our right to make a claim about the world on the basis of our inability to think about it otherwise. So, the mind-independent world on the other side of the chasm, the world as it is in fact, may be unthinkable – we have no more right to think that it is unknowable

than we do to think it is unthinkable. So we are forced to consider the possibility that the world is unthinkable. Considering an unthinkable world, though, is considering a world that is nothing to us. We only call it a world, we only think there is an “it” there to call anything, because we have gotten confused. The idea of an unthinkable world immediately falls apart. But my point is that if it falls apart, then so too must the idea of an unknowable world.

It is important to see the relationship between this argument – that Stroud’s Kant is confused – and Stroud’s own response to Kant. For on Stroud’s own response to Kant, he starts from a perfectly intelligible picture, one on which we have thoughts about the world (the world is thinkable) and seek to establish that these thoughts can amount to knowledge (the world is knowable). Kant goes wrong, Stroud thinks, in seeking to prove the knowability of the world starting from just its thinkability. To be sure, for Stroud, the world is knowable and we know that it is. But no transcendental argument can provide a proof that the world is knowable, precisely because an unknowable world is thinkable. My argument against Stroud’s Kant, on the other hand, is that we cannot in fact make sense of it. The failure of Stroud’s Kant does not come in the inability for transcendental idealism to fill the gap; it’s with the initial entertainment of the gap in the first place. Stroud misdiagnoses what goes wrong in strong transcendental arguments (and in his Kant). The confusion on which they founder is in taking the world on the other side of the chasm to be thinkable – to be a world at all.

Evidence that Stroud is committed to the thinkability of the unknowable world can also be found in his claim that propositions established by transcendental argument are not necessary. His understanding of these propositions is that we can intelligibly entertain the idea that the world is not in this way. That is, he thinks that to say that thought is possible is to make a contingent claim about the world, a claim that we must believe if we can make, but one which is

not necessarily true. This implies or rests on the idea that the conditions on the possibility of thought which we have identified are not also conditions on the possibility of knowledge (and so being) – the world may be such that knowledge is not possible. To sustain the thought that being might be otherwise, that knowledge might not be possible, the conditions on the possibility of being must of course be thinkable, in the sense that we can entertain those conditions under which knowledge is not possible. But that just means we have a conception of the conditions on thinkability on which we have no right to conclude that those are conditions on the possibility of being. But that means that we are forced to think of an unthinkable world. This is nonsense, not a coherent or stable position at which one might rest.¹⁵

So we must revise our understanding of the conditions on thinkability.¹⁶ If these conditions genuinely are conditions on what is thinkable, then they are also conditions on the possibility of being, because we cannot think of being as otherwise. And, as such, we have a conception of thought on which it has the same nature as the nature of what is. From this position, we can articulate different forms of knowledge. This is not to say that we infer from the conditions on what is thinkable to conditions on what can be, or that we infer from conditions on what is thinkable to conditions knowledge – we will see later that this is not the right way to understand Hegel's picture. It is just to say that we must understand the nature of thought such that we can grasp our right to think of the world as having the same nature. Unpacking this alternative will take some time.

¹⁵ And so it transpires that the idea of a parochial capacity to think is also nonsense once it is properly thought through.

¹⁶ Or we must give up on the project of thinking, driven at first by the thought that it is essentially parochial and then by the attempt to avoid the instability of the resulting position (on which we are forced to think what we cannot think) by abandoning thinking as an activity. What I say in this dissertation takes for granted that we seek to make sense of ordinary acts of thinking; my arguments do not touch a position on which we seek to give up on that project. (Hegel does have a response to this latter position. He tries to show that a perfected version of the despair it involves just is his position: cf. *PhG* ¶77-8 and “The Relation of Skepticism to Philosophy.”)

§3

In this section, I want to explore the implications of the Hegelian response to Stroud for an understanding of the project of Hegel's *Logic*. Doing so, we will begin to unpack what it might mean to articulate what Hegel describes as "an inner nature" common to both what is and thought. Moreover, we will see some exegetical evidence that Hegel would indeed respond to Stroud as I claimed in the previous section.

Above we saw that Stroud's conception of the initial set up for the transcendental argument is confused (at least when Stroud's argument is pressed into service against absolute idealism) and that Stroud does not genuinely think through what it is for a condition to be a condition on what is thinkable. These two points illuminate Hegel's project in the *Logic*. Starting with the first point, it is clear that Hegel does connect different concepts to one another, showing in some way that one set of concepts presupposes or depends upon another. Since we start with some version of the idea of what is necessary for thought to be possible, Hegel is engaged in some kind of transcendental argument (given how Stroud conceives of it and its goals).¹⁷ But at no point in the logical progression through concepts do we establish something about the world starting from something about the nature of thought: the conditions at each stage are simultaneously conditions on the possibility of thought and on what is. Hegel never draws metaphysical conclusions from psychological premises (which Stroud understands transcendental arguments to do, as the means for achieving their goal). Rather, our conception of mind and world in the *Logic* is such that they are not separable: as Hegel puts it at one point, the two moments of "being" and "concept" "are known now as *inseparable* [untrennbar]"

¹⁷ For the importance of connecting different concepts, cf. Stroud 2000b: 164.

(5.57/21.45). In the domain of the *Logic*, we cannot parcel out claims about what we must believe and claims about what is the case.¹⁸

The idea of a domain which articulates the common nature of thinking and being is difficult: what, exactly, does it mean that we cannot separate thought from being in it? One perhaps tempting way of understanding this claim is to think that we have arrived at conditions on what we can conceive, such that to deny these conditions would involve us in some sort of contradiction. Contradictions cannot be true, and so it seems like we can establish conclusions about being on the basis of avoiding them.

This is a form of thinking with which we are familiar from everyday examples. For instance, I may say that one should not participate in the economy, while being paid to give a talk on television; or I may assure you that I will follow the rules of arithmetic but then make a mistake in my calculations; or I may intend to play a game of chess but make an illegal move; or I may be tripped up (or trip myself up) in the course of articulating what I learned in my

¹⁸ Immediately after noting that they are inseparable, he notes that they are nonetheless “*differentiated* [unterschiedene] (although not existing [*seinde*] for themselves).” So, their inseparability does not mean that they are conceptually indistinguishable. As I understand this claim, what grounds it is that we arrive at the conception of their inseparability to preserve the validity of our thinking. In our everyday thinking, we (rightly) separate our thought and what we are thinking about: what I think is different from (not merely notionally, but existentially) what I think about. To make sense of the validity of this activity, we are driven to think about the nature common to both what I think and what I think about. Within an account of that nature, of objective thought, we must still be able to distinguish thought and what it is about (notionally, not existentially) because of the origin of our thought of their common nature in our cognizance of their difference. (I say a little more about this at the end of this chapter, when I argue that we cannot give up on the idea that thought has a nature.)

A further complication for my reading arises from the fact that Hegel divides the *Logic* into an “Objective Logic” and a “Subjective Logic,” which suggests that we do need to separate the nature of what is from the nature of thought even within the *Logic*. A proper response to this would have to give an interpretation of why the *Logic* is divided in this way, and that goes beyond the scope of this dissertation. But two provisional answers may help: first, negatively, a few pages after announcing the division into the “Objective Logic” and the “Subjective Logic,” Hegel notes that we should “lay no particular weight” on those terms, since they misleadingly suggest “the form of *consciousness*” (5.62/21.49). So, whatever the point in using such terms, we have to avoid assimilating them to the meanings they have for consciousness. As I will explain in what follows, I take that to mean we have to avoid separating the nature of thought from the nature of what is. Second, more positively, the *Logic* explains or accounts for how the subjective activity of thinking can be valid. That activity involves cognizance of the difference between the activity of thinking and what the thought is about. Consequently, it is to be expected that the *Logic* articulates some form of the distinction between thought and being, given that the *Logic* is in part an explanation of the validity of thinking.

chemistry class, and make incompatible claims. These are all ordinary cases which involve some kind of contradiction or inconsistency, such that not everything being said (or at least implied) can be true. We may be tempted to apply some version of this to the *Logic*, because it seems to start from no substantive assumptions about the way the world is and nevertheless can yield conclusions which are, in some sense, about the world.¹⁹

But this is not what Hegel means when he says that being and concept are inseparable. For, as the ordinary examples reveal, the conceivability or contradiction view is a kind of thought in which there is still a separation between my thinking and what I am thinking about: I am thinking about math, or about chess, or about chemistry, subject matters that are whatever they are whatever I happen to think about them. I might try to turn this kind of reasoning to thoughts about thought, but what matters is that the form of reasoning is taken from our thoughts about other things. Consequently, even when I think about the nature of thought using this form (of reasoning by contradiction) there is still a separation between my thinking and what I am thinking about: the nature of what I am thinking about is unaffected by my thinking it. That is to say, this is a form of thinking in which I make discoveries about something which is what it is, irrespective of what I think about it. And the same is true even if my topic is thought.

Of course one might contest my interpretation of the claim that being and the concept are inseparable. On my interpretation, it means that what we are thinking of is dependent upon the activity of thinking of it (and vice versa), such that the thought and the being constitute one

¹⁹ This is how Vittorio Hösle and Dieter Wandschneider understand the topic and arguments of the *Logic*: Hösle 1987: 188-9, 192-3, 196; Wandschneider 1995: 26. In the *Logic*, they claim, we are dealing with claims about the nature of thought such that we cannot deny them, because to deny them would be to fall into a kind of pragmatic contradiction: the denial of these claims undercuts itself by denying something affirmed in the very denial. They then see the arguments of the *Logic* as working by a kind of *reductio*: we show that we are contradicting ourselves because we have not yet embraced categories sufficient to make sense of the acts of thinking we are engaged in, and so we are forced to introduce yet more categories. The arguments I give in what follows apply to their reading, and other readings like it.

another. Perhaps that's not what Hegel means. But it is also worth noting that the conceivability or contradiction approach cannot give an adequate response to Stroud. Seeing this will lend further support to my interpretation of the inseparability passage, and it will also pave the way for a different understanding of the common nature of thought and being.

At first, it can seem as though the argument in §2 is really a kind of paradigm of the conceivability or contradiction approach. For the argument against Stroud in §2 might seem to go like this: in thinking that the world might not be how it must seem to me to be, I am committed to thinking about the world. If I am committed to thinking about the world, then I am committed to its being thinkable. But it might not be how I must take it to be – and so I have no right to claim that it is even so much as thinkable. So, I contradict myself, and conclude that the world is or must be thinkable.²⁰ So construed, the argument in §2 does indeed instance the conceivability or contradiction approach. But this cannot be the right way to understand the argument, I want to show, for there is nothing in this form which makes it intelligible that what is thinkable determines what is.

By the form of the conceivability or contradiction argument, what I am thinking about is something other than my thinking it: I represent the world as being the way it is, no matter what I think about it. This parallels the way I represent truths about chemical reactions: I may think what I like about those reactions, and they will remain what they are, and I am cognizant of this in my thoughts about them. But, applied to the *Logic*, this conception is at odds with the conclusion that I draw, which is that the world is dependent upon how I represent it. To make sense of this, we need to arrive at a conception of thought in which the way the world is is not

²⁰ Hösle presents this argument as a justification for thinking that the *Logic* tells us not only how things must seem to thinkers but also how they must be: cf. Hösle 1989: 66.

independent of how it is thought to be. And the conceivability or contradiction approach does not do that.²¹

So, to make sense of the fact that thought is not parochial, we have to advance beyond an understanding of my capacity to represent the world on which that capacity is, we could say, merely subjective: we need to arrive at a conception on which the way the world is and the way it is thought to be are (and are understood to be) dependent upon one another. On this conception, I do not represent the world as being a certain way, however I may represent it.

Rather, I represent the world like this: as being a certain way in virtue of its being so thought;

²¹ I think Pippin makes the same point more abstractly. In the course of defending his interpretation of Hegel as having taken the “transcendental turn,” Pippin argues against what he describes as a “rationalist” interpretation of Hegel: an interpretation on which we prove that the conditions on the possibility of thought are the conditions on the possibility of being by appeal to “the metaphysical conditions necessary for any object to be an object *überhaupt*.” Pippin rejects this view on the grounds that it involves “the confusion of ‘logical’ and ‘real’ possibility” (Pippin 1993: 286). I take him to mean something like the following: we cannot start with a conception of thought on which it is free of any reference to or connection with the world, and deduce claims about what the world must be like by appeal to what we must think, on pain of contradicting ourselves. To do that would involve confusing what is logically possible for us with what is really possible, a confusion that “Kant and the post-Kantians rejected.” In this essay, he does not say why they rejected this conception, but on my understanding of them they rejected it because the conception of thought at play in it is one which makes it impossible to conceive how thought could determine the world, because it is a conception of *a priori* thought which is anterior to, and so not dependent on or productive of, what it thinks about. Thus, whatever conditions it discovers on what it can conceive are not such that it can understand them to also be conditions on what is; to yield conditions on what is requires bringing in synthesis (“real possibility,” in Kant’s language).

The invocation of “real possibility” in the passage raises a question about Pippin’s understanding of Hegel, however. For it belongs to the idea of real possibility, at least as Kant understood it, that we can contrast it with logical possibility, a use of the understanding which is not anchored in the appeal to intuition and so not such as to yield cognition. If we bring this into our understanding of Hegel’s *Logic*, then we will be forced to conclude that we have a conception of thought on which it is already connected to the world, but is such that we can conceive or think of the world as otherwise (this is logically possible, in an act of thought which is not anchored in whatever plays the successor role of intuition in Hegel). And sometimes Pippin talks in this way, when he describes worries about the unknowable world as “epistemically idle,” presumably because that world is only logically possible but not really possible: cf. Pippin 1989a: 250, Pippin 1993: 286, Pippin 1989b: 31, 33; but contrast Pippin 2015: 170ff.

I contend that the position that an unknowable world is thinkable but non-threatening is not Hegel’s. As I have argued, and will continue to argue, objective thought cannot tolerate the separation of thought from what is; the conception of the world on which it is not how it seems to us falls apart – it does not remain thinkable (logically possible), but in an epistemically idle way. Perhaps Pippin would agree with this too – I take up this issue, and where my interpretation of Hegel diverges from Pippin in chapter 6. Either way, a rejection of that rationalist idea does not saddle us with a view on which we can conceive of a world which does not conform to the conditions of our thinking. One way to emphasize the difference between the rationalist idea and Hegel’s is to note that the apparent claim that the world is unthinkable is not *necessarily false*, false in virtue of the law of non-contradiction (as it is according to the rationalist); rather, those words (used as the rationalist uses them) express no thought, not even a false one.

and, from the other side, I represent my thought like this: as being the thought it is in virtue of what it is about. Objective thought is thought which has this two-sided dependence of thought and being and being and thought, and we are forced to it in order to understand the argument against Stroud.

At this point, it might be helpful to introduce an example of thinking which has the structure of objective thought. We can find such an example in first personal thoughts, at least according to the interpretation of those thoughts put forth by Sebastian Rödl. These thoughts are exemplified in judgments like the following: “I believe that the sun is setting” and “I should go to the store.” Rödl says I have knowledge of these two claims (when I do) in virtue of being their object, what they are about: these are claims about what I believe or about what I should do. Moreover, this characterizes their form: I cannot have one of these thoughts and be confused that I am thinking about myself. He draws on an analogy from Aristotle to explain this. It does not characterize the activity of being a doctor that she heal herself. If she does heal herself, it is an accident (relative to her activity of being a doctor) in that she is not being healed as a doctor but rather as a patient. Similarly, when I am thinking about something other than myself, something I can refer to with a demonstrative expression (like “this”), it characterizes the form of my thinking that what I am thinking about is different from the thinking of it, though it might by accident (with respect to the form of the thought) be the same. But this is not true for first personal thoughts: in these, I think about myself in virtue of the form of my thought, Rödl argues, and so I know on no basis other than having the thought that it is I that I am thinking about (whereas, in a demonstrative thought, my reference depends not just on the thought but also on perceiving the object I refer to).²²

²² Cf. Rödl 2007b: 8. The reference to Aristotle is at *Meta* 4.12 1019a15-8.

Further, Rödl thinks this means that I cannot be in the ways in which I can think about myself first-personally without having the first person thought. That is, my having the belief that the sun is setting is my having the first person thought that I believe that the sun is setting. This may be surprising: surely, one might respond, I can have the belief that the sun is setting without ever having actually formed the thought that I believe that the sun is setting. I might believe it without having given that fact any thought. Perhaps, in place of Rödl's claim, one might insist instead merely that I have the capacity to form the thought that I believe that the sun is setting in virtue of having the belief that it is; I do not need to form that thought, though I am *able to* form it simply in virtue of having the belief.

Clearly I can have the belief without ever saying or thinking to myself that I have the belief. But that is not relevant for Rödl – what is relevant is a point noted in my first chapter about thought's freedom, that I only have the belief insofar as I take it to be the right thing to believe. Rödl thinks it follows from this that my having the belief and my taking it that I have the belief are one and the same “act of the mind,” as he likes to put it.²³ Perhaps Rödl is wrong to insist on this point about first personal thought; I do not want to defend his view of first person thought. But this aspect of his view is important for illustrating my interpretation of objective thought.

For first person thought, on Rödl's view of it, has the form of objective thought: the thought is dependent upon the being it thinks about, and the being it thinks about is dependent upon the thought.²⁴ Because the being and the thought are dependent upon one another, we can

²³ Cf. Rödl 2007a: 56; cp. 96-8.

²⁴ Here is one succinct formulation of his position: “First person reference depends on a knowledge-providing relationship with the object. This relationship must differ from perception in that it must follow from its nature that she to whom one bears it is oneself. It is easy to say in the abstract what that relationship is: it is identity. First person reference depends on a way of knowing an object such that I know an object in this way by being this object. Unmediated first person thoughts articulate knowledge I possess, not by *perceiving*, but by *being* their object. If I

use this form to grasp the response to Stroud in the previous section: the world does not figure in objective thought as something which is independent of my thinking it, and my thought does not figure as independent of the world I think about. Consequently, we have advanced to a conception of thought (one in which it is no longer understood as a subjective capacity) on which the fact that we cannot entertain the possibility of an unknowable world is both intelligible and (potentially) grounded.

Rödl's claim aptly describes Hegel's position on objective thought. In objective thought, Hegel says, being and the concept are inseparable. That is, we are now in a position to appreciate, objective thought is knowledge which is identical with its object, a being which is identical with being known.²⁵ This is the idea of mutual dependence that I want to take from Rödl. Perhaps he is wrong to think that that condition is satisfied in first person thought; even if he is right, there may well be more to that form than is required for objective thought as such: we may not need self-consciousness to have a case of the being/being known identity. Moreover, the identity claim cannot be the complete story about the nature of objective thought, because (Hegel thinks) we still need to see some kind of distinction between being and thought. I will try to articulate the nature or form of objective thought at much greater length in the next chapter; but rehearsing Rödl's view should have given us at least a sense of what objective thought is like.²⁶

know without mediation that I am *F*, then I know it, not by perceiving that I am *F*, but by being *F*" (Sebastian Rödl 2007b: 8-9).

²⁵ Hans Friedrich Fulda puts this point quite nicely. He argues that Hegel's conception of metaphysics differs from the pre-Kantian conception (and the Kantian conception) in that it is not theoretical: "Because in the idea of theoretical cognition the objects [*Gegenstände*] all pre-exist the cognition" (Fulda 1991: 21; cf. also 24, 27). With this thought, Fulda registers that the very form of metaphysical cognition undergoes a transformation in Hegel, and becomes essentially a form of self-productive self-cognition; in his own account of metaphysical cognition, however, he does not carry through on this insight into the form of objective thought (as I argue in chapter 4).

²⁶ My invocation of the being-is-being-known claim will receive much more thorough textual and philosophical support in chapter 3; I encourage skeptical readers to see my invocation of it in this context as simply an announcement of my view of objective thought. What I take myself to have established so far is just that we need to think of objective thought, the inseparability of being and the concept, in such a way that Stroud's objection does not

As I read him, the point that being is being known is the point that Hegel is making when he emphasizes that the *Logic* has overcome the opposition (“*Gegensatz*”) of consciousness. Consciousness is the customary understanding of thought described by Hegel in EL §§20-3 and explained in chapter 1: a form of thought which is cognizant of what is other than it or of what is whatever it is whether it is thought about or not (e.g., the setting sun). So, he says, “the opposition of consciousness of a subjective *being* [Seinden] *for itself* and a second such *being*, an objective” is “overcome” in the *Logic* (5.57/21.45). The subject matter of the *Logic*, Hegel says, cannot be known in the way of consciousness: it is not consciousness. Neither is it the object of consciousness. Rather, the *Logic* “contains thought *insofar as it is just as much the Sache in its self, or the Sache in its self* insofar as it is just as much the pure thought” (5.43/21.33). This claim has been variously interpreted.²⁷ But if we connect it to the interpretation defended in chapter 1, then we should interpret the passage (and others similar to it: cf. 5.67-8/21.54-5, 5.72/21.59) like this: first, it expresses the thought that the *Logic* is about the nature of thinking insofar as it is the nature of being and the nature of being insofar as it is the nature of thinking; and, second, it characterizes the form of this endeavor that there is a mutual dependence (or identity) between the two natures.

Hegel also calls our attention to this fact about the *Logic* when, describing “*the education* [Bildung] and the relation of the individual to logic,” he notes that it “discloses the *inner nature* of spirit and the world, the *truth*” (5.54/21.41). Unlike the other sciences, which have “the wealth

get a grip, that the being-is-being known approach does this, and that the conceivability or contradiction approach fails to do it.

²⁷ For instance, Burbidge interprets this claim to mean that the *Logic* has incorporated empirical content: cf. Burbidge 2014: 107-8. It is worth noting, however, that Burbidge’s philosophical motivation for taking the claim in this way is that he does not think Stroud’s challenge to transcendental arguments *can* be answered, and so he thinks all that is left for philosophy is to make broadly empirical claims. If my account so far is on track, however, I have undermined that motivation: not only would his insistence on empirical content not work (because, by the argument of chapter 1, without an answer to Stroud’s argument, we cannot make sense of how the activity of thought can reach the truth about even empirical matters), but we can in fact answer Stroud’s argument.

of the representation of the world,” the *Logic* will appear “colorless” and “cold” when one comes to it for the first time. But, upon returning to it for a second time, and having in the interim acquired more knowledge of the other sciences, one will see that “it presents itself as the universal truth, not as a *particular* cognition [*Kenntnis*] alongside other stuff and realities, but rather as the nature of all of these other contents of spirit” (5.55/21.42). As I read these passages, Hegel is (in part) telling us that the *Logic* presents the truth, such that it is inseparably an account of thinking (or spirit) and being (or the world). It describes the inner nature of both, not by describing the inner nature of the one and then the inner nature of the other. Rather, the two have the same inner nature, which Hegel calls the “truth.”²⁸

It may initially be tempting to interpret the claim that the *Logic* presents the nature of “the other contents of spirit” differently, in a way which preserves some form of separation of thought and being in the *Logic*. Perhaps Hegel is really saying something like this: All of our thoughts (all the contents of spirit) conform, or must conform, to logic, or else they will not be true. Logic is the universal truth in the sense that it articulates the forms of our thinking, forms without which our thoughts cannot be true. On this view, logic is an account of what we do in thinking and it is only an account of what is insofar as we have some reason to think that the forms of our thinking are also forms of being. (Perhaps the *Phenomenology* gives us that reason.) But the *Logic* itself is only an account of the forms of thought.

If this is the right way to take Hegel’s project, then he could never answer Stroud’s objection. For, on this interpretation, the account of the forms of thought in the *Logic* would tolerate, indeed require, that the thinker be cognizant that what she thinks in the *Logic* is not dependent upon her thinking it. And that means that the kind of thinking in the *Logic*, the form of

²⁸ Hegel is also saying that the sense in which this is the truth will only be apparent to us in all of its richness when we return to logic from other sciences. Though this is the point he stresses, to do so he has to describe the difference between logic and the other sciences, and it is that description which is of interest now.

the accounts offered in the *Logic*, would not bring with it consciousness of the validity of the forms of thought described in it: I am cognizant that I may be mistaken in my thinking, that the world may be otherwise than how it seems to me to be. Perhaps I start with the idea (perhaps from the *Phenomenology*) that the forms of my thinking are forms of what is. Perhaps we can make sense of that as holding good of the first category of the *Logic*. But then, when I progress from that category to the next one, I do so cognizant of the fact that my conclusion is grounded by and only by how being must seem to me. The insertion of this “me,” of the nature of the thinker as distinct from the nature of what is, vitiates the progression from the first category. For I have to sustain the thought that the forms of thinking are the forms of what is when I progress – otherwise, I cannot think the progression valid. But I am cognizant that the progression only establishes how it must seem to me, and so I cannot be conscious of the validity of the progression. Nor can I be consoled by pointing to the assurance that however it seems to me is how it must be, for I understand the argument that I have devised to move me from the first category to the next in a way which is incompatible with that assurance. What we need is a kind of argument, or an understanding of the nature of the movement from one category to the next, which does not insert a “how it seems to me” into the conclusion, which does not tolerate the distinction between the thinker and what is. Only thus could we sustain the thought that the conditions on the possibility of thinking are conditions on the possibility of being as we move from one condition to another.

Fortunately, we do not have to take Hegel’s description of logic to imply that it is an account of what we do in thinking and not an account of the nature of being. Indeed, when he describes logic as presenting the nature of the “other contents of spirit,” his use of the word “contents” is important: he does not say that it merely presents us with the forms of spirit’s

activity, which would be a natural way of putting the alternative interpretation. Rather, it presents us with the contents, what the thinker is thinking about. So it presents us with the nature of what is – but not just this, since it presents us with the nature of what is as a content for thought. Consequently, it presents us with the nature of what is in a way which also brings in the nature of thinking it. By saying “contents,” Hegel once again reinforces that we are thinking at once *both* about thought *and* what thought is about, that we are articulating the nature constitutive of both.

§4

Before moving on to explore further consequences of the argument I attributed to Hegel in §2, I want to consider an important objection to Hegel’s project (as I have interpreted it). I have said that the form of thought in the *Logic* is one in which being is being known, and I have illustrated that claim with Rödl’s interpretation of first-personal thought. What that claim means in the case of first personal thought seems relatively clear (though perhaps false): I and my beliefs, for instance, are the being we are talking about, and the thinking that that being depends upon is my own. But what can this claim mean in the context of the *Logic*? After all, it does not seem to be the case that the nature of what is is in any way dependent upon what *I* (this here Andy) think about it, or about what anyone – any finite thinker – thinks about it. So what activity of thinking is identical with the nature of what is? Whose activity is it?

Hegel claims that to understand the *Logic* we, finite thinkers, need to arrive at a conception of thought on which what it thinks is constituted by what it thinks about and what it thinks about is constituted by what it thinks. What we will thereby conceive is not the dependence of what we are thinking about upon *our* act of thinking about it; indeed, we do not

conceive of thought as connected to us as finite thinkers at all. We think, rather, of the activity of thought as such. It is that activity which is identical with what it thinks.

The nature of this activity is articulated in the course of the *Logic*: it is, for instance, the fact that substantial being and causal chains and numbers are all intelligible – not to anyone in particular, but simply as such – and that this intelligibility is identical with substance and causal sequences and numbers being ways of beings at all. So, the substance way of being is identical with its being intelligible; this is the identity present in Hegel's claim that being and concept are inseparable.

Questions linger, however: for we are indeed active in thinking about substance, and we know substance as a way of being. Consequently, it seems like the *Logic* describes a kind of activity, an activity of thinking; and it seems that we (or, if not us, someone) must engage in this activity, and that the being described in the *Logic* is therefore somehow dependent on that activity and the one who engages in it. How can that be? What sense can we make of that?

I want to acknowledge that these questions linger and are important; they are also difficult, and a complete response to them would take us too far afield. I will, however, say something preliminary in response, to give a sense of what Hegel thinks about these issues. As suggested by the questions, the course of the *Logic* does indeed consist in a kind of activity of thinking. The sense in which this is an activity of thinking is different from – though importantly related to – the sense in which we are active in thinking it. It is different from our activity in that the activity of thinking present in the *Logic* – in which being is being known – is not articulated as the activity of any being in the *Logic*: it is articulated as the activity of being, not as the activity of (say) thinking beings.

We may balk at the idea of an activity which is the activity of no one, of no particular being; and we may ask how after all we can think our way through the *Logic*, if the activity of thinking involved in it is not ours. The *Logic*, though, does not articulate the activity of no one: what I said above is just that it does not articulate it *as* the thinking of anyone, and it is consistent with that that it is the thinking of some being or kind of being, though the nature of the activity as it is engaged in by that being is not articulated in the *Logic*. Indeed, the activity of the *Logic* is ours: it is no accident, Hegel thinks, that there are thinking beings to whom substance is intelligible, and our understanding of the activity of being as an activity flows from the fact that *we* are active in thinking it. Consequently, our grasp of the fact that the identity of being and being known involves an activity of thinking implicitly involves our understanding of ourselves as active in thinking (according to Hegel).²⁹

This latter understanding, however, is not illuminated by the *Logic* alone. To understand the relation between the activity of being and our activity of thinking it (when we work through the *Logic*) requires also getting in view Hegel's account of finite thinkers in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and in the *Philosophy of Spirit*. To ask after *who* is active in the *Logic* is to ask after something in the world which is doing the thinking, be it finite or infinite, and the *Logic* does not address that question. The *Logic* articulates the nature of being as being intelligible; it does not articulate the nature of that to which, within the world, being is intelligible.³⁰

²⁹ This is a contentious interpretation, and it would take too much space to try to justify it here. It is suggested by Hegel's re-introduction of the idea of freedom as the principle of spirit's activity in the *Philosophy of Spirit*, and of his claim that "this is the highest definition of the absolute," that which enables us to grasp the nature of the absolute (as freedom): cf. EG §§382, 384A.

³⁰ This is a difficult idea, and Hegel's commitment in the *Logic* to the fact that being as such is active, and that that activity is a kind of thinking, may cause us to miss it. If we miss it, then we might be tempted to think that the activity in question in the *Logic* is the activity of some kind of cosmic mind. But Hegel's thought that the activity in the *Logic* is the activity of being involves no such commitment – it is, rather, consistent with the claim that the activity of being can only reside in finite beings. And that is indeed what Hegel thinks, and he thinks that this follows from the nature of the activity which the *Logic* articulates: cf., for instance, his claim that philosophy realizes its task fully by articulating the nature of spirit, which is the philosophical counterpart to the religious claim

An analogy from Aristotle might help clarify the nature of the activity of thinking as articulated in the *Logic*. In *Metaphysics Lambda*, Aristotle asks whether the highest good exists in the order of the universe or whether it exists as one of the parts of the universe. He answers that it probably exists in both, and uses the analogy of the organization of an army to clarify what this means: in the army “the good is found both in the order and in the leader, and more in the latter.”³¹ Aristotle means that the organization of the army (the chain of command, the ratio of spearmen to archers, the battle plans, etc.) resides in the army itself, in what all of the soldiers do collectively, and it also resides in the general, the one who determines what the organization will be. Aristotle notes further that the good of the army (its being well-ordered) resides more in the general than in the army as a whole because it is the general who determines how the army should be organized.

Taking this example, one can envision an account of the well-ordered army which focuses just on the presence of that order in the army as a whole: this would contain an account of what kinds of rank the army should contain, of how to respond to different sorts of enemy units, of what kind of units an army should have, of what their proportions should be, etc. This account would be like the *Science of Logic*, which articulates the nature of objective thought by articulating the different ways in which things can be and can be thought. One can also envision an account of the well-ordered army as it exists in the part that most realizes it: this would be an account of being a general. One might envision an analog to the general for the *Logic*: that to

that God is spirit (EG §384A). Hegel’s account of spirit is not an account of a separately existing God, but an account of the human being. But illuminating this fact, by showing it to follow from the nature of the activity of thought as such, is not part of the task of the *Logic*, and so will not be part of my task here. Nor will I attempt to explain those passages in which Hegel does seem to be talking about a cosmic mind; he is not, but whether he is or not does not affect my interpretation, which concerns the *Logic*, and not an account of the nature of that for which being is intelligible. (I came to this view through talking with Sasha Newton about how Kant understood the self-constituting activity of general logic, and its relation to transcendental logic – the view that she attributes to Kant is not the view I attribute to Hegel, but I have nevertheless profited immensely from thinking through her interpretation: cf., in particular, Newton 2015.)

³¹ Aristotle 1991: *Meta* 1075a24-1075a30. My thanks to Katy Meadows for introducing me to this analogy.

which the order is intelligible (and, perhaps, that which most realizes the order). Hegel thinks of finite thinkers as the analog, the ones to whom being is intelligible, the ones in whom thought is active, and he provides an account of finite thinkers along these lines in the *Phenomenology* and the *Philosophy of Spirit*.

Clearly these two accounts will be importantly related to one another, because they in some sense share a topic: namely, the same order as it is present in the whole and as it is present in a special part of that whole. Nevertheless, one can distinguish between them. An account of the general will be an account of the one who orders the whole army; similarly an account of the one who thinks will be in some sense an account of the one to whom being is intelligible. There might be more to that than we are initially inclined to think: it might not be that we are merely passively beholding the intelligibility of the world – this would, after all, not be very fitting to the nature of thinking as an activity, a point Hegel insists on in EL §§20-2. Moreover, the principle of the activity of being or of objective thought will have to reside in this thinker since, otherwise, it would be a mere accident that this thinker can think objective thought (and that would render thought parochial). If that's right, then an account of that for whom being is ordered will also be an account of that which in some sense orders being. Given this, we may even be led to subscribe some form of necessity to the existence of finite thinkers.³²

These last two claims are very difficult. It is no part of my dissertation to clarify them, and (for all I say) Hegel might be wrong to think they followed from the fact that being is being intelligible. Nevertheless, asking whose activity of thinking is described in the *Logic* and what it is for that being to engage in this activity is asking after an account of these claims: to whom is being intelligible, and what is it for being to be intelligible to her? In response to this question,

³² Again, these are contentious claims, and I cannot justify or explain them adequately here. Some evidence for them can be found at PG §§382-3.

one might try to reject it as confused: we may be able to make sense (against Hegel) of an activity of thinking which is no one's, or perhaps it is ours but we are passive in taking it in. Or one might try (again against Hegel) to locate that order in another being, in some cosmic mind, and thereby avoid trying to think through the idea that finite thinkers are the principle of being. Or, instead, we might conclude (with Hegel) that the activity is ours and so we are that to which being is intelligible, and thereby in some yet to be determined sense the principle which orders being. I will not try to explore any of these responses here; I only want to bring out what is involved in asking after who is active in the *Logic*, through appeal to the relatively straightforward case of the general and her army. Supposing there to be something analogous to a general in the case of the activity of thinking in the *Logic*, the *Logic* will not be an account of it. An account of it, therefore, goes beyond the scope of my project.

§5

Let's return to articulating the consequences of the argument in §2. With Hegel, we started (in chapter 1) with a conception of thought on which it is a subjective activity. That idea brings with it a distinction between conditions on the possibility of thought and conditions on the possibility of being, it requires a separation (to use Hegel's term) between claims about the activity of thinking and claims about what is the case. Starting from that ordinary conception, we have been led to a form of thought on which there is no such separation – this new understanding, Hegel shows, is required to make sense of our ordinary conception. An account of this new form, of objective thought, will shed light on our capacity to have ordinary knowledge of the world. It will not fully illuminate that capacity, for (as I've already begun to bring out) it will not illuminate how that capacity can be possessed by a particular being, existing

in nature. That is, it will not illuminate the subjective character of our capacity to think – Hegel tries to explain that in his *Philosophy of Spirit* and in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* (cf. PG §377 and 377z). Nevertheless, it will illuminate thought as a capacity to arrive at the truth.

Further, the arguments of the *Logic* – supposing them to be valid – do establish necessity. They do not establish the necessary existence of things like substances, concepts, or numbers. But they establish the objective validity of those categories, in the sense that they describe ways in which something could be.³³ The idea that these are not necessary ways of being would mean that being might be such that they were not even possible ways of being. If the arguments of the *Logic* are valid, then this idea falls apart, in just the same way that the idea of an unknowable world falls apart.³⁴ Put differently, the *Logic* purports to establish the following: a thinker must be able to think in these ways, and the world must be able to be in these ways. The *Logic* does not establish that there are thinkers; nor does it establish that there are things in these ways.

So, to briefly summarize the results so far, our discussion of Stroud has brought us to the point of seeing that Hegel is engaged in a certain kind of transcendental argument, in that he is establishing dependency relations between concepts and in that he is starting from what is necessary for thought to be possible. But he never infers from psychological claims to metaphysical claims: rather, he has arrived at a conception of “objective thought,” in which we

³³ That the *Logic* does not make existence claims is implied by Hegel’s claim that it is only at the end of the *Logic* that the idea emerges into nature (cf. EL §244; WdL 6.572-3/12.253): prior to such an emergence, we have not yet established that anything is. Only at the end of the *Logic* do we establish that anything exists (in a very puzzling argument which I do not pretend to understand and which I will not try to explain in this dissertation). Further evidence that the *Logic* does not make existence claims (until the very end) can be found at 5.29/21.17, 5.41/21.31-2, and 5.55/21.42.

³⁴ Anton Koch articulates this feature nicely when he notes that the categories in the *Logic* should be “alternativeless” and should “fall below the level of two-valuedness” (Koch 2007: 50-1). He understands this to mean that at least the initial categories of the *Logic* are neither true nor false because they are “pre-propositional.” I will challenge this way of spelling out the alternativeless-ness of the categories in the next chapter, but the basic claim that they are without alternatives is exactly right. Pippin (in 2015: 168ff.) discusses these issues in a way which is more congenial to the interpretation I am offering. I have learned the most about what this means from a conference presentation by Wolfram Gobsch entitled “Skepticism and Philosophy.” In particular his remarks there about the relation between being without alternative and the law of non-contradiction have informed my thinking.

are talking at one and the same time about conditions on the possibility of thought and conditions on the possibility of being. Finally, the conditions arrived at are necessary (supposing Hegel's arguments to be valid), because their negations are unthinkable, though what is shown to be necessary (in the *Logic*) is the objective validity of ways of thinking and being and not the existence of thinkers and beings.

There is still more to be gleaned from a comparison between Stroud and Hegel. As the discussion of necessity reveals, Hegel's conception of the conditions on the possibility of thought is not the same as Stroud's: Stroud does not fully think through what it would mean for these conditions to be conditions on what is thinkable. It is important to bear in mind, though, that Hegel's conditions are in fact conditions on the possibility of a subjective activity, what we do when we think. Consequently, it is still striking, and may still seem mysterious, that we can establish conclusions about being on the basis of them. What is striking may be put like this: Hegel's position seems like it should fall within the target range of Stroud's criticism. What I have shown is either that it does not fall within that target range, or that (if it does) Stroud's criticism is confused. In either case, we still need to resolve or dissolve this mystery: why can't there be unthinkable beings? One might think this can be no mystery, because it is just obvious that we can form no thought of an unthinkable being and so cannot entertain the possibility of such a being. But for all that this response says, this might just be a parochial fact about us, about our capacities and their limitations. Rather than resolving the mystery, this response by itself just mires us in it more deeply by emphasizing how unstable our position is so long as we do not respond to the mystery. And so we have the task of accounting for our capacity to think in such a fashion that it dissolves the mystery by enabling us to comprehend why the world must be as we are forced to think of it.

One possible reason for the uncertainty about whether Hegel's position falls within Stroud's target range is that Stroud thinks of transcendental arguments as aiming to establish "substantive truths about the way the world is."³⁵ Conclusions established about what is thinkable may not seem to be able to be substantive in the relevant sense. For instance, the claim that no object has contradictory properties is something we might be able to establish on the basis of not being able to think a contradiction (if we adopt for a moment the language of a conceivability or contradiction view). But that the law of non-contradiction holds in the world is not such a substantive conclusion, especially compared with such conclusions as every event has a cause. Consequently, it might be that Stroud thinks of transcendental arguments as aiming to establish conclusions like the latter, and so thinks the negations of these conclusions must in some sense be thinkable. Whatever the case with Stroud, moreover, we now have an objection to Hegel's understanding of the conditions on the possibility of thought as conditions on what is thinkable: how can those conditions yield "substantive" conclusions?

I have identified a remaining mystery (why can't there be unthinkable beings?) and an objection (Hegel's conditions on the possibility of thought cannot yield anything substantive). To resolve the mystery, we need to develop a conception of thought on which we can understand how the conditions on its possibility can just be the conditions on the possibility of being. If the arguments from Hegel discussed in chapter 1 are on track, then the need to develop this conception of thought is internal to thought, to our own understanding of ourselves as thinkers. This means that we are driven to develop such a conception of thought as what is necessary to make sense of the possibility of thought. The conception of thought we arrive at will not be "substantive" in the sense of entailing conclusions that have intelligible alternatives. But it will be substantive or of interest in that it will reveal all of the conditions on the possibility of being.

³⁵ Stroud 2000c: 209.

So, we are committed to deriving sufficiently significant conclusions from an account of the conditions on the possibility of thought for it to be an important and insightful task. We do not yet understand how we are going to discharge that commitment – we do not yet have in view the form of “objective thought,” the inner nature common to being and thinking. But the arguments of chapter 1 prove that we need to get this form in view to make sense of (ordinary) thought’s validity.

But what *is* the nature of objective thought? We have seen above that the conditions on the possibility of thought do not constitute limitations on it, and that we, in thinking, are cognizant of this. These two claims will serve as a kind of touchstone in what follows (especially in chapter 3): we will use it to build up to an adequate understanding of the nature of objective thought, rejecting various ways of understanding it which fail to preserve our recognition of thought’s validity. Indeed, all of what follows in this dissertation will be spent attempting to articulate the form of objective thought, which is really to say (as I’ll explain in chapter 3) that the rest of this dissertation will be an account of the method of the *Logic*.

To clarify, my project here is not to give an account of the conditions on the possibility of thought and being. Rather, my project is to give an account of the form or nature of those conditions. Given what has been established here, my starting point will be the claim that this form does not limit thought, but rather explains our recognition of its validity.

Before I launch into this project, however, I want to respond to one more objection about the very possibility of it. One might accept the argument that thought cannot be limited, but argue that precisely for that reason it cannot have a nature. The idea of a nature is just the idea of some limitation (one might object), something particular about thought which distinguishes it from other things and which (one might contend) thereby limits it. Really, what we need to do is

recognize that thought does not have a nature. The philosophical task we ought to pursue is to expose as confused those attempts to account for thought as having a nature, by showing that they are at odds with or incompatible with our understanding of thought's validity. To seek to go beyond that, and actually give an account of the putative nature of this understanding is really just to fall prey to the exact same confusion Hegel is trying to respond to.

This objection fails properly to register one of the points Hegel insists on: that we know thought to be a subjective capacity (the initial determination of thought we start with in §20). As such, we know it to have a nature. In particular, we can employ thought to think about what is other than thought, and we recognize this difference (between our thinking and what we think about) in our understanding of our own activity. Moreover, in our understanding of the validity of thought, we have seen that we implicitly understand thought to have a form in which it is also a form of being, objective thought. We implicitly understand, then, that thought as a subjective capacity has some kind of relation to objective thought – a relation which, it will turn out, we all implicitly understand, but which we have not yet articulated. The relation between thought as a subjective capacity and objective thought is not one we can overcome as illusory, for it is internal to our understanding of thought as able to be valid. And that means that we understand thought to have various determinations (determinations which relate the two forms of thought to one another). So, we recognize that thought has a nature. To give up on the project of accounting for that nature is to give up on thought, to give up on the understanding we all have of ourselves as thinkers.

The nature of the subjective capacity must be such as to reveal it to be unlimited. Consequently, the nature of its determination is unlike the nature of other determinations. As we have seen, we have to advance to another form of thought which illuminates our initial

understanding of thought as a subjective capacity – objective thought, a form of thought that tolerates no separation between thinking and what it thinks about, a form of thought which is identical with what it thinks. What is the form or nature of objective thought? Our task in what follows will be to account for this form of thought's determination in such a way that it reveals thought to be unlimited.

Chapter 3: The Form of the Progression

According to Hegel, there is movement or progression within the conditions on the possibility of thought and being. This is a hard thought. It is easy to think that *we logicians* advance in the *Logic* from stage to stage: for instance, from an account of a thing and its properties to an account of a thing and its matter. But Hegel thinks that the stages of the *Logic* themselves advance: that, somehow, what it is to be a thing and its properties advances to what it is to be a thing and its matter. The method of the *Logic*, Hegel notes, is “the consciousness of the form [*über die Form*] of the *inner self-movement* of its content” (5.49/21.37; ital. mine). Somehow logic itself moves.

In response, one wants to protest: motion and progress have their natural home in the natural world, in the movement of matter and the progress of time. The conditions on the possibility of those things and of thought of those things cannot itself move or progress.

Hegel, evidently, disagrees. The stages, he thinks, are constituted by their place in the sequence of stages. Since the place in the sequence determines what the stage is, to grasp a stage is to grasp its place in the sequence of such stages. But the advance from one stage to another is not merely a movement which I make in my account of the conditions; it is also the movement of the stages themselves, which are constituted in the advance. So Hegel thinks.

My aim in this chapter is to shed light on this thought. Why does Hegel think that the sequence of conditions on the possibility of thought and being constitute those conditions? And what is the nature of that sequence such that there is progress from one condition to another? I will argue that we can unpack Hegel’s notion of a logical progression and see the necessity for it by reflecting on the account of the topic of the *Logic* provided in the first two chapters.

In my attempt to explain Hegel's notion, I will rely on what Hegel himself says about the logical progression for clues. Those clues suggest certain ways of modeling the progression; through a consideration of where more familiar models fall short of capturing what he says, I will arrive at a more adequate though much less familiar way of understanding the progression. In particular, Hegel claims that the progression is some form of enrichment, that it is some form of self-determination, and that it is necessary. The first claim suggests that the progress consists in specification, or determining a determinable. The second claim suggests that the progress consists in a kind of organic growth. I will show that neither model is satisfactory, in part because they are not consistent with Hegel's claim that the progression is necessary. In their place, I propose what I call the transformation view of the progression. According to the transformative view, to grasp one stage requires grasping its transformation into another stage: the transformation constitutes *the unity* of the original stage in constituting a new, enriched stage. The progress is self-determining, in that it is determined by the original stage and the advance is made to preserve the original condition. Moreover, the progress is necessary, for without it the original stage is nothing at all.¹

The strategy of explaining the progression in the *Logic* by relying on what Hegel himself says about it is not without its detractors. A number of scholars have argued that Hegel did not understand the nature of what he was doing, that what he actually did is much more interesting and comprehensible than his description of it.² It is not feasible to attempt to show in this chapter

¹ In explaining the idea of progress, I appeal to our “grasp” of one stage. That may make it sound as though the content itself is not what moves – rather, we (logicians) move, in advancing from stage to stage. However, the results of chapter two should mitigate this impression: we cannot oppose my activity of grasping with the content therein grasped. I appeal to the idea of grasping to oppose the idea that the movement of the content itself does not involve our movement. Our thinking is not passive in relation to the movement (merely observing) – that would just be another way of opposing our grasp and what we grasp. My hope is to shed light on what this means by the end of this chapter, in articulating the transformative view.

² Cf. Henrich 2010: 114; Hösle 1989: 179-80.

that Hegel's description of his project matches what he in fact does throughout the *Logic*. But it should be enough to win a hearing for my interpretation if I can show that what he says is justified in light of the conception of the *Logic* articulated in the first two chapters. The claims of those chapters will, then, serve as my touchstone in interpreting and defending Hegel's claims about the progression: in particular, the claim that the progression is required to make sense of thought's validity. The conditions on the possibility of thought and being are as such available to thought and they must determine thought in such a fashion that thought can know the world. Hegel's description of the method is worth taking seriously if it can be justified by appeal to this touchstone. I will show for each of the claims that I consider that they are in fact required to make sense of the validity of thought: the models of determining a determinable, organic growth, and advancing from part to organic whole, when applied to the progress of the conditions on the possibility of thought and being, all render thought parochial. I further show that the transformative view avoids this result.

One last note before beginning: the nature of my method in this chapter is to point to a familiar model as a way of thinking about the progress in the *Logic*, to note what in it must be preserved, and to note why nevertheless the model itself cannot work because of some further feature it has. A consequence of this approach is that one may, for any model, note that we can just accept that model if we abandon the feature in question. I have no objections to doing that; in fact, I plan to show that the transformative view is nothing other than thinking through what it is to give up the relevant feature in the different models I consider.

§1

Before I turn to consider Hegel's claim that the progression consists in a kind of enrichment, I want first to say something in defense of the idea that we must at least be able to engage in some kind of logical progression – not yet the stage-constituting kind which Hegel describes, but the kind that we logicians can engage in when we think about the different conditions. For, at the outset, it may not be clear why even this much should be granted. After all, why not think there are conditions on the possibility of thought and being, but not such that we can progress with any kind of order from one to another? Maybe they are unrelated to one another; or maybe their relation is such that we cannot articulate it; or maybe their relation is articulable but no particular form of that articulation is essential or even essentially possible. Why think that we must be able to progress from one condition to another?

It will help to answer this question if we develop a very general framework within which we can ask about the progression. First, it is important that we suspend or abstract from my specific interpretation of the claim that objective thought is one in which what is thought and what is thought about are inseparable or somehow identical. This is important because, in what follows, I consider different models for making sense of the progress in the *Logic*, models that imply some separation or lack of identity between thought and what it is of. Indeed, the flaws in the models I consider all stem from the fact that they are appropriate ways of thinking about something only where I do not think about the being of that thing and my thought of it as inseparably united. Consequently, it is much more natural to talk about these models as models for how to understand the progression of forms of thought, since each will (in different ways) make nonsense of the idea that the progression is of forms of thought and being. So, in what

follows, I shall start with the idea that the forms in question are forms of thought and work back up to the idea that they are forms of thought and being.

Second, it is important to begin with a generic idea of thought. According to the argument I presented in chapter 1, thought is free or self-determining. That is, it belongs to any act of thought that I determine what I think in light of a standard internal to my thought itself. This is easiest to grasp in the case of judgment. I judge what I judge because I take it to be valid. This characterizes the form of all judgment as such, or of anything that merits the title of judgment in the sense in which we are interested. An account of this form, or cognition of it, is therefore general in that it constitutes the common nature of all forms of judgment. It characterizes all of my judgments, no matter what they are about, that I think them because I take them to be valid. Though easiest to grasp in the case of judgment, the point that thought determines itself holds more generally. Whenever I think, whatever the form of my thought – whether it is a judgment or a question, indeed whether it has any predicative structure at all – I think what I think in light of determining that I am to think it, according to whatever standard is internal to the form of that thought. Even, for instance, an idle imagining contains within it a standard of validity: something like the logical space appropriate to imagining, that in virtue of which I count this activity as imagining. I will call this generic notion of thought the notion of thought's validity, because it belongs to all acts of thought that I think them in taking them to be valid (in whatever sense is appropriate for that kind of thought).

Next, it is evident that I do not only have different thoughts, or thoughts about different things, but also that I have thoughts with different, irreducible forms. Again, this is easiest to see in the case of judgment: I judge not only about flashes of lightning, and not only about the link between those flashes and the sound of thunder which follows them, but also about triangles and

their properties; I judge not only about whether I should be rude to my neighbor for bumping into me, but also about what material my clothing is made of. These thoughts do not only differ from one another as to their content – they have different forms, such that reasoning about thoughts with one of these forms differs from reasoning about thoughts with another. Different rules constitute what it is to judge validly in these different cases. And, once again, though easiest to grasp in the case of judgment, one can also find different non-judgmental forms of thought. For instance, what it takes for a concept to successfully pick out a quantity is different from what it takes for a concept to successfully pick out a quality; and both of these are different from what it takes to so much as entertain an object as able to perform a certain sort of action (the standard for this having to do with the conceptual fit between object and action – e.g., that the act of moving can only be entertained for material objects).³

All of the forms of thought must have this genus in common. So, we must have some account of the genus on which it is common to different forms of thought. And this means that we must be able to start from the account of the genus as generic and explain that it is this genus that is present in the different forms, to recognize (for instance) that thoughts about causes and thoughts about quantities are both forms of thought. Thus, we must at least be able to progress from the generic conception of the validity of thought to an account of the specific forms of that

³ With what right do we know that there are different forms of thought? I have suggested that it is plausible, based on an intuitive appreciation of the differences between different kinds of judgments and thoughts. That suggestion is not finally satisfying, because it does not articulate the need for different forms of thought as arising from the very idea of thought's validity. Hegel thinks the only justification that can arise from the very idea of thought's validity, or from within the account of objective thought, lies in the actual progression of the *Logic*: in the progression from being to *Dasein* to quantity to quality etc. That we cannot be satisfied with just being can only emerge, he thinks, from the account of being. (For a helpful account, cf. Houlgate 2005: 34-5.) We are not yet in a position to understand why he thinks that, but we will see why in §6.

validity. This, then, explains why we logicians at least have to be able to progress from the generic conception of thought to more specific determinations of it.⁴

So, we must be able to progress from an account of the generic conception of the validity of thought to an account of the specific forms of thought. This does not yet establish that the sequence of the progression constitutes or defines the specific forms, which Hegel also thinks (but Kant would certainly deny). It does not even show that we need to actually progress from one form to another, or that the advance has any explanatory import. But it does show that we need to be able to progress from the generic conception of thought's validity to the species of that validity in order to make sense of the fact that thought is genuinely one in its different activities.

This characterization of the progression might create two expectations that it is worth highlighting, so that we can track where we stand with respect to them as we move forward. First, one might expect the progression to proceed from the genus to the species, and not from one species to another species: starting, for instance, with the idea of reason, I note that there is theoretical reason and I note that there is practical reason; while I might first explain theoretical reason and then practical reason, my advance is not from the one species to the other but in both cases from the genus to a specification of it. As this would lead one to expect, it is true that the

⁴ It may help to note that Kant also acknowledges this point. For him (as, I argue in chapter 5, for Hegel), the generic idea of thought's validity comes with or is attached to the idea that all thought involves combination; different forms of combination (in, for instance, the different categories, or the different forms of judgment) have different internal standards of validity. But we must be able to see all of these thoughts as sharing in the generic notion of combination.

The same point holds for Kant's division of thought into its theoretical and practical forms. To be sure, Kant does not think that we can know, through reflection on the generic nature of thought alone, that thought is divided into theoretical and practical thought, for he does not think we can eliminate the logical possibility that there are theoretically rational beings who lack practical reason (in whom the moral law is not of itself motivating) (cf. Kant 6:26.). But he thinks we must be able to make sense of theoretical and practical thought as genuinely species of thought, and so must be able to recognize what is common to them as common. And he further recognizes that we must be able to advance from the generic notion of thought to its division into its theoretical and practical forms (cf. Kant 4:387-8).

progression will proceed from the genus to the species.⁵ However, the idea that this is in opposition to advancing from species to species will turn out to be illusory. Second, one might expect that, starting from the genus, we advance from one form *bearing* the unity of thought to another form which bears the same unity. An account of the genus itself tells us what it is to think validly; the forms articulated in the progression do not articulate what it is to think validly but merely describe specific ways in which one can think validly. This distinction, between an account of what it is to think validly and an account of the different forms of valid thought, will also not out to be illusory.

§2

We must be able to progress from the genus to the species. The form of this progression must consist in some form of enrichment: in advancing from the genus to the species, we must arrive at a further determination which differentiates this species from the other species. The idea that this is an enrichment of some kind comes with the idea that we progress from the genus to the species: that entails at least that the new determination was not present in the bare genus in the same way in which it is present in the species. And so it is not surprising that Hegel repeatedly notes that the progress in the *Logic* is a form of enrichment: “For first, this progress [*Fortgehen*] determines itself such that it begins from simple determinacies and the following become richer and more concrete because the result contains its beginning, and its course [*Verlauf*] enriched it with a new determinacy” (6.569/12.250).⁶

⁵ Hegel puts this point quite nicely when he notes that “the *universal* constitutes the foundation [*Grundlage*]; the progress is for this reason not to be taken as a *flowing* from an *other* to an *other*” (6.569/12.250).

⁶ Further evidence: “The *progress* [*Fortgang*] beyond what makes the beginning is only to be seen as a further determination of the beginning [*desselben*] so that the beginning remains lying at the ground of everything following and does not disappear from it” (5.71/21.58; Giovanni interprets the referent of “*desselben*” to be “*Fortgang*” which is grammatically possible but makes nonsense of the sentence). See also Hegel’s claim that the result “is a new

The claim that the progression in the *Logic* consists in enrichment through in some sense adding new “determinacies” suggests that we take more fully on board the ordinary understanding of the genus/species relation, or the model of determining a determinable. According to this model, the further determination (or, traditionally, *differentia*) is not already contained in the genus; hence, adding it enriches the genus. Moreover, there is a straightforward and familiar sense in which the species “contains” the genus.

As noted, it is essential to the determinable-determination relation that the determination is not already contained in the determinable – otherwise the result would be at best an analysis of the determinable and not a further determination of it. Consider, for instance, the relationship between triangle and right-angled triangle. Being right-angled is a determination which can be added to the concept triangle to determine or specify it. Prior to adding right-angled, the concept triangle has not yet been specified and could be determined in a contrasting way so as to exclude the feature of being right-angled. For instance, the concept acute-angled triangle does not – and, on pain of incompatibility, cannot – contain the feature of being right-angled. Prior to the specification, then, the concept triangle could be specified in different, incompatible ways. In other words, the way in which a determinable is enriched through adding determinations requires that the determinations not already be part of the content of the determinable.

For precisely this reason, Hegel argues that the model fails. In the *Logic*, he claims, “the *division* must hang together with the *concept* or much more lie in it itself. The concept is not undetermined, but rather *determined* in it itself” (5.56/21.44). Consequently, Hegel claims, the further determination (division) in the *Logic* is not like ordinary cases of determining a determinable. He uses the example of a triangle to illustrate his point: “Right-angularity, acute-

concept, but the higher, richer concept than that which comes before it; because it has become in its negation or opposition richer, [it] contains what comes before therefore, but also more than it, and is the unity of it and what opposes it [*seines Entgegengesetzten*]” (5.49/21.38).

angularity, and so forth, like equilateral and so forth, according to which determinations the triangle is divided, lie not in the determinacy of the triangle itself, that is, not in what is customarily called [*genannt zu werden pflegt*] the concept of the triangle” (5.56/21.44). So, in the *Logic*, the determination must not come from “elsewhere”; it must rather lie in the concept being further determined.

While Hegel does not explain why the determination must lie in the concept itself in this passage, it is easy to supply the reason. For, on the model of determining a determinable, it is internal to my grasp of the determinable that it can be determined otherwise than I determine it. It follows that I am cognizant, in adding the further determination, that it might have been otherwise.⁷ If we apply this to the case of the forms of thought and being, this means that I am cognizant that the further determination only accounts for how it seems to one like me, one for whom the conditions on the possibility of thinking are like this and not like that. So, when I determine the genus thought by arriving at some particular form of thought, I am cognizant that this determination is not fully grounded in the genus. In other words, I am cognizant that there is something optional about advancing to this form of thought. This means that, starting with the genus, I have the thought that the way in which it is determined might have been otherwise. To use once again the analog case of the concept triangle: acute-angled triangle might not have been a way of determining the genus triangle. Whether it is turns on more than just the genus – it turns, for instance, on the curvature of space. Similarly, on this model, we have to have the thought that the forms of thought we arrive at might not have been forms of thought. But this

⁷ One way to put this point is that the model lacks the necessity which is proper to philosophy, or at least to the *Logic*: Hegel makes this point against the model of determining a determinable – that it lacks necessity and so cannot be the method of philosophy – at EL §9 (though it is not obvious what sense of necessity he has in mind there).

means that I am cognizant that they are forms of thought for me and not simply as such, in light of the genus. And so I am cognizant that the forms of thought are in some way parochial.

A general way of putting this point is to note that the progress in the *Logic* cannot consist in learning. As I will use the term, to learn is to advance from ignorance about something to having knowledge of it.⁸ Learning only makes sense where the conclusions one reaches are not conclusions one already knows. Consequently, learning requires that one have the thought that, for all that one knew prior to learning, it might have been otherwise. And we do indeed learn all the time. But we cannot learn about the conditions on the possibility of thought, for it is not the case that these might have been otherwise. We must conceive of these conditions in such a way that the apparent thought of their being otherwise falls apart – for, otherwise, we conceive of these conditions as merely parochial.

So, the determining a determinable model cannot be the right way to make sense of logical progress. Nor, to my knowledge, is this model advanced by any interpreter – perhaps because of the kind of evidence quoted above. But another argument might also be offered against the model, and might also explain why scholars do not take the model up: it cannot account for the shifts in topics over the course of the *Logic*. For instance, the *Logic* progresses from syllogism to mechanism, from identity to difference [*Unterschied*], from finitude to infinity. These do not seem to be any form of specification. Indeed, in the case of the latter two, they clearly involve some kind of negation of what would be the genus – and so it does not seem

⁸ This is not the only way kind of thing we call “learning”: as we ordinarily use the term, we might say that taking something implicit and making it explicit is a kind of learning; that going from a state of confusion to a state of clarity is a kind of learning; that deepening one’s appreciation for a claim through attempting to contest it is a kind of learning. The idea of learning that I wish to focus on is just going from ignorance to knowledge of something (in Kant’s terms, we do this through synthetic judgment and not through analytic judgment; Hegel’s picture is more complicated).

to make sense to think of it as a genus. Consequently, one might argue, no form of determining a determinable makes sense.

But this reasoning goes too far. On the one hand, it is clear from the evidence cited at the beginning of this section that Hegel is committed to the thought that the progression enriches the content of the starting point, a feature which licenses some conception of specification or determination. And if all we mean by talk of genus/species is that the genus is common to all of the following conditions, and that those conditions are in addition in some way enriched, then by Hegel's lights we should accept some form of genus/species talk.

Moreover, as we saw in §1, Hegel is right. We must be able to progress from the generic conception of thought as valid to the particular forms of its validity to make sense of all of the different forms as forms of the same thing. As we have just seen, this progression cannot involve determining the genus in such a way that it might have been determined otherwise. But this does not undermine the starting claim that we must be able to determine the generic conception of thought. The apparent counterexamples found in the *Logic*, progressions in which the idea of enrichment and of further determining a genus do not seem to make sense, will have to be addressed below (cf. footnote 31). For now, I note only that we still have reason to insist that a progression from the genus must be possible.

Further, we now see that the progression needs to be grounded in the genus itself. That is, grasping the genus must in some sense (to be further explored) ground the advance to the next form of thought (the next species). Or, put differently, the progression is not one in which we merely determine forms of thought's validity – it is one in which we also determine what it is for thought to be valid, by articulating that which is in some sense contained in the very idea of thought's validity. For we have to avoid opening up the specter of other forms of thought (not

ours) in the advance, such that we cannot think of our forms as valid. And so our grasp of the generic form of thought must itself determine what species occur in the progression.

§3

The idea that the progress in the *Logic* is self-determining is supported by a great many passages in Hegel. For instance, he describes “the demand for the *realization of the concept*, which does not lie in the *beginning* itself, but rather much more is the aim and work of the entire further development of cognition” (6.554/12.240).⁹ Talk of self-determination, and the associated talk of development and realization, suggests another model for making sense of logical progress: the Aristotelian model of organic growth.

A different model which also invokes the idea of an organism appeals not to organic growth but to the organic unity that binds together different organs in an organism. On this view, we advance from an account of one part of an organic whole to an account of the whole organism. This idea is typically connected to the Aristotelian and Kantian idea that we can only understand a part of an organism through relating it to the whole organism. From this idea, it follows that an account of the part will necessarily lead to an account of the whole (cf. McTaggart 1896: §§1, 120-2; Martin 2012: 27-8). This interpretation has to give up on the thought that the progress is one made by the subject matter itself, as it is nonsense to assume that an organism advances from one organ to another. To this extent, it is like the determining a determinable model, and it might be questioned on somewhat similar grounds: that is, the organs are understood through an understanding of the whole organism; but it is not clear that the whole

⁹ Or, as he puts it a little later, “[T]he progress consists much more in that the universal determines its self and is *for itself* the universal... Only in its completion [*Vollendung*] is it the absolute” (6.555-6/12.241). He elsewhere describes the progress in the *Logic* as “this way that constructs its self” and claims that its “self-movement is its spiritual life” (5.17/21.8). Cf. also §17, §28z, §238, 5.35/21.27, 5.43/21.33, *PhG* ¶2.

organism itself suffices to explain the manifold organs – it seems like one needs to appeal not just to the organism, but also to the environment around it. But if that is so, then the specific organs are not contained in the very idea of the organism, and so they might well be different (which would make this conception of thought parochial).

But the view is worth considering at more length, and I do that in the next chapter (especially in §1). In that chapter I argue that it makes the method of the dialectic a form of theoretical cognition, and that this means it cannot properly account for the self-determining validity of thought.

Returning to the model of organic growth, we distinguish between immature and mature states of an organism. The immature state is posterior to the mature state in account, or conceptually, because what it is to be the immature state is to be that which tends towards the mature state. Moreover, as the language of “tends towards” suggests, the immature state advances towards the mature state through its own activity.¹⁰ To use the classic example, an acorn is an immature oak tree. What it is to be an acorn, then, is to be that which tends towards being an oak tree (or, more immediately, tends towards being an oak sapling). The acorn will remain a potential oak for as long as it is an acorn. Moreover, the acorn becomes an oak through its own activity: by taking in nutrients from the soil, for instance, and – when it is a little more mature – by taking in sunlight. A manifestation of all of these points is that, though most acorns do not become oaks, we are not surprised when one does become an oak; rather, we see that result as due to the very nature of the acorn.

The first claim, that what it is to be an immature state is defined in terms of the mature state, explains how we can think of the progress as an enrichment – the acorn has not yet realized its nature, to be an oak tree, and in realizing this nature it is enriched, in that it is now actually

¹⁰ Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Θ8 1049b12-1050a16.

what it was merely potentially. Moreover, it explains how this can be combined with the thought that the enrichment is already contained (implicitly or in an undeveloped form) in the starting point, since the acorn is defined in terms of the oak tree. Finally, it does this while providing a clear model for thinking about the progress as grounded in the starting point, which is now no longer thought of as a genus but rather as the immature state (the acorn). The acorn itself tends towards becoming an oak tree. This tendency would explain Hegel's language of "self-determination," and it seems to explain the progress in a way which does not make thought parochial. But in fact this model of the progress does make thought parochial, because it essentially involves an appeal to external matter.

To see this, note again that organic growth is defined by the transition from an immature state to a mature state. These two states are incompatible with one another, and the immaturity is eliminated by the time one arrives at the mature state. So, in organic growth there are distinct states of the existence of the organism, each one exclusive of the others: seed, sapling, tree. The immature state is a way in which the organism can exist, while also being a state in which the organism is a potentiality (potentially mature). So, it belongs to the idea of an immature state that it can fail to realize its potential, that it can fail to become mature.¹¹

Since the organism can cease to be without becoming fully mature, there must be conditions outside of or other than it which enable it to become mature: when those conditions are not met, the organism cannot reach maturity; when they are met, it can. I do not mean that there are conditions on the continued existence of the organism in its present state, though there

¹¹ Aristotle makes this point quite well: "Every potentiality is at one and the same time a potentiality for the opposite; for, while that which is not capable of being present in a subject cannot be present, everything that is capable of being may possibly not be actual. That, then, which is capable of being may either be or not be; the same thing, then, is capable both of being and of not being. And that which is capable of not being may possibly not be; and that which may possibly not be is perishable, either without qualification, or in the precise sense in which it is said that it possibly may not be" (Aristotle 1991: *Metaphysics* Θ8 1050b8-15). The sapling is potentially an oak, which means that it might not be (indeed, is not) an oak. That is, it might fail in its striving to become an oak.

are such conditions: for instance, that all of the air not suddenly become acid, or that the sun not explode. These are enabling conditions on the existence of the organism. In addition, there must be distinct enabling conditions specifically on the growth of the organism. The need for these distinct enabling conditions comes with the idea of growth. If either the acorn or the sapling already had that which they needed to be mature, then they would already be mature, and they would not relate themselves to their environment in a process of becoming mature. As merely potentially mature, the immature organism lacks that which it needs to be mature: that is why it must *become* mature, in an activity of acquiring that which it needs. But this means there are distinct enabling conditions on growth: whatever those conditions are which enable the organism to acquire what it needs to become mature.

There are many different kinds of enabling condition, corresponding to differences in the nature of what is enabled. In this case, the enabling conditions enable a certain kind of activity: they enable the organism to grow. Growth, moreover, is an activity of self-realization, or an activity in which the organism sustains itself. This brings with it two specifications of the kind of enabling condition in question. First, to make sense of the organism itself as active, and not merely passively determined into some complex motion by the enabling condition, the organism must actively relate itself to these conditions. Thus, the enabling conditions must function as a kind of matter on which the organism works. Growth is “laborious,” as Aristotle put it, because it consists in working on some matter.¹² Second, this is labor in which the organism realizes *itself*: so, second, its active relation to these conditions must consist in incorporating them into itself, so that it may realize itself.

An acorn, for instance, can grow only in the presence of certain kinds of nutrients. But these nutrients do not merely cause it to grow: the acorn actively incorporates or takes up the

¹² Cf. Aristotle 1991: *Metaphysics* Θ8 1050b27.

nutrients into itself in growing. The activity is more evident in the case of the sapling: it shoots out roots so as to find nutrients and turns towards the sun to receive the light it needs for photosynthesis.¹³ The sapling is, in other words, active in seeking out those conditions which enable it to grow, conditions which it incorporates in order to grow.¹⁴

Applying this to the progression in the *Logic*, the idea must be that thought is in an immature state prior to the end. Maturity is achieved when thought has realized that which is contained in the form of thought as such. That form of thought is defined by nothing other than thought's validity. So, the progression is one towards an account of thought in which it is valid. Prior to our account achieving maturity, it is parochial: it is not (yet) able to arrive at the truth, since on our account of it, we cannot yet grasp how our thoughts can yield anything more than conclusions about how it seems to us thinkers. That is what it means for thought to be only potentially mature. Moreover, the progression to validity rests on an enabling condition outside of or other than the generic idea of thought's validity: whatever it is that corresponds to the nutrients in the soul that enables the acorn to grow.

In its immature state, thought is not yet valid, because it has not yet fully realized the form of thought. To become valid, thought must work on some matter. This work, the activity of thought, consists in nothing other than thinking. Thought, moreover, can be driven to think about this matter – whatever it is which will enable thought to become mature – only in being cognizant that the account of itself it has so far provided is not yet valid. For, otherwise, thought could recognize no need for working on some matter, just as the sapling only seeks nutrients

¹³ I should clarify that my argument does not turn on the actual truth of any of these descriptions of biological growth – what matters is not whether Aristotle got growth right, but whether how he thought about growth is a good way to think about Hegel's logical progression.

¹⁴ This activity of incorporation does not always need to involve a physical absorption: it might involve digging a tunnel in which to live free from the interference of predators. Here the incorporation is not into the physical body of the organism, but rather into a part of the animal's environment, a part by which it secures or promotes its survival. The activity of physical absorption is, nevertheless, a useful paradigm for thinking about incorporation.

when it senses a need for them. But this means that, in its immature state, thought must be cognizant that it is not valid.

Moreover, in its immature state thought must not only cognize itself as it is – in whatever immature state that may be – it must also, in an additional act, cognize some matter. This must be an additional act because, on the organic growth model, thought is actual in its immature state: it does not, simply in cognizing itself, arrive at the mature state, but must take up or incorporate something other than it. There are distinct enabling conditions on its being in its present state and on its growing, conditions which entail a distinction between our act of reflecting on where we are in our determination of thought and our act of advancing further.

The matter that thought cognizes might not in fact be anything other than thought itself: thought may only, in this sense, depend upon thought. But, on this model, in the act of working on itself-as-matter, thought is not conscious of the matter as itself. Precisely not: it is conscious of itself as immature. Consequently, it is conscious of itself as not being in the state of maturity arrived at by being conscious of the matter as itself (as not yet having grown by incorporating the matter). Hence, it is not, and cannot yet be, conscious of the matter needed to realize maturity as itself.

So, thought cognizes itself, in its immature state, as limited: the conditions on the possibility of it are not the conditions on the possibility of being, because it is cognizant of other ways of thinking which it does not have and in relation to which its cognition is limited. Moreover, the advance beyond thought in its immature, limited state is effected by the activity of thought in that very state. So, the act of working on the matter is performed by a form of thought which is cognizant of its own parochialness. That cognizance infects the very act which is supposed to enable thought to become mature, unlimited: for that act is just an act of thinking, an

act performed by thought in its immature state, and so thought is cognizant that it lacks validity. Parochial thought cannot bootstrap its way into being valid. Consequently, thought cannot grow to maturity, and the organic growth model fails.

The idea of potentiality – and, with it, the idea of incorporating matter – central to the model of organic growth cannot capture the form of the logical progression. And, when he rejects the determining a determinable model, Hegel describes the logical progression in a way which reveals that he would also reject the organic growth model: the progression is “unstoppable, pure, taking in nothing from outside” (5.49/21.38). As unstoppable, the non-final stages of the progression are not merely potentially mature (for potentiality implies possibly not, and so it implies that the progression can be stopped). As taking in nothing from the outside, they must rely on no external matter. The non-final stages must contain within them everything they need to be the final stage.

Hegel, moreover, notes explicitly that the living being cannot be used to understand the nature of the topic of the *Logic*. In the course of discussing arguments for the existence of God, he notes that the “true [*wahrhaftie*] determination of the idea of God” cannot be grasped from “the merely living nature” for “God is more than living, he is spirit. The *spiritual* nature is alone the most worthy and truest *origin* [Ausgangspunkt] for the thought of the absolute” (§50A). His argument for this conclusion is that our observation of the ends of “living nature” “can be contaminated” by “insignificance [*Geringfügigkeit*]” (§50A). That is, the ends that living beings set cannot demand as their explanation the absolute, because those ends are insignificant enough that something less than the absolute would suffice to explain them. These ends, moreover, are conditioned by that which they take as their matter. Hegel notes specifically about animals that they do not transform that which they perceive and intuit into anything absolute, but relate to the

sensible world as what conditions them (for this reason, Hegel claims, animals “have no religion”) (§50A). He must have a similar point in mind for all merely living nature: all of it is conditioned, in its capacity to set ends, by the world which it relates to.

We, on the other hand, are not conditioned by that which we think: we “transform [*verwandeln*]” the “empirical world” in thinking about it by raising it up “into the infinite,” that which is without conditions, the absolute, God (§50A). It is hard to understand how we do this in thinking about the sensible world, especially if we take seriously traditional notions of God. I have tried to shed some light on this in my first chapter, where I noted that thought is unconditioned in virtue of being able to arrive at the truth, what is, in its freedom. Admittedly this is still far from explaining why it makes sense to connect this topic to the physicotheological proof for God’s existence, as Hegel does here.¹⁵ But, even without clarifying that connection, we can see that the point against living nature corroborates the argument against the organic growth model I presented above.

Hegel’s point is that the ends life sets itself are conditioned and so a consideration of them could contaminate the pure idea of self-determination that allows us to advance to the thought of the absolute. The contamination occurs because the self-determination never advances beyond the need for a condition which does not have its source in the self-determining activity itself: because the end is never lifted up to that which is without conditions. And, whatever

¹⁵ Hegel’s argument should be compared to Kant’s discussion of physicotheology and ethicotheology in §§85-6 of the third critique: Kant, like Hegel, notes that we cannot arrive at the concept God merely from the idea of a natural end, or a living being, because we could conceive of an author of that being which lacked the infinite, unconditioned attributes of God (a being that is relatively more powerful than us, but not omnipotent). Further, Kant, like Hegel, notes that we should instead start with rational nature. Unlike Hegel, however, Kant thinks that the aspect of our rational nature which grounds theology is our moral nature: we must posit God as that which enables us to realize the highest good, a world in which happiness is proportioned to virtue. Hegel rejects this argument from Kant, arguing that we cannot arrive at the absolute from within practical reason in this way but must instead advance to speculative reason, thereby grounding (and, even more radically, realizing) God: this is one consequence of his argument about the Idea of the Good at 6.547-8/12.235.

exactly Hegel means by this, he claims that we should instead consider rational nature because it is not similarly conditioned, because its ends are not “*dependent*”: though we, like animals, start from perception and intuition, in thinking we transform our perceptual and intuitive representations of the world in such a way that our thought of them is not conditioned. Though this is not Hegel’s point, it follows from this that we cannot model the activity of the absolute, the logical progression, on the end-setting capacity of organisms, on organic growth.

So, the organic growth model breaks down because it involves the idea of a potentiality and, with it, the idea of external matter. Nevertheless, we need to retain from the idea of organic growth that the logical progression involves a realization of thought, and also that this realization involves thought’s own activity. These characteristics are evident in the quotes with which I began this section; they also enable us to make sense of the enrichment as one in which the additional determination is contained within the starting point, and so begin to make good on the failure of the determining a determinable model.¹⁶ Nevertheless, we need to think of a kind of realization which has no enabling conditions on its realization, such that it is genuinely unstoppable and such that it takes in nothing from outside.

§4

The argument I have given against the organic growth model rests on the idea that thought is cognizant of its own immaturity: it is for this reason that it cannot advance beyond the immature state, because it recognizes the act by which it is to advance as itself immature and so

¹⁶ I take it that Hegel’s frequent invocations of organic growth in characterizing a speculative development is meant to capture these features, and in particular the idea that we can only conceive of the genus valid thought in its progression through the stage, just as we can only conceive of a mature organism through understanding its progression from immaturity (this is certainly his point, for instance, at *PhG* ¶2). As with each of the models, one might employ this one without invoking the appeal to an external matter, and I would have no objection. But we then need to inquire into the nature of a self-realizing activity that progresses through different stages and yet does not work on any external matter.

as invalid. One might object to this argument, however, that thought need not be cognizant of its own immaturity: perhaps it merely senses or feels or intuits that it is immature without yet being cognizant of this immaturity. Indeed, perhaps it so lacks an account of itself that it is not even cognizant that it is working on something other than it, in working on whatever matter enables it to mature. Of course, the activity by which it advances is an activity of thought in which it works on something that does not figure for it as itself (on the organic growth view), but it might not be in a state in which it is cognizant of itself at all, and so it might not be aware of its own activity as an activity of thought.¹⁷

This, I suspect, would be a tempting response for an interpreter like Stephen Houlgate. Houlgate recognizes and insists upon the fact that the logical progression (which he talks about as a progression of categories, or fundamental concepts of thought) is self-determining. So, for instance, he claims that “our conception of the categories has to be derived or deduced from – and so necessitated by – thought’s own self-determination. According to Hegel, such a deduction would involve demonstrating that certain categories understood in a certain way arise directly from the very nature of thought as such.”¹⁸ That is, as I claimed above, we start with the generic conception of thought, and that very conception grounds the progression to the different categories. And he goes on to say that the generic conception of thought, at least as it is articulated at the outset of the *Logic*, is not self-conscious, that this is a point where Hegel disagrees with Fichte, and that the claim that thought is self-conscious at the outset could amount

¹⁷ In the argument against the determining a determinable model I also employed the idea of self-consciousness: I am conscious, in grasping a determinable, that the negation of any determination I add to it is thinkable (and so...). But that appeal is innocuous, since that model understands the progression in the *Logic* to be the logician’s progression, not a self-determining progression of thought itself. The apparent viciousness of an invocation of self-consciousness only kicks in when it is the subject matter that progresses which is said to be self-conscious.

¹⁸ Houlgate 2006: 16.

to nothing more than a presupposition.¹⁹ Consequently, though Houlgate does not himself adopt the organic growth model, it follows that he (and anyone who thinks about the role of self-consciousness in the *Logic* as he does) might be unconvinced by my response to it.

In response, it is important to note that I am not claiming that one can understand what it is to be self-conscious at any stage prior to the last. Indeed, I think that one cannot, just as one cannot appreciate what it is for thought to be valid at any stage prior to the last. We learned this lesson from the failure of the first model: if we grasp what it is for thought to be valid, without yet having all of the forms of thought in view, then the advance to those additional forms of thought will be like determining a determinable in that it will bring with it the thought that these forms might have been otherwise. So, the view that I am proposing is not Fichtean in the way that Houlgate understands Fichte: I do not think that we have self-consciousness in view, such that we can grasp it without yet having articulated the categories that articulate it, and then we deduce the categories by showing that they are suitably related to it. Rather, I think that the progression consists in grasping what self-consciousness is.

That last claim requires a little more clarification: for I have said before that the progression consists in grasping the validity of thought, what is generic or common to all forms of thought, and it is not clear how thought's validity relates to self-consciousness.²⁰ I think Houlgate would rightly insist that we cannot articulate this relationship properly outside of the

¹⁹ “Pure self-consciousness, or I, thus should not provide the starting point from which to derive the categories, and the task of philosophy should not be (as Fichte puts it), to define the categories “*by showing how each category is determinately related to the possibility of self-consciousness.*” The task of philosophy, in Hegel’s view, is rather to establish which categories are immanent in thought conceived simply as *thought* as such” (Houlgate 2006: 24; he argues that the claim that thought is self-conscious would be an illicit presupposition at 27-8). I do not know whether he would criticize my argument for illicitly invoking self-consciousness; my task in this section is to show that, were he to do so, he would be unjustified.

²⁰ Houlgate might object that I am also wrong to think of the generic conception of thought as valid thought. My arguments for this view are contained in chapters 1 and 2: I indicate there why this is no mere presupposition, but that this conception is in fact without alternative. Of course, my argument there presupposed the validity of theoretical cognition as we ordinarily think about it; a true justification would have to be a scientific exposition of our forms of consciousness, or the *Phenomenology*.

actual progression or self-determination of thought. But two points can be made that show a connection between the two topics. First, note that the idea of validity I have invoked is one of self-conscious validity: the activity of thinking is incompatible with thought's being parochial in virtue of the principle that I think what I think because I self-consciously take it to be true. Without self-consciousness, there would be no difficulty with the claim that thought is parochial: it is just another capacity which works according to its own laws. The difficulty with the idea that thought is parochial arises from the claim that it is internal to the very laws of this capacity that it is constituted by its cognizance of arriving at the truth. Indeed, it is this very character which generates the project of the *Logic*, since without it we would have no reason to think through the unity of thought and being. This suggests that self-consciousness is internal to the validity of thought, and so supports my claim that the logical progression is (at least in one of its guises) a development of what self-consciousness is.

And, second, it is clear that Hegel recognizes the centrality of self-consciousness for the project of the *Logic*. Thus, his famous praise of Kant: “It belongs to the deepest and most correct insights which one finds in the critique of reason that the *unity*, which constitutes the *essence of the concept* [Wesen des Begriffs] is cognized as the *original-synthetic* unity of *apperception*, as the unity of the “*I think*” or of self-consciousness” (6.254/12.18; cf. also 6.254-62/12.17-22). “The concept” is one of Hegel’s terms for the subject matter of the *Logic* as a whole. So, Hegel thinks, Kant got it right when he said that the unity of that subject matter is nothing other than self-consciousness. Moreover, his point is exactly the same as the one made in the previous paragraph: self-consciousness is that in virtue of which my representations are representations of what is the case, and so it is that in virtue of which thought is valid. Or, as Hegel puts it (still following Kant), “the unity of the concept is that through which something is not merely [a]

determination of feeling, intuition or also merely representation, but rather [an] object, the objective unity of which is the unity of the I with its self” (6.255/12.18).

These two points get at the way in which the generic conception of thought as valid is linked to the conception of thought as self-conscious. They do not establish that, from the start, we know thought to be valid or self-conscious, such that the progression is nothing more than spelling out the consequences of that. For the progression might instead constitute what it is for thought to be valid or self-conscious (this is the view that I will try to defend in the next section). But, I now want to show, that is all I need in order to show that the organic growth model fails.

The organic growth model is one on which the logical progression is in fact invalid: the progression is made precisely because a form of thought is parochial, but it is made by that very form of thought. These twin facts are incompatible: if the form of thought is not valid, and so must be gotten beyond, it cannot be through it that we validly get beyond it. If one is conscious of this incompatibility, then one cannot advance in this way. The last ditch effort to sustain this model by appeal to an ignorance of this incompatibility does nothing to make the advance genuinely valid: it just hides the lack of validity from that which advances. But we will ultimately, on this view too, have an understanding of thought on which it is valid (in its mature state). Consequently, an invalid progression cannot be one which it will recognize as valid. Since the progression is its own activity (that is, the progression is self-determining), and indeed since it constitutes itself through this activity, its nature will exclude or be incompatible with an invalid progression.

§5

At this point, it makes sense to revisit the two expectations created by the way in which I initially introduced the claim that we must be able to make sense of some form of logical progression (§1). The first expectation, recall, is that the progression would be from genus to species and not from species to species. And the second expectation is that the progression would be an account of that which bears the genus and not an account of what the genus itself is. We can now see that both of these expectations are frustrated. The progression, as I there indicated, must start with the genus. But we cannot start with the genus in such a fashion that we grasp what it is at the outset: we can only grasp what it is in progressing. Moreover, this means that we cannot distinguish between a progression from species to species and a progression from genus to species: that distinction rests on being able to grasp the genus prior to grasping its species, such that we see each stage as a determination of the genus and not as a further determination of the prior species. But if our grasp on the genus is constituted by the progression, then to determine the genus just is to determine the prior stage, which is to further determine the last species.

At the moment, these two conclusions are like abstract logical signposts, because we do not yet have any proposal on the table in terms of which we can think about them. They represent, rather, negative lessons that we have learned from the failure of the previous proposals. But what positive proposal can we make that will enable us to appreciate these negative lessons?

The result of the argument against the organic growth model is that the development cannot require a distinction between the act in which a form of thought is conscious of itself and the act by which it advances: if we distinguish between these two acts, then we are forced to

conclude that the form of thought is conscious of itself and of the act by which it advances as parochial, invalid. So, we have to think of the development as one which is nothing other than the self-consciousness of the form in question. This form of development (supposing we can make sense of it) would not consist in advancing beyond an immature state, because there would be no separation between an act of self-cognition and an act of working on some matter.

Further, the logical progression must be one unstoppable act. As we have seen, there can be no matter which the progression rests on, nothing that is not already contained within the first form of thought. Moreover, there is nothing to the progression beyond the thought of that first form, what it is cognizant of in its self-consciousness. So the progress consists in nothing other than thinking this first form, which means it lies in only one act. The distinction between different forms does not require a distinction in the acts of thought in which we think them. Any such distinction would reintroduce a difference between the act in which we thought of some condition and the act in which we thought of what was beyond it, a difference which renders thought parochial.

This characterization – that the progress consists in nothing other than the one act of self-consciousness of the first form of thought and being – is quite abstract, but it actually reflects an intuitive understanding of the nature of logic. Logic constitutes what it is to think, such that it defines the nature of any thought. Indeed, this is precisely what motivates the worry about the coherence of the idea of a logical progression: unlike what exists in space and time, the truths of logic are true always already and everywhere. The result is that logic must be constituted all at once, by itself: it must be constituted in one act of thought. This result threatens our grip on the idea of a development, and we shall have to say more to make sense of how there can be a

development in one act; nevertheless, the idea that the laws of logic are constituted in one act is implicit in our ordinary (everyday, non-philosophical) understanding of it.²¹

Further, we can now reintroduce the idea of a common nature of thought and being. To see this, it will help to take stock again of what we have learned. The failure of the first model means that the source of the further determinations must be the generic idea of thought itself. The failure of the second model resulted from the need to incorporate matter from outside of thought, or – as we might put it – the second model failed because, in it, the source of what is determined (for the plant, the nutrients in the soil; for thought, thought as intuited) comes from outside of thought. Consequently, we can say that the source not only of further determinations but also of what gets determined must be the generic idea of thought. Finally, again from the failure of the second model, we have seen that this first stage must be a valid form of thought itself, for no non-valid form of thought can bootstrap its way into validity.

In the previous chapter, I argued that to understand how thought can be valid, we had to think about objective thought as a form of thought in which we articulate the nature common to thinking and being, and I argued that this means that what is thought is because it is thought and the thought is because of what it thinks. We have now seen, in our discussion of the progression, that every form in the progression must be valid, which means that it must be a way of thinking truly about what is, being. Moreover, neither the form nor the validity of the form can have their source in anything outside of the progression itself. And, finally, the progression consists in

²¹ One objection worth considering is the objection that this view of logic entails that there is only one act of thought in general. If there is only one act of thought, then it cannot be the act of a capacity, because a capacity is essentially general, or can produce in a manifold of acts. But obviously thought is a capacity, and any view of logic which denies that is absurd.

It is right to note that the one act which constitutes logic cannot be the act of a capacity. But it does not follow that it cannot be an act which constitutes a capacity, or even that it is not an act which constitutes itself as a capacity. The unity of this act will not, then, lie in the capacity – rather, the unity of the capacity will lie in the act. I will say more about this in my account of Hegel's relation to Kant in chapters 5 and 6.

nothing other than an account of the form. Consequently, the form must be not merely a form of thought but also and inseparably a form of being: for an account of it, as a form of thought, just is an account of its validity, and so includes that which it thinks.

But how can an account of one form of thought and being lead to another? And how can the mere act of thinking of a form of thought, of giving an account of it, reveal that it is also a form of being? In the remainder of this section, I will provide answers to these two questions.

It will help if we introduce an example, causality (though to keep my account brief I will not try to justify the account of causality, philosophically or exegetically; I give a more thorough example in §6). Let's start in particular with the idea of one object as a cause of an effect in another object. For example, one billiard ball can cause another billiard ball to move by striking it. If the act of grasping the concept causality is to constitute a development beyond it, there must be something in that concept which resists being thought in the concept. This will be like the matter present in the organic growth model, though it will have to have its source in the very thought of this form. The matter, that in causality which resists being thought in causality, must itself be generated by thought – in this, it is not like organic matter (or like any other form of matter as traditionally conceived).

For causality, the matter will be the relation between the two objects: the cause and that in which it produces the effect. (What follows is hopefully plausible stipulation.) The cause is the ground of the existence of the effect, but it is not the complete ground: it produces the effect in some antecedently existing object. The first billiard ball can only cause motion if it makes contact with another ball that already exists; thus, the causality of the first billiard ball is dependent upon the existence of another ball. So, to think the concept cause, we must think the relation between the cause and that object in which it produces its effect, for without that relation

we cannot think how the cause produces the effect. The two billiard balls must stand in some relation in order for us to think of the one as causing motion in the other. Moreover, we cannot think of this relation in the same way as we think about the relation between a cause and its effect: that is, we need to think of that relation between the moving billiard ball and the ball that is there to be moved which enables us to think of the causal relation of the transference of motion. Since the very idea of a cause (on this conception of it) brings with it dependence upon something which it does not cause, we cannot think of this dependence through the concept cause. Consequently, this relation between the two objects resists the concept cause as we presently grasp it. Nevertheless, without getting that relation in view we cannot grasp how one billiard ball can cause another to move. So, to grasp causality requires grasping a relation between two objects (the cause, and the object in which it produces an effect), a relation that we cannot grasp as a causal one. Consequently, we have to advance to another stage.

The next stage is also a kind of cause, though now transformed. What constitutes the difference, what Hegel speaks about as the greater “richness” of subsequent stages relative to prior ones, is that the concept now contains that which resists it. That is why he claims that the stage is richer because it contains the prior stage and “its negation or what is opposed to it [*Entgegengesetztes*]” (5.49/21.38). The negation or opposition consists in something which resists the concept, a resistance generated by nothing other than the account of the concept itself. The presence and overcoming of this resistance explains the idea of a progression.

In the example of causality, the next stage is reciprocal causation. We think of the cause and that in which it produces effects as standing in a transformed relation of causality. That is, they are not related as cause and effect are related according to the first stage; they are related as reciprocal cause and effect. In the case of the billiard balls, the one can cause the other to move

only because each exercises a reciprocal force on the other – a reciprocal force that is present in nature in the form of gravity. By advancing to reciprocal causation, we incorporate the matter that resisted being thought in the first form of causality. This incorporation occurs simply by cognizing the first form of causality (which we might now call one-way causality), since this turns out to require advancing to a second form of causality (reciprocal causality). That is, the thought of reciprocal causation is (supposed to be) nothing other than the incorporation of the relation between the cause and that in which it produces an effect into the unity of thought and being as it is constituted in the concept causality. Because we can grasp the relation between the two objects, our initial account of one-way causality is preserved. The one ball can cause the other ball to move precisely because they stand in relations of reciprocal causation. In this way, the first form is made sense of as a valid form.

In the next section, I will work out the transformation view in more detail, providing a more worked out example and further exegetical evidence. Before doing that, though, it is worth considering an objection to the validity of the progression. To a Kantian, at least, this claim will surely sound like a bit of rationalist dogmatism: lacking the appeal to the forms of our sensibility, we cannot know the validity of that which we think in the so-called logical progression. How do we know that we have not “merely played with representations,” representations which lack “objective reality” (A154-6/B193-5)?

I offer my account of how Hegel differs from Kant, where and why he thinks Kant goes wrong, in chapter 6, and so a worked out response to Kant will have to wait until then. But the objection is, I think, pressing enough that it will be helpful to say something about it here. We know that we are not playing with mere representations because we start only from the idea of thought’s validity, and our account consists only in unfolding or developing what is present

implicitly in that original idea. Kant, in the *Deduction*, also notes the importance of thought's validity; however, he thinks that to secure that validity we have to appeal to something other than thought itself, to something external to thought which can serve as that in relation to which thought has its validity (the forms of intuition). It is this appeal to what is external which generates the division between the mere thought of a form of thought and the validation of it (revealing it to be a form of being). Not admitting this distinction just is thinking that thought can validate itself.²²

What I have done in this chapter is articulate the form that that validation must take, a form in which there is no distinction between an account of a form of thought and its validation. If my arguments are right, then they entail that no attempt to make an appeal to that which is external to thought essential to an account of thought's validation can make sense of thought's validity. So, Kant's *Deduction* must fail; in its place we must conceive of thought in such a way that we need to appeal to nothing other than thought itself in an account of its validity.

Moreover, the alternative to the Kantian attempt to validate thought is not a rationalist enterprise, for it does not attempt to deduce the nature of what is from the nature of thought (recall the discussion of the conceivability or contradiction view in chapter 2). (It is also not rationalist because it takes very seriously the Kantian claim that thought is spontaneous, that its spontaneity consists in a power to unify, and that it is a result of this self-conscious spontaneity that thought can be valid.) As such, it is not subject to the objection that for all we know we might merely be playing with empty representations. Precisely not: I can put the whole point of this chapter by saying that its task is to conceive of a logical progression so that the very idea that it involves empty concepts, concepts which are not as such valid, falls apart.

²² Sebastian Rödl makes this exact point in his argument against McDowell: cf. Rödl 2007a.

Of course, I have not tried to consider Kant's arguments (in the Aesthetic and the Dialectic) against this enterprise. If those arguments are right, then there can be no logical progression: for those arguments purport to show that there can be no conception of our thought such that thinking it and validating it are one and the same thing. What I have said in this and the prior chapter implies that Kant must be wrong, because it implies that the result of Kant's arguments would be that thought is invalid. I have not tried to make this case out against Kant specifically, and I have not tried to show what error Kant makes in his arguments in the Aesthetic and the Dialectic; nor have I tried to show what goes wrong in the Deduction itself. But there is no separate argument to be made against the worry that thought might be empty, except to note that in the progress through the various models I have eliminated precisely this worry.

§6

We can bring together the lessons from §5, to give an account of what logical progress must be like. First, we start with a concept understood to be both a way of being and a way of thinking. An account of that concept reveals a tension in it, something which resists being thought with that concept. The tension is such that we cannot make sense of the concept without advancing beyond it to the next concept. (The way in which this is the *next* concept, and not simply the same concept, is that it combines that which resists combination in the prior concept; it is not next in the sense that it contains content that is not grounded entirely within the content of the prior concept.) Second, the next concept unites the prior concept with that which resists it. This means that the next concept is the transformation of the prior concept: it is that concept, so determined that it is united with what it was previously opposed to. But, third, this progress

preserves the validity of the prior concept, in that the progress reveals it to be a genuinely valid condition on the possibility of thought and being. These three features define what I call the transformative view of the *Logic*. In this section, I want to give a more worked out example of the method and some further exegetical evidence in support of my interpretation.

The example I will use is the transition from teleology to life towards the end of the *Logic*.²³ By teleology, Hegel means instrumental teleology, in which an end is realized through employing something else as means. This, he thinks, is a way in which something might be, and thoughts which articulate something as an end and something else as a means may articulate what is and not just how it seems to me to be. By life he means a way of being which sustains itself, such that to be a living being or a part of a living being is to be constituted by this activity of sustaining the living being. As Aristotle said (and Hegel echoed), a hand cut off from the body

is a hand in name only – it has ceased to be what it was, because it has become disconnected from the biological activities of the body.²⁴ Teleology, Hegel argues, is followed by life.

According to the transformative view, this means that an account of teleology yields something which it needs but with which it is not unified (in short, that teleology is in tension with itself), that life unites teleology with that which is in tension with it, and, finally, that the progress to life preserves teleology as a way in which something might be and as an objectively valid form of thinking.

Since we are interested in the transition from teleology to life, I will start with an already developed understanding of teleology.²⁵ In particular, I want to stipulate two features of

²³ My understanding of this example changed substantially due to a very fruitful conversation about the text with Rory O'Connell.

²⁴ Aristotle, *Generation of Animals* 1.19 726b20-5; Hegel, EL §216z and PN §350z.

²⁵ Hegel must justify this conception in the logical progression: that is, he has to start from a bare concept of teleology, which has already itself been arrived at through the logical progression, and develop the different moments of it in accordance with the transformative view. I believe a close reading of the transition from subjective

teleology: first, that there is what Hegel calls a “subjective end,” or an end that has before it a world that is “not yet determined by the end” (6.447/12.161) and which “strives” or is a “drive” to determine that world and thereby to “posit itself” in it (6.445/12.160). So, to use one of Hegel’s examples, I might have the subjective end of building a clock, and in having this end I confront a world in which I have not built a clock, such that I must strive to realize this end by determining the world to be one in which I have.²⁶ Second, to realize itself, a subjective end must employ means. Hegel uses the term “means” in a very inclusive sense. In his sense, we can say not only of the screwdriver I use to tighten the screws that it is a means to my end of building a clock; we can also say of the sunlight “by means of which” I see the screw that it is a means to my building the clock. What is essential to his understanding is that it is something that I use to realize my end, and this implies first that it is there prior to my activity (of realizing this end) and second that I can direct its mechanical and chemical features (these features can stand under “the mastery of the end”) to make my end come about (6.452/12.166). The means is not already or as such determined by my end, it is just a mechanical and/or chemical object. Using the means to realize my end is “the sublation” of “the presupposition of an objective world”: the world must exist to be used, and in being used it is determined and so ceases to be merely presupposed (6.448/12.162) As this implies, having the means at hand is not yet having realized the end: it is what must be used so as to realize the end.

These two features, of a subjective end and a means, are described in the first two sub-chapters within “Teleology”. Our focus will be on the third subchapter, which describes the

end to means to completed end reveals that he does this in each case, but trying to go through the details would be distracting to our using this as a relatively clear and intuitive example.

²⁶ To be sure, ordinarily we do not speak of a subjective end like that of building as “determining itself” or as “striving” – we might say instead that I determine what I am to do in light of this end, and that I strive to build. But it is important even in our everyday conception that we think of my having the end as playing some kind of causal role in my determining what I am to do – this gets at the fact that teleology describes an end as itself a certain kind of power to bring about changes in the world. And that is all that we need to make sense of Hegel’s talk of the subjective end as striving and determining itself.

completed end, or the end as having been realized in the objective world: it describes the state of my having built the clock. It is divided into three numbered sections. In the first section, Hegel notes the way in which the realized end is different from the means. He initially describes the means as “*higher*” than the “*finite* end of *external* purposiveness,” because the means are what gives the end the capacity to determine the world (that whereby the human “possesses force [*die Macht*] over external nature” (6.453/12.166)). But then he notes that in fact the end in question is “not only outside of the mechanical process, but rather maintains itself in that process and is its determination” (6.453/12.166). That is, the end both remains the same throughout the process and is that for the sake of which the process occurs: while initially I merely represent building the clock, at the conclusion I have used various means in order to realize that very same end in the objective world. As Hegel puts it, “The force [*Macht*] of the end over the object is this for itself [*für sich selbst*] identity” (6.453/12.166). That is, the force of the means is to effect changes in the objective world, but the force of the end is that which maintains itself through the changes that are effected for the sake of realizing it. The force of the means is mechanical and chemical: through being part of the objective world, the means can change the determinations of other objects. But the force of the end is to realize itself in these changes: in this “activity” (*Tätigkeit*) of realizing itself, the end is “the *sublation of the semblance* [*Scheins*] of externality” (6.453-4/12.166). And so the end, as that which is realized in the activity, is higher than the means (or is “the *truth* of the process”) (6.453/12.166).

Hegel’s point can be made by describing the logical difference between the completed end and the means as these are related to the subjective end. For the subjective end must be in the means in the sense that it is what uses or directs them, but the means (the screwdriver and the sunlight) cannot be identical with the end (having built the clock), since they are merely for the

sake of completing the end. The subjective end must be in the completed end by being identical to it, such that the means fall away or no longer need to be used once the end has been realized. This is the difference between means and completed end that Hegel is getting at when he says the completed end is the “truth” of the means.

And yet in the second section of “The Completed End” Hegel argues that the very relation between the subjective end and the means requires that the completed end is no different from the means and so cannot be the truth of the means. So, he says that “the *product* of the purposive act [*Tuns*] is nothing other than an object determined through an end external to it; *it is thus the same as what the means is*” (6.456/12.168). To show this, he first notes that the completed end is really just a mechanically and chemically determined object. So, for instance, the clock I have built is just a bunch of chemical and mechanical parts. The end is present in these parts, in that together these parts make up the end, but the end does not characterize the nature of the parts, which are still merely mechanical and chemical. The metal and wood in the clock are not by their nature parts of a clock; being a clock is something that has happened to these parts (as Hegel puts it “the unity cannot be conceived [*nicht begriffen werden kann*] from the specific nature of the object” (6.455/12.167)). But this means that the nature of the parts that make up the realized end is no different than the nature of the means used to realize the end: both are merely mechanical and chemical objects. In particular, the reality of the completed end is no more a self-determined reality than is the reality of the means. And this is in tension with the claim that the end is the truth of the means. Having built the clock, the world is now determined in accordance with my end – I have realized my end (this is the point of the first subsection). But the world is not determined in accordance with my end, since the world remains a set of merely

mechanical and chemical objects, objects which are not by their nature organized in accordance with any end (this is the point of the second subsection).

Of course, I can and do distinguish between the means and the end. The end is that which I seek, that for the sake of which I use the means – Hegel is not denying that. But this distinction is not an objective distinction, a distinction in the kind of properties of the object or in the nature of the reality of the object: it is merely “a relative determination, external to the objects themselves, not an objective determination” (6.457/12.168). So, considered just as a real object or state of affairs, any end might just as well be a means, and any means might just as well be an end. That is, we lack the ability to draw an objective distinction between means and end. Hegel’s point is that it follows from this that (without advancing beyond this stage) we lack a way of comprehending how anything in the world can be the realization of an end. And that is exactly what we need to make sense of the subjective end: the subjective end is that which determines itself by realizing itself within the world. But at the end of the activity of teleology we have nothing but a mechanically and chemically determined world; we cannot grasp any part of reality as self-determined or self-determining, and so we cannot grasp the completed end as completed.

Hegel draws together these two points in the third subsection within “The Completed End.” There he notes that the subjective end is supposed to be in the completed end (the clock) by being identical with it, while it is supposed to be in the means by directing them (or by being their “master”). But if we examine the completed end, we see that in fact the subjective end is only in that object by directing or being the master of the various mechanical and chemical parts (which, by their nature, will tend to be affected by further mechanical and chemical forces which break them apart from one another). So, I use the screwdriver to build the clock, and my end of building the clock is in the screwdriver as what forces it to move in various ways. But that is

exactly how my end is in the clock I have built: this is a clock only because its parts have been forced to move in various ways. This means that my subjective end is in the screwdriver just as much as it is in the clock. Of course my end is not completed just by moving the screwdriver – but then how can I understand it to be completed in the parts of the assembled clock?

To reiterate, I can in fact understand my end to be completed in the clock in a way in which it is not in the screwdriver I use to build it. But we do not yet grasp how that can be possible. To grasp it, we have to understand how what is by its nature merely a means can be an end. That is, there are two determinations or characterizations that we have to combine, and that we cannot combine within teleology: first, the completed end is the realization of the subjective end, or it is the subjective end now made objective; and, second, it is by its nature just a means, a mechanical and chemical object. At the moment, we cannot see how to combine these two characterizations, because within teleology we essentially distinguish between the means and the completed end: the means is not identical with the end, it is just used to realize the end. So, within teleology alone, we cannot grasp how to combine the two characterizations, since the means is essentially distinct from the end. But we must grasp how to combine these two characterizations, since a teleologically realized end is nothing other than an end that is by its nature a means.

So, we need to grasp how the means, or that which is used or directed towards realizing the subjective end, can just as such be the realization of that end. To do this we need to think of a means, or a way of being a means, that has its nature solely in the end that it realizes; and, conversely, we have to think of an end, or a way of being an end, that has its nature solely in the means which it uses to realize itself. As Hegel puts it, “the end is achieved [*erreicht*] in the means, and the means and the mediation is maintained in the fulfilled [*erfüllt*] end”

(6.461/12.171). He describes this as “the *last result of the external connection of ends* [Zweckbeziehung] wherein it has sublated its self” (6.461/12.171). Teleology sublates itself in grasping a means that is just as such an end, and an end that is just as such a means, because this combination just is life: the idea of an end that is realized – the living being – in the means that it uses to realize itself – the organs. The organs are that by means of which the living being is alive, but also simultaneously the living being itself. And this is no longer teleology as we were conceiving of it before: there is no end that confronts a world that has not yet been determined by it; a living end is only by having already been realized in the world. That is, we have now gone beyond teleology, to life, which works out how the means can be the realized end and the realized end can be the means.

Importantly, in moving to the idea of life we have not changed the nature of the completed end of teleology: the parts of the clock remain merely mechanical and chemical objects. But now we can make sense of this way of being a realized end by reference to life: a clock is a realized end because it can play a role in maintaining a living being, and thus can contribute to the objective and self-determining activity of a higher form of teleology. Lacking the capacity to nest the completed end within the context of a living being’s maintaining itself, we would not be able to distinguish between it and a mere means, and so we would not be able to understand it as being identical with any subjective end. What we might now call instrumental teleology is intelligible only in light of the role it can play in life.²⁷

²⁷ This is not to say that only living beings can have instrumental ends – that may well be true, but we can only show that within the philosophy of nature. What we know is just that being or having an instrumental end is a way of being only in virtue of life being a way of being. Just as Hegel has argued that there can be mechanical and chemical objects only in virtue of instrumental teleology being a way of using those objects: of course not all mechanical and chemical objects are used in teleological activities, but in principle they can be and it is because they can be so used that there can be such objects at all. Or so Hegel has tried to argue.

Finally, one might object to this account that making sense of teleology does not really require advancing to life – that is a way of overcoming the tension, perhaps, but how can we know it is the only way. Perhaps we can make sense of a clock as a completed end by appealing to a non-living but non-instrumental kind of end, like a non-living intelligence. To show that no such alternative solution can work, we only need to recall that we have to conceive of the advance as one that can be completely grounded in teleology. That means that we cannot appeal to any concept not already developed from within teleology. For of any such concept we could ask after our right to employ, and if we conceive of it as not already contained in teleology then we are forced to conclude that that advance is parochial since we can conceive of other, contrasting determinations that we might have added. (This is to repeat the argument against the determinable-determination model.) But we do not need to appeal to any concepts not already contained in our account of teleology: we only need to think through the combination of the two concepts that are already in teleology, a combination some form of which is required to make sense of the idea of a completed end.

With that, I conclude my exposition of the example and turn to highlight more thoroughly how it conforms to the transformative view. To do so, note first that the example illustrates the three features of the transformative view. First, the account of teleology reveals a tension: for teleology is the power to realize an end through means, and yet we cannot make sense of it as able to realize an end. Yet an account of it is contained in the account of teleology, for without a grasp of how one can realize the subjective end we cannot grasp teleology itself. So, the account of teleology leads necessarily beyond it.

This exemplifies Hegel's general claim that the beginning (of both the *Logic* itself and of every progression within it) is "*differentiated in itself*" ("in sich unterschieden") but that this

differentiation initially appears in the form of something “*different*” (Verscheidene).²⁸ That is, a differentiation that is contained in the beginning appears or shows up in that beginning as a relation to something else, something which is related to the beginning but other than it (cf. 6.561/12.244-5): an account of teleology reveals that the end must be related to the means which are not identical with that end. But because the beginning is “universality connecting itself to itself, as subject” it is also “the *unity* of these different things [*dieser Verschieden*].” The terminology of connection to itself, and of “subject,” is a way in which Hegel describes the freedom of thought: I think a thought only in taking that very thought to be true, and so the thought is related or connected to itself. That is, thought is cognizant of its own validity. So, the first condition, cognizant of its own validity, is thereby cognizant of itself as united with what is different from it in this first condition. That is, we have to grasp the identity of the means and the end – this emerges within teleology in the fact that the end turns out to be by its nature no different from the means (just a mechanical/chemical object). Grasping this identity requires advancing to life.

Second, the account of life unifies that which resists unity in teleology: indeed, it is nothing other than identifying what is by its nature a means as an end: since it is just the thought of means which are simply as such an end. From this it follows that life brings into the unity of the concept teleology that which resists the concept teleology itself (the identification of means and end), and it does so by transforming that concept. Life is the transformation of teleology: in teleology, it is something which is to be realized (the world is initially “not yet” determined by the end); in life it is to be realized (maintained) by being already realized (there is no longer a “not yet” determined world which the end determines).

²⁸ Or, as he puts it later, “an apparent *other* [*ein scheinbares Anderes*]”: cf. 6.569/12.250.

Hegel makes this point in two steps in his description of the method. First, he notes that the progress beyond the tension (or the progress beyond the negation/opposition that has afflicted the prior stage) is also a return to “a universal” or the “simple connection to itself” (6.566/12.248). The “*negativity*,” the tension which required the progression beyond the first stage, returns to “*simple determinacy*” in the new stage. That is, in advancing to the next stage, we have returned to a unity, in which nothing has yet been revealed that resists this unity: the account of life is one in which there is no longer a tension generated by the idea of a means, since the means are now thought as united with the end. This return to the beginning is not merely the repetition of the prior stage, however, because (as we have seen) there must be a kind of enrichment.

In a second step he describes the kind of enrichment. In his description, Hegel is concerned to ward off the misinterpretation that one might think of this enrichment along the lines of the determinable-determination model. To distinguish what happens in a logical progression from that model, Hegel notes that while the enrichment preserves everything which comes before it, it also contains a “negative or dialectical side,” a side which is not contained in the normal idea of adding determinations to a genus (6.569/12.251). And, as we would expect given the argument against the determinable-determination model (that it lacks necessity), he first describes this dialectical side in terms of a necessity: “The enrichment progresses in the *necessity* of the concept, it is maintained [*gehalten*] by it, and each determination is a reflection-into-itself” (6.569/12.251). He further describes this reflection into itself by noting that the “*further determination*” is both a “*going outside of itself* [*Aussersichgehens*]” and a “*going into itself* [*Insichgehen*]” (6.570/12.251). By being a reflection into itself, it is a way in which the very unity of the prior stage is enriched – whatever is thought in the prior stage is transformed.

To use the example, life is not merely a kind of end; what it is for it to be an end is different. To arrive at life is indeed be an enrichment in which the concept of an end “goes outside of itself,” into the concept of a means. But it is an enrichment that reflects back on the very concept of an end, by uniting or combining the means with the end. To get the reflection, one needs to understand the further determination as transforming the prior stage.²⁹

And, third, the progression to life is effected so as to make sense of teleology, and so it preserves the validity of teleology. If, on the other hand, we were to reject teleology as invalid, then there could be no basis for insisting on a means which is as such already an end. Why would that be a valid form of thought and being? Only because teleology is valid, and because the thought of teleology requires the thought of life.

Hegel puts this point quite nicely when he notes that, though the advance forward to a new determination seems like it would be different from the grounding of that from which we advance, in the *Logic* these two are the same: “each step of progress [Fortgangs] in further determination, in that it departs from the undetermined beginning is also an *approach back* [Rückannäherung] toward the same, so that what initially appears as different [*verschieden*], the *backward going grounding* [rückwärtsgehende Begründen] of the beginning and the *forward*

²⁹ With this idea of transformation (of a going outside which is also a reflection inward), we can return to an objection presented in section §2 to thinking about the progression as one from genus to species. Namely, the *Logic* contains progressions (from syllogism to mechanism, identity to difference [*Unterschied*], finitude to infinity) for which the prior stage is no genus of the following stage: difference is no species of identity, mechanism is no species of syllogism. To answer this objection in a fully satisfying way would require giving an account of each of the objectionable transitions, and I cannot do that here. But it should help us to be less bothered by the apparent absurdity of thinking about these examples in terms of genus and species now that we see that this relation, in the *Logic*, involves the claim that what it is to be the genus is transformed by the species. Infinity, Hegel must think, is a transformed way of being finite, mechanism a transformed way of being a syllogism, etc. Further, he makes claims that sound an awful lot like this, noting that infinity is, in the appearance of it that follows finitude, itself finite (cf. 5.149/21.124), that difference is identity that is “the negativity of its self [*ihrer selbst*]” (6.46/11.265), and that the mechanical object is the syllogism, in which mediation has become immediate (cf. 6.410/12.133-4). This at least adds to the exegetical plausibility of my interpretation, even if it does little to clarify what exactly these claims mean (much less how they could be defended).

going further determination of it, falls into each other and is the same” (6.570/12.251).³⁰ That is, the further determination just is the preservation of the prior stage: in transforming teleology, life grounds it.

So, the logical progression generates a tension, such that we cannot grasp one stage without advancing to the next. The next stage resolves the tension by being the transformation of the first stage. And, finally, the transformation of the first stage preserves the validity of the first stage (by enabling us to grasp it). This is the transformative view. The need for it is grounded in our capacity to make sense of our ordinary knowledge of the world. To make sense of that knowledge, I have argued, we need to possess a form of thought in which there is no separation between thought and being, which means that any thought of this form is as such objectively valid.

Our ordinary knowledge would be grounded if its *a priori* forms could be shown to occur in the logical progression – for then we could exclude the worry that they are merely parochial forms, since we have thought them in a way which ensures their objective validity. In chapters 5 and 6 I explore how the *a priori* forms of our ordinary knowledge might be understood to occur in the logical progression. But before doing that, I want to consider some other interpretations of the logical progression. Most scholars would reject the transformative view because they are committed to the thought that the progression must in some sense involve modifying or altering our account of the prior stage. As a result of this commitment, the simple occurrence of a form of thought in the logical progression cannot by itself suffice to explain its objective validity (since at first the stage is invalid, and only becomes valid by modifying it). I respond to this commitment (what I call the modification view) on exegetical and philosophical grounds in the next chapter.

³⁰ Hegel makes the same point at 5.70-1/21.58.

Chapter 4: Anti-Modification

According to what I will call the “modification view,” progress in the *Logic* partially consists in correcting errors one has made previously in the *Logic* and thereby modifying one’s account of the subject matter. The modification view is pervasive in the literature.¹ If we gather up its proponents, we find scholars who disagree on nearly everything of significance in Hegel. But they all agree on the modification view: they all agree that the method of the *Logic* is one by which we correct erroneous accounts of its subject matter.

What I mean by error will emerge more clearly as we consider detailed examples. But as an initial indication, I mean that the modification view involves taking a stage to be something that it is not, such that the progress partially consists in realizing that we were wrong or that the stage is not what we initially took it to be. Treating a stage as complete, determined, absolute, unconditioned, or final when it is not counts as an error.² Or suppose that one distinguishes between the content of the stage itself, and our take on its significance or of its meaningfulness or of its role in our understanding of the absolute. Even if what is in need of revision is just our understanding of the stage’s significance, such that the content of the stage itself is right, this still qualifies as a medication view. It might also help to define the modification view to contrast with my view. A schematic statement of the contrast that will only be fleshed out over the course of this chapter: on my view we do not take the non-final stages to be something which they are not,

¹ For some representative examples, cf. McTaggart 1896: §1, Fulda 1978: 143ff., Theunissen 1980: 82-3, Pippin 1989a: 36-7, 180, 303, Forster 1993: 132-3, Schick 1994: 109, Burbidge 1996: 10, Kreines 2004: 39-42, Bowman 2013: 35-6, 78, Koch 2014: 108, 122-4. Among those who have written on Hegel’s *Logic* with whom I am familiar, there are only a handful of non-modification interpretations: Wolfram Gobsch’s work is the most important for my own understanding. Sebastian Rödl is another example.

² As I bring out in my discussion of Theunissen in §4, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* does contain errors of this sort: different shapes of consciousness take themselves to be absolute, and are reduced to despair by revealing a contradiction in their understanding of their object or of themselves. But I will argue in this chapter that nothing like this happens in the *Logic*.

such that we must then revise our account; nor do we understand them to have a significance which we later learn they do not have.³

There are many different versions of the modification view, with differences about what kind of error is supposed to be involved and on how one eliminates the error. So, for instance, Fulda thinks that the error results from vagueness, a vagueness which yields contradictions, and we overcome the error by modifying the meanings of our terms to make them less vague (cf. Fulda 1978: 148-50). Theunissen thinks that the error consists in a certain kind of reification, in which we treat the being of a thing as itself a being. Overcoming this error, he thinks, in part consists in first uncovering or exposing its conditions and then in challenging the core assumptions that generate the error (cf. Theunissen 1980: 71-3, 78-9). And Kreines thinks that the error consists in thinking that a given stage is absolute, so that in our account we falsely put it forward as the final stage. As a result, our account of the stage results in contradictions. We overcome this error, he thinks, by no longer claiming that the stage is the final one and by recognizing its dependence on the stage which follows it (cf. Kreines 2015: 26).

One can easily envision further alternative conceptions of what the error is and of how to correct for it. However, these views all share the thought that applications of the method of the *Logic* to some stage partially consist in correcting for some error that we have made in our account of the *Logic*'s subject matter. It is this thought that I will object to.

³ We can also see the difference between the modification view and a view on which the stage contains an error that the stage itself overcomes. It is not so clear what this means, but perhaps one paradigm for thinking about it is the growth model from the previous chapter: if we think of a stage as immature or imperfect, and the progress as consisting in the stage's activity of overcoming it, and the method as describing this activity, then I think we will have an example view of the relevant sort. I tried to say what is wrong with this view in the previous chapter. But the view, by itself, involves no commitment to an understanding of our position in relation to the progression, and so does not involve any modification of our account (indeed, as stated, there is no reference to our account at all). I say a little bit more about this in relation to Theunissen's view in §4. I am not familiar with any view that certainly fits this description. Perhaps Houlgate's view aspires to (cf. Houlgate 2006: 32-5); if it does, I do not think that my criticism of the organic growth view suffices to respond to it, since he aspires to eschew any reference to an internal standard which can be grasped as present in non-final stages independently of the progression itself. I hope to say more about how my view relates to Houlgate's in future work.

On my view, progress in the *Logic* consists in responding to some kind of tension, and the resulting stage is tension-free and is such that the tension in the previous stage is no longer troubling because we can grasp how that previous stage is valid. This might seem like it must be some kind of modification view – indeed, it might seem very close to Kreines’ view. On my view, however, we in no way modify our account of the previous stage: it is exactly as we accounted for it prior to advancing to the next stage. The advance is effected so as to make sense, or preserve the validity, of the previous stage just as we accounted for it. And so, in particular, we do not put forward the first stage as final only then to see that it is not, and we do not think that the first stage is independent of any future stages only to see that we are wrong. Rather, the first stage is an account of the subject matter of the *Logic* (an account of objective thought), and it is a completely accurate account of that subject matter: to grasp it, and so to grasp the subject matter, we need to advance beyond the first stage, but the advance does not involve revealing any inaccuracies in our account of it.

At the moment, this distinction between my view and a Kreines-style modification view might seem insignificant. Its significance will only emerge by examining what is involved with the claim that the non-final stages contain inaccuracies. I argue in this chapter that this claim is inconsistent with Hegel’s claim that the logical progression consists in the movement of the subject matter itself (§1), that it implicitly reflects a view of the speculative method as a kind of theoretical cognition (§§2-4), and that as a result it makes thought parochial (§§5-6). I then consider some exegetical evidence that seems to favor the modification view (§7), before summarizing what I take to be the consequences of this and the previous chapter (§8).

§1

In this section, I want to begin to get at what is wrong with the modification view by considering McTaggart's version of it. McTaggart's view is useful because he explains why the modification view is inconsistent with Hegel's own conception of the method. He nevertheless adopts it because he thinks Hegel must have gotten this aspect of his method wrong. In this section I will focus on McTaggart's argument that the modification view is inconsistent with some of what Hegel says about the method. In later sections I will try to show that Hegel was right to think about the method in the relevant way.

Every modification view shares the commitment that the dialectical method advances from error to truth. By the end of the *Logic*, when we have advanced all the way to the absolute idea, we have arrived at whatever truth or truths the *Logic* is supposed to disclose to us. On McTaggart's view (and I agree with him), what we arrive at is an accurate account of the capacity to think. Moreover, McTaggart (as we saw in the last chapter) defends a version of the part to organic whole view: the different stages of the *Logic* are different aspects (or “organs”) of the capacity to think, such that we cannot understand any one aspect without understanding all of the others. As McTaggart thinks of this organic unity, any account of the capacity to think which fails to include some part of it will contain some error. As we progress, we advance accounts of the capacity to think which progressively include more aspects of that capacity, ending in an account which includes the whole capacity and so contains no errors.

The speculative method (what McTaggart calls “the dialectic”) is that by means of which we progress from the erroneous accounts to the more accurate ones. Consequently, through it we first grasp the part and then proceed to grasp a larger whole of which it is a part. This characterizes our way of grasping the capacity to think, moving from part to whole. But,

McTaggart argues, this cannot characterize the capacity to think itself, in which the whole must determine the parts (because it has an organic unity). Consequently, he argues, the speculative method does not characterize our grasp of the capacity to think itself, but only our coming to grasp it: “the dialectic starts with the knowledge of the part, and from this works up to the knowledge of the whole. This method of procedure is always inappropriate in anything of the nature of an organism. ... To this extent, then, the dialectic is subjective.”⁴

McTaggart’s interpretation has come under a lot of fire for its emphasis on strong organic unity. Many interpreters have thought that this entails a strong form of ontological monism which is not only pre-critical but also unHegelian.⁵ I am sympathetic with this criticism, and one can see McTaggart commit this misreading in the very passage in which he explains that the dialectical method is subjective. Nevertheless, I think this is inessential to McTaggart’s argument for the conclusion that the method is subjective, and I think focusing on his objectionable monism has led people to misunderstand what actually leads McTaggart to this conclusion.⁶ I will show that the claim follows just from commitment to the modification view, the view that the speculative method essentially involves making and overcoming errors.

According to the modification view, the results arrived at by the speculative method do not always accurately characterize the subject matter of the *Logic* (the capacity to think, according to McTaggart). Instead, they are our attempts to characterize that subject matter. And so the method is a method which we employ to arrive at the correct characterization of the subject matter. But that means that the speculative method is an account of how the subject

⁴ McTaggart 1896: §122.

⁵ Cf. Kreines 2015: 262ff.

⁶ Giovanni, for instance, attributes McTaggart’s claim that the method is subjective to his interpretation of the *Logic* as having “an ontological commitment” and “advanc[ing] a dogma” (Giovanni 2010: lv-lvi). Giovanni thereby misses McTaggart’s actual justification for thinking of the method as subjective, which is his commitment to the modification view (a view shared by the “non-ontological” and “non-dogmatic” interpreters of the *Logic*).

matter appears to the thinker, and not an account of that subject matter itself. In other words, the speculative method does not explain the subject matter – it merely explains how we come to know it. As McTaggart puts it:

Since the dialectic, if the hypothesis I have advanced be correct, does not adequately represent the nature of pure thought itself, although it does represent the inevitable course our minds are logically bound to follow, when they attempt to deal with pure thought, it follows that it must be in some degree subjective. ... [W]e must now pronounce the dialectic process to be subjective in this sense – that it does not fully express the essential nature of thought, but obscures it more or less under characteristics which are not essential.⁷

McTaggart says that if we think about the capacity to think as itself characterized by the speculative method, this will obscure our understanding of that capacity. His particular way of understanding this obscuring appeals to the organic unity of thought, an organic unity not found in the movement from part to whole which he thinks characterizes the speculative method. But we can abstract from this particular understanding of the obscuring and note more generally that the dialectical method is subjective because it takes *us* from an erroneous account to an accurate one.

One way to put this is to note that, for modification views, the speculative method is a tool, which we employ to arrive at the true account of the capacity to think.⁸ One can think of this tool as like Wittgenstein's ladder, such that we use it to arrive at an account of the capacity to think after which we no longer have need of it and so throw it away. That is, once we have our account of the capacity to think, we no longer need to employ the speculative method and can just advert to this account directly. Or one can think of this tool as always important, so that we can only ever grasp the account through using the speculative method. In this latter case, the speculative method would be like a telescope, essential any time we want to observe the heavens

⁷ McTaggart 1896: §121.

⁸ For a criticism of a view of the speculative method as a tool: cf. *PhG* ¶73ff and also 6.551-3/12.238-9.

closely. Whichever metaphor is more appropriate, what matters is that the tool and the account arrived at by using it are different from one another: an account of the tool cannot be an account of what we know by using the tool, except by a mere accident (e.g., if we use a telescope to stare at another telescope). This is what McTaggart means when he claims that the dialectical method is subjective, and this follows not from his commitment to a monistic interpretation of Hegel but just from his commitment to a version of the modification view.

The analogy of using a telescope to look at another telescope might give one pause in the case at hand: one might think that it is in fact a good fit for thinking about the relation between the speculative method and the capacity to think. For employing the speculative method is exercising the capacity to think, and so the method's nature may also be the nature of that capacity, the capacity that happens to be the *Logic*'s subject matter. If this were so, then describing the capacity to think might also be describing the method we use to articulate that very capacity. This will not be true in virtue of the form of the method, but rather in virtue of the particular subject matter we have chosen. Consequently, with respect to the method itself it is an accident that the description of the subject matter is also a description of the method. But, accident or not, it might well be an accurate account of what is going on in the *Logic*. And, if it is, McTaggart is wrong to infer from the subjectivity of the method to the fact that the method does not fully express the nature of thought.

The possibility that the method might be subjective and that it might also characterize the essential nature of thought needs to be considered more fully below. What matters at present is that it does not undermine the subjectivity of the method, the fact that it characterizes a

procedure that we employ to come to know the subject matter of the *Logic*. And Hegel denied the subjectivity of the speculative method, as McTaggart recognized.⁹

McTaggart does not mention particular passages in which Hegel expresses views inconsistent with the subjectivity of the speculative method. Perhaps McTaggart has in mind passages like this one from the “Introduction” to the *Logic*:

“[T]he method is nothing different [*Unterschiedenes*] from its subject matter and content; because it is the content in itself, *the dialectic, which the content [er] has in its self*, which moves it along. It is clear that no presentations can count as scientific that do not go the course of this method and are in accordance with its simple rhythm, because it is the course of the *Sache* itself” (5.50/21.38; cf. also 5.16/21.7-8).

The content or subject matter contains the method “within itself” and that means that an account of the method is not a bad account of the subject matter, nor is it an account of something else. Rather, it is the correct account of the subject matter. Hence, the speculative method is objective, since the method is the subject matter’s own nature.

Maintaining the accidental coincidence of method and subject matter is not enough to do justice to this passage: for we still then distinguish between the particular employment of the method we use to account for the capacity to think and the capacity to think itself, such that we would distinguish between the capacity we are accounting for and the errors we make in accounting for it. But Hegel claims that the course is the course of the fact itself – and so it cannot be a course which takes us from errors to truths. The activity of the method is not our activity as against the activity of the subject matter; rather, it is the activity of the subject matter itself.¹⁰ We will need to examine more closely what this can possibly mean. At present, I just

⁹ Cf. McTaggart 1896: §119.

¹⁰ In the passage, Hegel is focused on the aspect of the method that propels us forward from one stage to another (the tension, the dialectical aspect). I do not mean to imply that the subject matter is identical with that aspect of the method alone – it is also the fact itself or the stage that we arrive at (the resolution of the tension), and this is a kind of activity of the subject matter as well. (I do not pretend to have explained what this means yet.)

want to note with McTaggart that it is inconsistent with thinking of the method as subjective, and so inconsistent with any form (monistic or otherwise) of the modification view.

This gives us an exegetical reason to pause before accepting the modification view. But the exegetical evidence is itself quite difficult to understand, and even difficult to take with complete seriousness. So it would be helpful to consider a possible philosophical argument against the modification view as well. And it would be even more helpful if the argument considered was given with an eye towards making sense of the exegetical evidence given in this section.¹¹ I propose to consider just such a philosophical argument in the following four sections.

§2

In this section, I want to show that the modification view presupposes that the speculative method is a form of theoretical cognition. By theoretical cognition, I mean a form of cognition in which what one knows must be given to one. By this I mean that what one knows is whatever it is whether or not it is cognized. Or, equivalently, such that the character and existence (in whatever way it exists) of what is known is independent of the act of cognizing it. Applied to the subject matter of the *Logic*, this implies that we must be able to be given the absolute idea in some way. Many defenders of the modification view would deny that this is an implication of their position; my task in this and the next section is to show that it is.

¹¹ In the previous chapter, I provided an interpretation of the method on which we can make sense of it: we can make sense of the movement as already contained in some stage, if we think of an account of that stage as revealing a tension, such that we can only resolve the tension (and thereby think the stage) by progressing to the next stage, thereby preserving the first stage. But in this chapter I do not want to rest weight on my alternative to the modification view; I want to spell out a different reason why it must be wrong, one that will shed further light on Hegel's mysterious claim that the method is the method of the subject matter itself.

It will be helpful to start with a clear example of a modification view: Kreines' view that at each stage we advance a proposal or a hypothesis about the stage which turns out to be false.¹²

Here is how Kreines puts it:

the method of the *Logic* is supposed to proceed with an epistemic necessity establishing the structure of this system: At the beginning, since we will pursue theoretical inquiry, we must take this not to be pointless, and so take there to be something absolute, or a complete form of reason. At each step we consider proposals concerning the absolute, uncovering contradictions, as for example a contradiction in the lawful. Each contradiction means a failure as a definition of the absolute, but teaches something determinate about a better proposal. And the conclusion completes a circle, or justifies the beginning. It establishes not just comprehension of how something could be absolute or a complete form of reason but also that there is such a thing.¹³

So, on Kreines's view, we put forward some account about the absolute, or form a hypothesis about it, only to discover that this hypothesis leads to a contradiction that requires or at least suggests making a particular revision in our account of the absolute. The method of hypothesis testing is familiar from both everyday life and natural science. A hypothesis is such that one advances it as possibly true, without yet having sufficient grounds for its truth. True or not, testing a hypothesis increases our knowledge of the world, because it enables us eventually to get our subject matter right – in this case, it enables us eventually to form a correct account of the absolute.

In everyday hypothesis testing, we test hypotheses by perceiving our subject matter. Perhaps we need to conduct further experiments, and so perceive the subject matter in different conditions; perhaps our perception of the subject matter is highly mediated by various kinds of tools or by lots of background theory/hypotheses. Regardless, we can only disconfirm or confirm a hypothesis in the typical case because our perception of the subject matter is not exhausted by

¹² For evidence (some of which is quoted below) that his view is a modification view, cf. Kreines 2015: 38, 182, 198, 206, 216, 233, 243-4, 252.

¹³ Kreines 2015: 26; cp. 243-4; for his use of the language of "hypotheses," cf. 37-40.

the hypothesis but outstrips it in some way. But this point must generalize beyond the everyday kind of case to the kind of case that Kreines is considering (forming hypotheses about the absolute): were our grasp of this subject matter exhausted by the hypothesis, then we could have no access to anything about the subject matter which could possibly disconfirm or confirm it, and the very idea of advancing a hypothesis would lack sense. The way in which the subject matter outstrips our hypothesis is by actually being given to us or at least being able to be given to us: our hypothesis seeks to do justice to it as it is (possibly) given to us. Consequently, to make sense of the idea of a hypothesis, we have to understand it as a claim about an object which can be given to us.

It might seem that we do not actually need to be given the absolute to make Kreines' hypothesis testing work. For we can simply say, of some account: generalize this to see if it can hold of everything. And it might seem like this generalization need involve no appeal to the objects as they are given to us. Kreines talks in exactly this way, and does not seem to think we need to be given the absolute. So, for instance, he says about the hypothesis that the absolute is mechanism (or that every object is explicable only in terms of its parts) that

if pure mechanism were really true, then there would be no explanatory import of anything at all, including mechanism.... More specifically, it will follow from pure mechanism that explaining requires recharacterizing wholes in terms of their parts or their interactions with other objects within a larger whole system. Wherever we look, the pure mechanism hypothesis will tell us again that what we find *there* is also explanatorily superfluous. No matter what parts we distinguish, each of these would have to be itself merely an aggregate – not explicable in terms of that particular whole, but rather in terms of further parts. But this undercuts the initial pure mechanist proposal, which was that an appeal to concepts or forms is superfluous *because the real explanation* is, rather, mechanistic.¹⁴

The idea seems to be that we do not need to assume or take for granted any access to our object; we only need to think through the hypothesis itself to realize that it is incoherent: if I explain

¹⁴ Kreines 2015: 39-40.

everything by appealing to its parts, then there is no explaining anything because there turns out to be no explanatorily significant parts to which I can have access. So, the hypothesis that I can explain everything by appealing to its parts is incoherent, and it seems like we can show that without comparing our account against the absolute as we are given it. Where is the need to appeal to something given in this?

We can see the need even in this minimal description. Note first that by this account we understand what a mechanical explanation is, and are simply testing whether it can be the only kind of explanation of things in the world. The incoherence is not in the very idea of a mechanical explanation; it is rather in the supposition that that kind of explanation can be used to explain everything. But to see whether we can use it to explain everything, we must have some grasp of everything, perhaps only implicit, which is not exhausted by our understanding of mechanism. For otherwise, the idea of mechanism would exhaust our conception of what it was to be an explicable thing, and in rejecting the hypothesis of “pure mechanism” we would be rejecting the very idea of explanation. So, in formulating the hypothesis, there must at least be some content to our understanding of everything which is logically independent of our idea of mechanism.

In Kreines’s proposal, this takes the form of the idea that where something explicable in other terms is given, then so too is whatever explains it. Or, in the more traditional Kantian language: **“If the conditioned is given, then the whole sum of conditions, and hence the absolutely unconditioned, is also given”** (A409/B436). This principle underwrites the incoherence of the pure mechanism hypothesis: for otherwise we might just think we only have conditions but not the unconditioned in our explanation, so that we are making explanatory progress even if we lack the capacity to achieve a complete explanation. But in Kreines that idea

of explanatory progress is made to depend on the idea of a complete or unconditioned explanation (cf. Kreines 2015: 129, 233). Moreover, we cannot find that idea of a complete explanation in the idea of a mechanical explanation – precisely not, for the whole point of the argument is to prove that there is no coherent idea of an unconditioned explanation within an account of mechanical explanation. Rather, one has to have some kind of cognitive access to the absolute, apart from the pure mechanism hypothesis, that enables us to see that it must be completely explicable. We require some insight into the world such that we know that it must contain within it something that is completely explicable. Indeed, Kreines is explicit about the way in which the need for something to be completely explicable is generated from something other than or outside of any of our particular hypotheses about explanation: in his terminology, it is generated by a constraint on theoretical inquiry (by the fact that “we must take this not to be pointless” as he puts it in the first long quote above), a constraint that is supposed to enable us to reveal the failure in our various hypotheses and that is what justifies the eventual appeal to the absolute idea as what is completely explicable.¹⁵ Kreines insists that mechanical explanation is coherent, and that there are mechanically explicable things. Because he thinks this while also maintaining the modification view, he has to distinguish between the kind of explanation present in mechanical explanation and the kind of explanation that mechanism fails to provide; the source of the latter demand lies in the interests of theoretical inquiry (or, as Kant would say, the interests of reason) and not in the idea of mechanical explanation as such. So, we must have some insight into the world – sufficient to assure us that it contains something completely

¹⁵ As he puts it, “In pursuing theoretical inquiry on some domain we are seeking the rational or the absolute idea there. We can reach explanatory satisfaction to different degrees on different domains. But whatever satisfaction we reach will be only in finding the absolute idea there, or else an approximation or an image of it” (Kreines 2015: 254). For more on this, cf. Kreines 2015: 235, 248-50, 261.

explicable – against which we test various hypotheses. And this makes the method of the *Logic* a form of theoretical inquiry.

Sometimes Kreines talks as though there is no difference between the standard of explanation internal to mechanism and the standard of explanation internal to the demand that something be completely explicable. So, for instance, he claims that

The absolute idea exemplifies the kind of explanation we are seeking when we seek to explain anything. True, some phenomena – paradigmatically the lawful – are not such that they can be explained in a way that reaches the endpoint. But explanation of any *X* only provides a kind of insight or understanding insofar as it uncovers a sense in which *X* can be understood as an approximation, even if distant, of the absolute idea. It turns out, then, that all intelligibility of anything would implicitly involve comparison to the absolute idea, within one whole system in which everything relates back to the absolute idea.¹⁶

This passage might suggest that it is internal to the idea of any kind of explanation – and so in particular mechanism – that it refer to a complete explanation (the correct account of the absolute idea). But this impression is misleading. For the paragraph is not really about kinds of explanation; rather, it is about our *interest* in pursuing explanation. So, a reference to complete explanation is internal not to mechanism as such but to our activity of seeking satisfaction through providing mechanical explanations: mechanical explanation satisfies our interests only to the extent that it is like a complete explanation.

Nor can we maintain Kreines's position and delete the reference to our interests, or think of those interests as if they added nothing to the idea of explanation. For it is crucial to Kreines' position that we distinguish between the epistemic standards we employ (what he describes as the dimension of "intelligibility") and the metaphysical reasons that are in the world itself (what he describes as the dimension of "explanation").¹⁷ Indeed, it turns out that on his view the kinds

¹⁶ Kreines 2015: 221.

¹⁷ Cf. Kreines 2015: 235. The importance of the distinction for Kreines between the epistemic standards we have in seeking explanation and the metaphysical standards that are internal to explanation as such comes out in another

of explanation we arrive at in the *Logic* are shown to be objectively valid only because they satisfy certain epistemic demands that we have in virtue of doing philosophy. So, the reason why we must proceed beyond mechanism is because we are seeking explanation, and we cannot be satisfied by an explanation unless we can compare it to a complete explanation. There is nothing in mechanism itself that forces us beyond it; we have to add to it the idea of finding explanatory satisfaction, and with this idea comes an implicit but given understanding of what the world must be like for it to provide that explanatory satisfaction.¹⁸

So, the hypothesis-testing conception of the modification view entails that speculative cognition is theoretical. Does this claim generalize to all modification views? At first, it may seem like it does not. It may seem like I can make an error at a given stage, but not come to know that it is an error in virtue of being given or being able to be given by the absolute idea: for instance, perhaps because there is a contradiction internal to a stage, one not generated by making that stage do work it is not meant to do (as in Kreines). I want now to show that despite initial appearances, the claim that speculative cognition is theoretical is a consequence (or, perhaps better, a presupposition) of all modification views. (I will deal specifically with the view that there is a contradiction internal to a stage in the next section.)

way in Kreines's distinction between epistemological and metaphysical readings of Hegel, and his attempt to read Hegel as in the first instance concerned with metaphysical claims *as opposed to* epistemic claims. He must preserve this opposition in his account of the method, seeking to explain it as employing epistemic standards to arrive at metaphysical claims (cf. Kreines 2015: 253ff.) It also comes out in his frequent attempt to dismiss skeptical considerations solely on the grounds that they apply with equal force to every position (cf. Kreines 2015: §§0.2, 5.2).

¹⁸ One final way to see that Kreines cannot delete the reference to our interests: if we think of our interests as though they added nothing to the idea of explanation, then we would have to grasp the relation between mechanism and the absolute idea simply in grasping what mechanism itself is. But then we would need no hypotheses, no reference to a subject matter about which we are putting forward a proposal, no reference to the “we” who are attempting to explain this subject matter, and no account of the method as employing distinctively epistemic standards. I am happy to go down this path (it is a version of the view I put forward in chapter 3), but there is much in Kreines' view that would have to be discarded.

To generalize to all modification views, let's first assume what is to be rejected: assume that speculative cognition is not theoretical. That is, assume that the subject matter is not in some way given to me, which is to say that I do not have any cognitive access to the subject matter apart from my thoughts of it. I will show that this assumption must be abandoned to sustain the essential feature of the modification view.

The essential feature of the modification view is that speculative cognition involves making an error, realizing it is an error, and then correcting it. An obvious, seemingly trivial implication of this is that the claims that I advance about the subject matter are dependent upon my recognition that they are true. For learning that I have made an error only leads me to correct my view if I advance the view on the thought that it is true.

I have to be able to recognize that my claim is true, which is to say that I must think of my claim as grounded (or, in a very broad sense, justified). What can serve as that ground? An answer that we can rule out is that my ground is simply how it in fact is with my subject matter. For how things are with it is not just by itself relevant to my thought of it: by itself, it gives my thought no cognitive standing of any sort. Rather, my thought must be suitably related to the facts, such that I can recognize them to be facts, in order for them to justify my claim. Perhaps I can guess at how things are, and luckily get it right. But the bare fact that I am right does not affect the cognitive standing of a guess: it remains a mere guess, and does not become something that I can *recognize* as true (unless, of course, something else happens that enables me to recognize that I have gotten it right).

So, my ground for my claims cannot be merely what is the case with my subject matter. But what can my ground be? By our assumption, the thought cannot be grounded by an appeal to the way in which I can be given or affected by the subject matter – for I am not given or affected

by the subject matter. But neither can my claim be grounded in itself, as it were. For, according to the modification view, I can err when thinking speculatively: so, the form of my claim is such that it can fail to be grounded (indeed, it can be wrong). I cannot ground my claim by appeal to the subject matter, nor by appeal to the claim itself. Nothing else seems to be at hand which can serve as my ground for the claim. So, I cannot so much as advance any claim as grounded on the non-theoretical version of the modification view, and I cannot make sense of how I could ever use it to arrive at what I recognize to be the truth about my subject matter. Consequently, the modification view must understand speculative cognition to be a form of theoretical cognition.

§3

The crux of the argument from the previous section is that (on the modification view) how it is with the subject matter is not something that thought, by itself, has access to. Indeed, if it did, what possible explanation could there be for how or why thought would err? And without error there is no modification view. To make sense of the modification view, then, we have to appeal to another form of cognitive access to the subject matter, such that we can make sense of our claims about the subject matter as true or false of it.

But one might object to the argument: for, above, I said that there is nothing else which can ground my claim without being given the subject matter. But why is that true? In particular, can't I ground a claim by showing that the negation of that claim is self-contradictory, incoherent, or somehow inconceivable? And, speaking more generally, can't I ground a conception of some subject matter by showing that every other conception is self-contradictory, incoherent, or somehow inconceivable?

In chapter 2, I considered this view, which I called the conceivability or contradiction view. The idea is that we in some way show that, by the very nature of thought, we are forced to think of the subject matter in a certain way. In that chapter, I objected to such views that they cannot work because they leave us without any explanation for how the claims that we are forced to by the very nature of thought can be valid determinations of what is. Suppose that we are indeed forced to think in whatever way – with what right do we think that this characterizes how it must be with the world, or whatever our subject matter is? The worry that thought is by its very nature parochial, is merely a way of getting at how things seem to be but not how they actually are, has not been touched by this conception of thought forcing us to certain conclusions. Of course, we want to be able to conclude that what we are forced to think must also be how the object must be – but I argued that the conceivability or contradiction view does not provide us with an understanding of the form of thinking on which we can get that desired result. That argument still applies here, to those versions of the modification view that arrive at conclusions by noting that their alternatives are self-contradictory, incoherent, or inconceivable.

But I now want to show that the conceivability or contradiction version of the modification view implicitly presupposes that we are able to be affected by the subject matter. To start to see this, note that on this view the correct account of the subject matter is forced by the nature of thought, and so it must in some way be implicit in any of my accounts. I err, however, in my explicit account of this nature: I attempt to account for what is implicit in even this act of thinking, but fail in some way. I cannot recognize this failure simply in judging the account to be true – in fact, I could not so much as judge it to be true in that case. Indeed, I could not so much as envision it as a view anyone might hold (even for the sake of argument), if I build

into the very affirmation of the account recognition that the account is erroneous. The idea of an affirmation which involves recognition that what I am affirming is false is incoherent.¹⁹

So, I cannot recognize my error in the very act of affirming the account I wrongly take to be true. Rather, I must recognize the error in an act of reflecting on my account, or perhaps an act of reflecting on the account I have advanced together with my advancing it. For instance, if we suppose again that the subject matter is the capacity to think, I might reflect on the relation between the content of my account and the nature of the act of asserting it, and I might judge that the content is false because it does not fit with or cannot yet be used to make sense of the act of asserting it (resulting, perhaps, in a pragmatic contradiction).²⁰ Or, whatever the subject matter, I might reflect on the relation between the content of my account and the fact that, in thinking, I am implicitly committed to its being thinkable, noting that the content is in fact unthinkable (or unthinkable without some additional content) and so must be rejected or revised.

The need for this act of reflection registers that I relate to an act of thought (the content of which) I reflect on as something given to me in the progression: I think something, and then I reflect on that *data point*, and form a theory which better accommodates it. In relation to this second act of reflection, the first thought is whatever it is whether I reflect on it or not, it exists independently of my act of reflecting on it. This is a strange idea, the idea that on these versions of the modification view what we are given is itself an act of thought. But the strangeness really has its source in the view itself, in the alienation implicit in it: in the act of reflection (as

¹⁹ It may sometimes happen that I am in tension with myself in the following way: I recognize something to be false and also take it to be true. For instance, I might know that flying in a plane is less dangerous than driving in a car, but (in my experience of a deep fear of flying) I might nevertheless also be committed to flying's being more dangerous than driving. What I say is not meant to rule this kind of case out. The kind of "case" I am ruling out as unintelligible is one in which it belongs to the very nature of what I am affirming or the very nature of my affirming it that I cannot affirm it without also recognizing it to be false. I can make sense of someone who thought flying was more dangerous, without any conflicting belief. I cannot begin to make sense of someone whose very recognition that flying is more dangerous is her recognition that flying is less dangerous.

²⁰ Again, this is the view taken by Hösle 1989 and Wandschneider 1995.

understood by this view), I do not relate to the account I have just given as something which I affirm; rather, I relate to it as I would to something I am given in perception. This is implicit in the fact that I am comparing the thought to something else (perhaps something implicit in it, perhaps the activity of thinking or affirming it) to see whether it fits. I do not make this comparison in affirming the account; rather, I can only make this comparison by viewing the account (together with my affirmation of it) as something *from which I can learn*. This is like when I regard my thought that it is oppressively hot today as evidence that I have still not gotten used to being in the South, or when I regard my recurring thought that I might die in a car crash as a symptom of a yet-to-be accounted for neurosis. In both of these cases, it does not matter to me whether my thoughts are true; what matters to me is only that I have them. That is how I can learn from them, how they serve as data, and that is why my account of them is theoretical. And this is exactly the kind of relation that I stand in to my thoughts of the absolute idea on the conceivability or contradiction view.

As we have seen, then, the modification view only makes sense when we relate to the subject matter, or to some manifestation of the subject matter, as able to affect or be given to us (whether in sensibility or not). This is not, by itself, an objection, but it is a consequence many proponents of the modification view would contest – since it suggests that their view saddles Hegel with a kind of pre-critical rationalism. But that suggestion is not by itself an argument against the view. In §§5-6 I want to give just such an argument. But first I want to consider one final version of the modification view.

§4

So far I have been considering versions of the modification view on which I put forward a false claim about the absolute. And my point has been that this is intelligible only within

theoretical cognition, in which my activity consists in attempting to ascertain the nature of something that is what it is regardless of what I judge. But there is another kind of error which one might see emerging in the course of the *Logic*, an error that consists not in making a false claim but rather in an imperfection in the realization of the absolute idea.

A standard example of an imperfection, one that Hegel himself uses, is that of a bad friend.²¹ A bad friend is a friend, but it is one who falls short of the standards implicit in the idea of friendship, such that she is not what a friend as such should be. On the view of the modification view that I want to consider in this section, there are errors in that non-final stages are imperfect realizations of the final stage. That is, our understanding of them makes reference to a standard for what they are to be in light of which they are in some way lacking.²²

Michael Theunissen has articulated the most sophisticated version of this reading.²³ As he puts it, in the *Objective Logic* Hegel “leads the correspondence… between the object [*Gegenstand*] and its [*selber*] objective [*gegenständlichem*] concept back to the fact that in being itself, *reality*, also the reality of that object [*Gegenstandes*], is inadequate.”²⁴ As he goes on to explain, the standard set by the concept is internal to the reality of the object: the object “stands

²¹ Cf. EL §23z2. For some other discussions and examples, cf. EL §§41z, 135z, 213A; 5.92/21.77, 6.465/12.175. The point Hegel makes whenever he invokes these examples is twofold: first, that there are actually existent things that are imperfect or failing in light of the concept that determines what they are; second, that those things cannot be so imperfect that they do not actualize that concept at all. Theunissen sees such passages as evidence that Hegel thinks about the method in these terms, but I can find no evidence for that claim in these passages. As I read them, they are about the relation between actually existing things (in space and time, so in the *EN* and *EG*, but not in the *Logic*) and the concepts that determine their essences. (There is a related sense of truth in which Hegel describes one stage as the truth of another, and this is surely a description of the method – but, as I will argue in §7, I do not think this supports the imperfection view.)

²² As this makes clear, we are only interested in internal imperfections, and not in imperfections in light of a standard that is external to the matter at hand. A tree is not imperfect, in the relevant sense, in virtue of its not being suitable to be made into a house; it is imperfect in virtue of failing to live up to the standard set by its life form, e.g. by its growth being stunted.

²³ In an earlier draft, I significantly underestimated the merits of Theunissen’s account, as comments by Robert Pippin helped me to see. I include this section as a way of doing his view the justice it deserves.

²⁴ Theunissen 1989: 336/13 (the pagination after the “/” corresponds to the page numbers of the English translation by Luis Guzman, Theunissen 2002). (All translations of Theunissen are my own, though I have consulted Guzman’s translation of this article.) This article was originally published in 1975 (prior to *Sein und Schein*).

under the *claim* [Anspruch] of the concept.”²⁵ Finally, on his understanding, the object becomes as perfect as it can (it corresponds as much as it can to its concept) through its own activity.

Theunissen argues that we can think of the progress in the *Logic* as overcoming the imperfection in each stage by revealing what is imperfect in that stage (specifically, by revealing the imperfection to have no legitimate claim to be to reality).²⁶ One could imagine this progress to be a progress made by the subject matter of the *Logic* itself, such that the subject matter itself strives to overcome the imperfection (as a bad friend might strive to become a good friend). Or one could imagine the progress to be merely ours, such that revealing an imperfection gives us grounds for advancing to a less imperfect understanding of the subject matter (somewhat like an attempt on our part to remodel a bad house and thereby turn it into a good one).²⁷

Theunissen himself understands the progress along the lines of the latter idea. For, as he thinks about it, within the *Objective Logic*, we must distinguish between the thought present in

²⁵ Theunissen 1989: 342/18; cf. also Theunissen 1980: 45. Theunissen explains the relation between the standard and the imperfect reality in two distinct ways. First, he does so by appeal to Plato’s distinction between that which is really real and that which perishes (or between the Idea and mere copies): cf. Theunissen 1989: 338/14; Theunissen 1980: 45. Second, he talks about it in terms of a dialogue, taking seriously the “claim” aspect of the standard on the reality, such that it is really like a claim made by one person on another person in a dialogue. The first way is more closely linked to my invocation of an imperfection. As I understand it, he employs the second way because he thinks Hegel’s methods culminates in and is overcome by a more truly dialogical understanding of philosophical method: cf. Theunissen 1989: 355-6/28-9. I will not attempt to discuss Theunissen’s reasons for thinking the dialogical is the philosophically fundamental.

²⁶ Cf. Theunissen 1980: 72.

²⁷ This former view is not, or at least need not be an example of a modification view as I use the term. For on it, not only do we make no errors, but there is no reference to a “we” as against the progress of the subject matter itself. My argument against a view of this sort would be a version of my argument against the organic growth view in chapter 3. At least on a traditional understanding of imperfection, the perfection precisely does not explain the imperfection, such that it remains an accident relative to the perfection (the result of an interfering force) that the imperfection has emerged. As such, the imperfection in question would have to be the result of a force other than the concept in question (the absolute); but then we would have to imagine the activity as working on a recalcitrant matter, and so it would not be able to understand itself as sufficient to explain its own nature. The result would be a parochial conception of the subject matter.

If, instead, the appeal to imperfection is understood in a non-traditional manner, such that one could not grasp the perfection independently of grasping the imperfection, and such that the imperfection was completely explained by the perfection, then I would not object to this view. I would, rather, see it as a variant of the transformative view. (I once saw Wolfram Gobsch work out an interpretation along these lines in a conference presentation.)

the stage in question and our thought of that stage; the imperfection, for him, lies in the gap or separation between these two thoughts. So he writes that “Hegel’s *Logic*, at least the objective, is *Phenomenology*. The objective logic is this already independently of the fact that it presents itself as [the] logic of *Scheins*, namely insofar as it is the thinking of thinking in the manner of critique and not only in the sense of self-certification [*Selbstgewisserung*], or (said differently) insofar as the thinking thought in it does not only fall together with the thinking in it but rather is also differentiated from it...”²⁸ It follows immediately from this that Theunissen’s view of the progress of the *Objective Logic* is theoretical: for we regard the stage as what it is whatever we think of it, and advance beyond it by noting the inadequacy in it relative to an internal standard.

As the passage from Theunissen indicates, he thinks of the *Logic* like this by modeling it on the *Phenomenology*. And I think his view of the method of the *Phenomenology* might well be right. In particular, Hegel claims in the *Phenomenology* that the advance from one form of consciousness to the next is justified behind the back of the form of consciousness in question, such that the next stage appears to come out of nowhere or emerges inexplicably.²⁹ This happens because the forms of consciousness all relate to what is given in one way or another, and so the speculative development of the stages is not something that those forms can grasp.³⁰ Consequently, there is a distinction to be drawn or a gap between the self-understanding of the forms of consciousness and the understanding we have as readers, as Theunissen notes. And part

²⁸ Theunissen 1980: 80. There is a difference between logic and phenomenology for Theunissen: the stages the *Objective Logic* examines are not knowledge as it appears (as in the *Phenomenology*) but rather “the determinate knowledge of the old-European philosophical tradition” (1980: 81). And he defines the *Concept Logic*, which he understands to have overcome all imperfection (at least if Hegel is right), as “having reached a level on which there is no more difference [*Unterschied*] between the considering and the considered thinking” (1980: 81).

²⁹ As Hegel puts it in the Introduction to the *Phenomenology*: “Only this necessity itself, or the *emergence* of the new subject matter that presents itself to consciousness without knowing how it occurs – only this is what occurs for us at it were behind its back” (*PhG* ¶87; cf. also the discussion of skepticism at ¶79).

³⁰ In fact, the forms of consciousness are sometimes theoretical and sometimes practical; in both cases, they relate to something given, but they do so in different ways (I am only discussing the theoretical version of this in this dissertation).

of the task of the phenomenological method consists in showing each form of consciousness that it cannot make sense of itself (thereby bringing it to despair: cf. *PhG* ¶78), which one might attempt to make sense of by appealing to the idea of an internal imperfection that cannot be overcome from within that shape of consciousness itself.

That much in Theunissen's reading (of the *Phenomenology*) is perfectly consistent with my claims about the *Logic*. That is, I can agree with that but still argue that the advance does not occur behind the back of the stages in the *Logic*: the stage is not a perspective on the absolute, and we do not stand back from the stage to regard it. What I have shown so far, however, is just that Theunissen's version of the modification view commits him to understanding the method of the *Logic* as a form of theoretical cognition. In the next two sections I will show why that cannot be right.

But before doing that, I want to make one more point about the central feature of Theunissen's view, that one can understand the progression of the *Logic* as "the unity of presentation and critique," where he understands this unity to be that of articulating the various forms of "thought determinations" and just therein explaining the objective validity of those forms. As he puts it, "The Hegelian logic does not want to be anything other than the protocol of this self-examination of the thought-determinations."³¹ I think this interpretive claim is absolutely right.

Theunissen argues that Hegel's project cannot work because there can be no unity of critique and presentation (cf. Theunissen 1980: 85-89). There can be no such unity, Theunissen thinks, because that which is critiqued is shown not to be the subject matter of the *Logic*: in his terminology, it is shown to be *Schein*, to have no truth, where that means not to correspond to its

³¹ Theunissen 1980: 15.

concept (cf. Theunissen 1980: 72-3).³² Theunissen, that is, understands Hegel to assert the identity of that which is exposed as merely *Schein* and that which is presented as the truth, and he argues that this does not make sense.³³

I agree with Theunissen that, if one understands critique as he does, there is no way to make sense of the unity of critique and presentation. But that is not the right way to understand what Hegel means by “critique”: the unity of critique and of presentation is the unity of grasping a thought determination (presentation) and of determining its objective validity (critique). And we can make sense of this unity, along the lines of the interpretation I presented in chapter 3. I there argued that the logical progression does not separate out grasping a concept and showing it to be objectively valid. In this way, unlike Kantian critique, Hegel’s true critique does not “regard the thought determinations according to the opposition of *subjectivity* and *objectivity*” (§41). Rather, we grasp the thought determinations in such a way that this grasp is the sole condition on its valid use.³⁴ Grasping one stage does involve restricting the valid use of the thought determinations – and so still merits the title “critique” – but not by revealing it to be inadequate or imperfect relative to its concept. Rather, grasping it is nothing other than grasping

³² Bowman also cites Hegel’s claim to be practicing a “true critique” (5.62/21.49) in the *Logic* as evidence in favor of his modification view: cf. Bowman 2013: 111-2.

³³ As Theunissen puts it, “in the most extreme case, the *Logic* makes use of as truth exactly the thought-determinations in which it brings *Schein* to light in the realization of its critical intention... and indeed without a differentiation of those respects” of what is viewed as truth and what is viewed as mere seeming (Theunissen 1980: 88)

³⁴ I take this to be the upshot of Hegel’s argument that Kantian critique is solely directed at the *a priori/a posteriori* contrast (cf. EL §41). Kantian critique investigates the conditions in which that which is *a priori* (or has its origin not in the given objects but in the nature of the thinking subject herself) is also valid of the *a posteriori* (that which is given to the subject, and so does not have its origin in the thinking subject). By noting that Kant’s critique attends only to the *a priori/a posteriori* contrast, Hegel is not (as Sebastian Rand has claimed) claiming that his *Logic* is not *a priori* in the broader sense of known prior to or independently of experience: cf. Rand 2007. Rather, Hegel is only claiming that the true critique contained in the *Logic* does not establish *a priority* in this broader sense by locating the origin of the determinations in the thinking subject as opposed to the object (perhaps for this reason, Hegel uses the expression “pure,” not “*a priori*,” to describe the *Logic*). It follows from this that Hegel’s true critique must not separate out grasping the content of the concept or thought form and determining the objective validity of that concept or thought form, since Hegel criticizes precisely this separation in Kant’s version of critique.

its concept (the absolute) – for to grasp it (and so to know its validity) just is advancing beyond it to grasp the absolute.

With that, I want to turn to justify why an interpretation of speculative cognition on which it is a form of theoretical cognition cannot be right.

§5

In the previous sections, I argued that, on the modification view, speculative cognition is a form of theoretical cognition. In this section, I will argue that this interpretation deprives speculative cognition of its objective validity.

It cannot be the very fact that it is theoretical which suffices to deprive this interpretation of speculative cognition of its objective validity. For there are objectively valid forms of theoretical cognition – for instance, our knowledge of the world as it is given to us in sensation. If we grant this, then an objection to the view can come from one of two sources. First, one can object (as I did in chapter 1) that theoretical cognition cannot stand alone or be made sense of by itself, so that to make sense of it as objectively valid requires advancing to another form of cognition (one which the modification view does not make available to us). Second, one can object that a theoretical view of thought is somehow objectionable.

Central to the argument in chapter 1 is the claim that theoretical cognition changes the way we represent what is given to us. That claim might seem not to apply here, since what is given to us is itself a thought. However, it does apply: the thought as given is not yet articulated into the account that results from reflection on it. Articulating whatever is given into an account changes our way of representing its content. Indeed, this is essential to making sense of the fact – required by the modification view – that we do not already know the nature of our subject matter

from the outset: even if the true nature of the subject matter is implicit in our very first account, we only arrive at knowledge of it through articulating it and so such articulation must involve changing the way it is represented as given (in reflection).

From the fact that our thought of the subject matter changes our way of representing the subject matter, the worry about parochialism arises: how do we know that thought can get at the way the subject matter is in fact? That is, how do we know that the way it is in itself is also the way it is for us in our account of it? To make sense of the validity of theoretical cognition, we need to be able to think the identity of the way in which it is in itself and the way in which it is for us, an identity which is present despite the change produced by thought. The thought of this identity cannot itself be theoretical: for any thought with a theoretical form will itself work only by effecting a change in the way its subject matter is given to it, and so will itself raise the very same question it is meant to answer. Hence, the worry about parochialism cannot be answered by theoretical cognition.

At this point, we are now in a position to appreciate Hegel's own way of making the point in his discussion of theoretical cognition within the *Logic*: "For insofar as the content still has the determination of a *given* in the result, the presupposed *being-in-it* [Ansichsein] against the concept is not sublated; the unity of the concept and the reality, the truth, is thereby just as much also not contained in it" (6.499/12.200-1). The content of our thought, which we take to capture the truth about the subject matter, is arrived at by being given the subject matter. Moreover, in theoretical cognition, I am cognizant of the difference between my thought and what I am thinking of, cognizant that my thought presupposes the possible givenness of its subject matter. Consequently, the thought of the identity of the form of thought and the form of what is (what Hegel calls the unity of concept and reality) is not contained in this form: to think

this identity, and thereby secure the validity of theoretical cognition, we have to advance to another form of cognition, one in which the content thought and the subject matter of the thought are more fully united. Speculative cognition is Hegel's term for just this kind of (non-theoretical) cognition.

That forms my first objection to the modification view, an argument first introduced in chapter 1. The argument purports to show that we cannot make sense of the form of theoretical cognition by itself, and so it is not the kind of cognition Hegel is describing in the *Logic*. Moreover, it begins to bring out the fact that the course of the *Logic* is the movement of its subject matter by pointing to the identity of the thinking and of what is thought about in the *Logic* (so that any advance in our thought will also just thereby be an advance made by what is thought about).

Now I want to introduce a second objection which has a different source: the modification view, and any theoretical conception of the method of the *Logic*, alienates us from our nature as thinkers, and thereby fails to accurately characterize that nature.

To make this argument, I want to start with two claims, one about the subject matter and one about the way we relate to it. Both claims were already introduced when discussing particular modification views. First, the subject matter of the *Logic* is the nature of thought.³⁵ This seems plain enough from Hegel's introductory remarks: he says, for instance, that logic is “the thought of thought” (§19A), opens his account in the *Encyclopedia Logic* with an account of the nature of thinking (§§20-3), and refers to its subject matter as “*thought* or more determinately *conceptual thought* [begriefende Denken]” (5.35/21.27). Nor is the view that the *Logic* is about the nature of thought controversial.

³⁵ My own version of this view is presented and defended in chapter 1. Here I abstract from much of what is controversial in my interpretation so as to make the characterization less objectionable to defenders of a modification view.

Second, I advance a claim (or, equivalently, form a judgment) about the absolute only in recognizing (or in taking myself to recognize) the truth of that claim. This thought is present in Hegel's claim that thought is free, or that in thinking I am connected to myself ("Sichaufschichbeziehen") in that I take the "content" of my thought to be that of the "Sache," or to truly characterize what I am thinking about (§23A). This is presupposed by the modification view, as noted above, since it is only in virtue of this fact that learning that I have made an error leads me to correct my account.³⁶

Combining these two claims, we get an interesting result. At the final stage of the *Logic*, according to the first characteristic, I have given an accurate account of the nature of thought. On the modification view, the form of my account is such that, as I account for it, the nature of thought figures for me as something which is what it is whether I recognize it to be so or not (it is given to me). But, according to the second characteristic, I relate to my account in this way: were I no longer to recognize it as true, it would cease to be my account; its being my account is dependent upon my recognizing its truth. So, as I account for the nature of thought, I do not relate to it as I relate to my own account of it.

I am accounting for the nature of thought, and so the content of my judgment is about this nature. But, on the present view of it, this content is different from the nature of my very judgment, a difference which arises from the different relations in which I stand to what I am accounting for and my account of it. This is a typical view of accounts of the nature of thought: after all, I bear the same relation to this judgment, which articulates the content of the nature of thought (and so of judgment), and to other judgments, judgments about other things. And so

³⁶ I am not saying that we are somehow entitled to or even understand this claim at an early stage in the *Logic*, as though we could somehow use this characterization of thought as a premise which enables us to rule out various views along the way. I am not noting a role that thought's freedom plays as a premise in any argument. I am just noting that it is only in virtue of thought's freedom that any argument or account can convince at all.

even if the content of my judgment happens, in this case, to articulate the very nature present in the judging of it, the judging of it must in some sense be different from what it articulates. Here we see resurface the view mentioned in §1 on which what I am accounting for with the speculative method is the very nature of that method itself (as an exercise of the capacity to think), but it is this by accident and not by virtue of the form of the speculative method.

When I give an accurate account of the nature of thought, I am articulating the nature of my very judgment (as a kind of thought). But I do not relate to what I am accounting for as I relate to my account of it. In recognizing that this is an account of the nature of my judgment of it, then, I am alienated from my judgment: in this recognition, my judgment (my account of the nature of thought) figures as something about which I have a (theoretical) judgment (namely, I note that it is one of the things that my account is about), and that means it figures as something given to me. To relate to the judgment as given to me is to relate to it as what it is whether I judge it to be true or not: I am saddled with this judgment, whatever I may think about it (and, in particular, about its truth). This is the root of the difficulty with a theoretical account of the nature of thought, and I want to unpack it and why it is a difficulty slowly.

First, note that I do not deny that I can relate to my judgments as given to me, nothing prevents me from doing that. We saw two examples of this above (about the heat and about dying in a car accident). Generally speaking, for any judgment I form, I might wonder what it means about my mood or how I am doing (or whatever). In relating to the judgment in this way, I am thinking about it as given to me, or as a data point, from which I can draw various conclusions about my psychic health (etc.).³⁷ Nothing about this is, for instance, incompatible with continuing to affirm the judgment.

³⁷ Kant would describe this by saying I am relating to my judgment as given to me in inner sense, and not as I relate to it when I spontaneously judge it: cf. B152-159.

The inference from my judgment to my psychic health is not intended to be one which explains or accounts for my judgment itself. Suppose instead that I came to think that I made the judgment *because* I was in a certain mood, and not because of the way things are. I would then give up the judgment – or, supposing the mood still gripped me, I would at least see this explanation as in tension with my continuing to take the judgment to be true. (I am not in fact likely to die in a car crash, I might conclude, I am just an anxious person.) That is because I explain the judgment in such a fashion that it is not made because it is true, but for some other reason. And so in that explanation I have made the judgment parochial: I have shown it to be merely how it seems to one like me. But in judging I exclude any such explanation: I judge what I judge because it is true, and any explanation for my judgment which does not appeal to the truth of what I judge either fails to explain why I judge or reveals that I should not judge in that way. It is this fact which poses problems for a theoretical account of the capacity to think.

Before attempting to elaborate further on this argument, it is worth noting that it does not exclude the possibility of various kinds of psychological or neurological or biological accounts of judgment. That is, the argument leaves room for thinking that we can give a partial account and explanation of the capacity to judge by relating to it as it is given to us. What the argument entails is that this partial account can only make sense if it is controlled by the recognition that the fundamental explanation of why I judge, in the non-parochial and so normal or fundamental case, is that what I judge is true. That is, a psychological explanation can be fine, so long as it is not put forward as competing with the explanation that I judge because it is true; if, rather, it is merely explaining some mechanisms that are involved in that, or if it is explaining the development of that capacity, etc., then there is nothing objectionable about it. What makes this

objection damning of the modification view is that it makes the theoretical account into the ultimate explanation of our capacity to think (in a sense that I will try to bring out below).³⁸

To see what is wrong with doing that, consider an observer of human children who studies their judgments about colors. She regards these judgments as data points, or as given. That is, she regards them as what they are whether they are true or not. She may be interested in discovering at what point the children start to accurately discriminate between red and green. And so she will be very interested in knowing, for instance, whether child A's judgment that the box is green is true. And suppose, further, that one of the children is at the point where they reliably discriminate between red and green. Perhaps she will explain this phenomenon by noting that the child judges that things are green because the child recognizes that they are. The observer can surely do this. Note that her capacity to do it is dependent upon her capacity to recognize the truth: it is only in virtue of her possession of that capacity that she can assess whether the child's judgments track the truth.

Now suppose that instead of explaining the child's capacity to judge that things are green, she were to explain her own capacity to think in general, and suppose she regarded this capacity too as given to her (just as she regarded the children's judgments as given to her). To avoid making her account of thought parochial, she has to be able to explain her judgments by appeal to their truth. But in regarding her capacity to think as given to her, she regards her judgments as what they are whether they are true or not. Moreover, since it is *her* capacity which is in question, she has no antecedent capacity with which to determine whether she judges as she does because it is true. So, were she to give an explanation of her capacity to think, the only one she could give would be one on which she judges as she does whether it is true or not. But she

³⁸ My thanks to Jason Bridges for pressing me to be clearer about the interaction between my argument and psychological accounts of our capacities.

cannot give even this explanation, since she can only put forth that explanation in judging it to be true, a judgment which that very explanation would exclude.

She can give a partial explanation of her capacity to judge, one which was not intended to compete with or completely account for the claim that she judges as she does because it is true. That is just what she is doing in the first case, for she is there engaged in explaining the children's capacity to judge in a way which rests on her antecedent understanding that we judge as we do because what we judge is true. What she is doing becomes objectionable only when it is intended to explain that antecedent understanding in a way that does not rest on it, or when she intends to offer an explanation of our capacity to think that is incompatible with that antecedent understanding. And what is objectionable about that is that the antecedent understanding must run through and be the formal ground of any explanation she could give, such that any explanation of it must (ultimately) rest on appealing to it.

Stepping back from the hypothetical case, we can see that no explanation of the capacity to think which regards that capacity itself as given can be self-standing. For, by itself, that account makes thought parochial, and leaves me unable to grasp how my recognition that a judgment is true can have a ground. In judging anything at all, and in particular in judging that a particular account of the capacity to think is true, I exclude any account of thought which renders it parochial. And so no theoretical account of the capacity to think can be the last word.

This argument against a theoretical interpretation of speculative cognition might give the impression that such a view fails because it cannot account for one feature of the nature of thought – though it might well get every other feature right. But that is not the right way to understand this argument. For I must be the source of my judgments, they cannot be given to me, and this informs every aspect of the nature of thought. The theoretical account is forced to

systematically misunderstand the nature of thought, because it cannot make sense of the form of those aspects.

Consider, for instance, a theoretical account of the nature of inference. In such an account, the explanation for why an inference has the form that it does will appeal to the nature of thought, but I will relate to that nature as something given to me. But that means that the account will make it mysterious why I should be saddled with the capacity to infer at all, or with this form of inference in particular. For, on this account, I cannot relate to the form of inference as issuing from my nature. Rather, I must relate to that form as something given to me by a nature which I cannot recognize as having its source in me: a nature which is forced upon me. And so I will not be able to understand why I infer at all.

This last claim circles back to the argument from chapter 1 that I reiterated at the beginning of this section: confined just to theoretical cognition, I cannot make sense of it as a valid form of cognition. As the argument just made reveals, that is because I cannot make sense of it as mine, I can only make sense of it as something forced upon me from outside (cf. 6.254-5/12.18). And so no modification view and, more generally, no theoretical account of the nature of thought can suffice to make sense of it.

Finally, we are now in a position to appreciate the relationship between rejecting the modification view and Hegel's claim that the movement is the movement of the subject matter itself, or that the method is the subject matter's own. This claim is impossible to understand so long as we think of what we are accounting for as in some way given to us, for then (as McTaggart argued) the movement that we make in attempting to get it right is indeed subjective, and dependent upon the subject matter staying as it is. But an account of the capacity to think cannot be theoretical in this way, because it is an account of *our* capacity to think. In particular,

we have to understand our account of that capacity in such a fashion that it enables us to recognize the account as true. As we have seen, this means that the form of the account must be such that I relate to my account just as I relate to what I am accounting for. And that means that I relate to the progression I make in my account as a progression in what I am accounting for. Hence, the logical progression is a progression which both I and my subject matter make.

§6

In the previous section, I argued that interpretations of speculative cognition as a form of theoretical cognition are wrong because they involve a relation to the nature of thought which prevents us from recognizing that nature as our own. As a result, they systematically distort that nature. In this section I want to show that a version of that argument can also be found in the *Logic* itself, in a discussion of Kant's Paralogisms.

The starting point for Hegel's argument is Kant's claim that, in giving a metaphysical account of the I, we must start with "the simple and in content for itself wholly empty representation **I**, of which one cannot even say that it is a concept, but a mere consciousness that accompanies every concept" (A345-6/B404). Kant claims that the I or the "I think" can accompany every representation because, on his view, it is that representation by means of which I unify some given representations and take them up into thought. So, whatever I am thinking, it is my thought only in virtue of being accompanied (or at least being able to be accompanied) by the representation "I think...." Since the I is what is common to all of my thoughts, I must abstract from every particular or determinate thought to investigate it. We cannot form a concept of this "I" without predicated something of it, or attributing some content to the concept, but these predications have to consist in particular thoughts: the I is simple, or the I is complex. We

must, however, abstract from any particular thoughts, because the I think is common to all of them. So, we cannot form any concept of the I. As Kant puts it, “we therefore turn in a constant circle, since we must always already avail ourselves of the representation of it at all times in order to judge anything about it; we cannot separate ourselves from this inconvenience, because the consciousness in itself is not even a representation distinguishing a particular object, but rather a form of representation in general, insofar as it is to be called a cognition” (A346/B404). That is, if I start solely from the “I” or the “I think,” then any concept I form of it will be a thought of it: (I think) that the I is.... But this is inconvenient for our inquiry: we first reflect on the I to try to form a predicate of it, but turning to the predicate we recognize that the predicate can be nothing other than the form common to the thought of all objects, and so can be no predicate at all but merely the “I think,” forcing us to turn back to our starting point.

Hegel’s response to this argument is intricate, and I will not discuss it extensively here. Instead, I just want to bring out three points from it. First, Hegel acknowledges that the I think is present in any thought: for instance, he explicitly praises Kant for having seen that “the *unity of self-consciousness*,” “the I,” is that in virtue of which any of my thoughts relate to objects (6.255/12.18-9), and so it must be able to accompany all of my thoughts. But Hegel finds it “laughable [*lächerlich*]” that Kant describes the nature of self-consciousness as “an *inconvenience* and, as something flawed, a *circle*” (cf. 6.490/12.194). That is, Hegel thinks, Kant is wrong to take the fact that the I is present in every thought as a problem for an account of the soul.

Second, Hegel notes that the inconvenience Kant ascribes to the I is not present for objects that we know that are not ourselves: “A stone does not have this *inconvenience*; if it should be thought or if one should judge about it, it does not thereby stand in the way of its

self... it is an other outside of it which must take on this labor [*Mühle*]” (6.490/12.194). That is, when what we know is something other than ourselves, what we know does not stand in the way of our knowing it. For Kant, it is only when we seek to have knowledge of ourselves that what we know stands in the way of our knowing it.

Third, Hegel agrees with Kant that we cannot have metaphysical knowledge of ourselves in this way (where we know ourselves in the same form in which we know about rocks): he describes the kind of self which would figure in such knowledge as “abstract,” precisely because it is common to all thoughts, and notes that both Kant and the rationalist metaphysicians he critiques stay with this “one-sided” understanding of the I and so do not say anything about “the true speculative ideas” of it (6.491-2/12.195).

Taken together, these points imply that Hegel thinks that in our metaphysical knowledge of the I think we do not relate to ourselves as we relate to other objects in our knowledge of them. Kant’s claim that we lack metaphysical knowledge of the I think turns on thinking of such knowledge as resting on an “*intuition*” of the I “whereby it would be *given* as an *object*” (6.491/12.194). And that is to say that Kant thinks of such knowledge as a form of theoretical knowledge. Hegel’s affirmation that we have metaphysical knowledge of ourselves against Kant depends upon thinking of that knowledge, and accordingly the I think which is thereby known, differently.

We can see now the abstract outlines of the argument from the previous section: theoretical cognition of the nature of thought must fail to be the last word (to amount to metaphysical knowledge of the soul) because it is present both as the given object and as the relation between myself and my thought, and the way in which it is present as my object (as given to me) prevents me from knowing it as it is present in my relation to my thought of it. The

last crucial detail is to draw out why Hegel thinks I would get in my own way, to see whether his thought there looks anything like the argument I gave about alienation.

Kant, as we saw, thought that the I got in its own way because, as the nature common to every thought, no determinate or particular thought can articulate it. Hegel makes essentially the same point (though in a different way, consistent with his thought that we have a different way of knowing the I think). He notes that “when I am taken conceptlessly [*begrifflos*] as mere simple representation, according to the way we express I in everyday consciousness, it is the abstract determination, not the connection to its self that has its self for a subject matter [*zum Gegenstand*] – it is, then, only *one* of the extremes, one-sided subject without its objectivity” (6.491/12.195). The “mere simple representation” is a reference to Kant and, in connection with the “abstract determination,” suggests that Hegel means to make the point that the I think, as understood in everyday consciousness, accompanies or can accompany all of one’s thoughts. This conception of the I think is one on which it is only “one-sided,” it is only as a subject or a thinker, and so we are not here thinking of it in such a way that it can also be made into what we are thinking about. In thinking about myself as a particular given subject matter, I would fail to capture my nature as that which is common to all of my thoughts. Or, put differently, in thinking about the I think as a particular subject matter, I would relate to my acts of thought as given to me and so I would no longer be able to recognize what I am accounting for as my nature. Though neither Kant nor Hegel use the term “alienation” in this context, or explicitly discuss the worry about making thought parochial, this is a version of the point I made above.³⁹

³⁹ In Hegel’s version of the claim we get the further thought that this understanding of the I think is conceptless – which does not mean that it is false, just that it is not how we grasp the I think in the *Logic* – and a suggestion of an alternative way of understanding such metaphysical knowledge, one which is not rationalist in that it does not treat the I think as given. The idea of a connection to itself is quite schematic, but he fills out what he means a little bit when he notes that the I think as it is conceived in everyday consciousness is always the thought of something, that this representation of the “I think” is thus inseparable from a representation of its connection to a subject matter (cf. 6.491/12.195). Kant, he thinks, misses this when he restricts our attention solely to the “I think”: the nature of the I

§7

I take myself to have shown that the modification view, and any interpretation of speculative cognition on which it is a form of theoretical cognition, cannot work, and that Hegel recognized this. In this section I want to address some exegetical evidence which seems to speak in favor of the modification view. In particular, I want to consider Hegel's frequent claim that a stage in the *Logic* is "untrue." This claim seems to straightforwardly entail the modification view: we put forth an account, which is in fact untrue; progress beyond that account must in part consist in realizing that it is untrue. I argue that Hegel's particular conception of truth makes this reading of his claim at the very least non-compulsory, and I offer evidence that raises exegetical trouble for this interpretation and also for the modification view more generally.

To start with, I want to spell out the case in favor of the modification view. In his most extended discussion of the concept of truth in the *Logic* itself, he notes that the definition of truth as "the agreement of cognition with its subject matter" is "of the highest value" (6.266/12.26).⁴⁰ So, we can begin with the idea of truth as the agreement of cognition with what it is about. To this we need to add that Hegel most frequently pairs the claim that a stage is untrue with the claim that the next stage is the truth of the prior stage. So, for instance, he claims that "the truth of being as much as of nothing" is becoming (EL §88; cp. 5.84/21.69); and he says that the

is not, as Kant maintains in the Paralogisms, to be a simple representation but rather to be a simple representation which demands or requires a synthesis or a relation to something, without which the I think itself cannot be. This latter conception is also Kantian, it is the Kant of the B-Deduction, and Hegel uses it against Kant's argument in the Paralogisms: because the I think only is in virtue of connecting a manifold and so in virtue of thinking of something, and because there only is something, some object, in virtue of the I thinking or being able to think it, a metaphysical account of the I should be an examination of the relationship between the I and its object. The task of conceiving of the I think, or grasping its nature, must involve grasping the relation between the I think and the something – whatever it is – that it thinks. As we'll see in detail in the next two chapters, Hegel argues that to grasp this relation requires advancing to speculative cognition, and so we have metaphysical knowledge of the I think that has a speculative form.

⁴⁰ Hegel is explicitly opposing Kant's estimation of this definition as "trivial": cf. A52/B82. For our purposes, we do not need to explore this dispute with Kant.

quantitative is “according to its truth” measure (EL §106; cp. 5.384/21.320). This locution implies that the preceding stage, though untrue in some sense, is not untrue *simpliciter* or without qualification. Rather, the suggestion seems to be that there is a truth in the preceding stage, and that we can grasp this truth only by advancing to the next stage.⁴¹

To determine what exactly this means, it is helpful to turn to a particular example in which Hegel describes something as untrue. In the introduction to the *Logic of the Concept*, after discussing the definition of truth mentioned above, Hegel claims that we need to investigate whether the form of the positive judgement is “*in and for itself* a form of truth” (6.268/12.28). As a characterization of positive judgment, he says that it links something singular with something general (“the singular is the universal”) and notes that this means it “lacks what the definition of truth demands, namely the agreement of the concept and its subject matter” (6.268/12.27). The most natural interpretation of this passage, and one congenial to the modification view, is that Hegel is saying that the positive judgment is unfit to capture or express the nature of the unconditioned. So, we cannot use positive judgments to cognize the unconditioned – presumably that is because when making a positive judgment, we represent (“*vorstellen*”) our subject matter as a substrate, and so by the form of our judgment turn the unconditioned into something conditioned.

Moreover, in his own account of positive judgment, he makes essentially the same point. He notes that “the positive judgment is *not true*, but rather has its truth in the negative judgment” (6.317/12.64). He further notes that positive judgment can be “correct” because it can express an agreement between a “representation” and its subject matter when that subject matter is taken from “*intuition or perception*” (6.318/12.65). But, he claims, there is a difference between the

⁴¹ For the moment, I am abstracting from Hegel’s important claim that the *Logic* examines the truth not of judgments but of concepts (cf. §§24z2, 28A, 33A). I return to this claim below.

thought that a positive judgment can be correct and the thought that positive judgment, as a form, is true. And he notes that the positive judgment “has through its *form* as positive judgment no truth” (6.318/12.65; cf. §172A).

I take this evidence to be sufficient to establish that we cannot use positive judgments to cognize the unconditioned. One way of putting this point is to note that speculative cognition does not consist in making positive judgments about the unconditioned. This fact, when combined with the evidence we have just considered, might seem to entail the modification view. For it might seem to entail that a positive judgment is untrue, or does not agree with its subject matter, when that subject matter is the unconditioned. After all, a positive judgment can agree with its subject matter when that subject matter is taken from perception or intuition, which suggests that the form of positive judgment as such is untrue when its subject matter is the unconditioned. And so the sense in which the form of positive judgment is untrue is that it is not fit to express truths about the unconditioned; its untruth is something we demonstrate in the logical progression itself; and so the logical progression consists in part in showing the error in thinking of the unconditioned in certain ways. Or so it seems.

The evidence is plainly in favor of taking it that the progression consists in part in showing that a given stage is untrue. And I agree with the modification view that an implication of the fact that a stage is untrue is that we cannot cognize the absolute in thoughts that have the form described in that stage. But that is not enough to justify the modification view: the modification view needs the progression to consist in part in showing that some stage is untrue by showing that we cannot use it to cognize the unconditioned. And this does not characterize what happens in the progression.

Consider, for instance, Hegel's actual argument for the transition from positive to negative judgments. The positive judgment is not true because "such an *immediate* singular is *not* universal; its predicate is of wider extension [*Umfang*], does not agree with it. The subject is a *being immediately for itself* [unmittelbar für sich seiendes] and therefore the opposite of that abstraction, the universality posited through mediation, which was supposed to be claimed of it" in the predicate (6.316/12.64). The negative judgment is the truth of the positive judgment because it expresses the claim that the singular is not universal, which Hegel understands as equivalent to the claim that the singular is particular (cf. 6.318/12.65). (It is odd to describe the negative judgment as having the form of a particular judgment: the singular is particular. I will not try to explore why Hegel makes this equation here – it is only important to note that he does.)

How does this transition work?

A positive judgment asserts a link between the subject and the predicate, and it is defined by the fact that the subject is singular and the predicate is universal. Further, to think the link between the subject and predicate requires thinking a link between two things such that one is also cognizant of their difference. One can think this difference through a judgment which specifies the predicate of the positive judgment. The capacity to form such a specified judgment is the capacity to be cognizant that the predicate in the positive judgment has a wider extension than the subject: the subject is not only alive, say, but it is an animal and so a specific way of being alive. Hence, the capacity to form the negative judgment, or a judgment which specifies the predicate of a positive judgment, is one which explains the capacity to form the positive judgment by making sense of how one can be cognizant of the difference in extension of the predicate in the positive judgment. This is a very abbreviated summary, and several questions

would need to be answered to fill out the account.⁴² But we can see just from this sketch that the transition from positive judgment to negative judgment does not involve considering the relation between the positive judgment and the unconditioned: it just involves thinking the positive judgment in itself.

Moreover, even if one disagrees with the particular account sketched here, at no point does Hegel say that what necessitates the progression beyond positive judgment arises from considering its relation to the unconditioned. We do not universalize (or make unconditioned) the form of the positive judgment and ask whether we can make sense of the world using just it alone; we do not reflect on our account of the positive judgment and see whether it itself has the form of a positive judgment; we do not note that it can only capture conditioned things because of the difference between the subject and the predicate and then advance because we are looking for something unconditioned; and we do not try out positive judgments of the unconditioned to see whether we wind up in contradictions. Rather, all we do is grasp the concept positive judgment, which involves grasping the link between the subject and the predicate and grasping their difference.

We can see further evidence for this interpretation of how the progression shows a stage to be “untrue” in Hegel’s discussion of symbolism (using something as a symbol for the unconditioned or, more generally, for a later stage). He notes that philosophy should reject symbolism even when the symbols are drawn not from the senses but “from spheres of its own

⁴² In particular, why does Hegel call the judgment which links a singular to a particular a *negative* judgment? And how exactly does the form of the negative judgment differ from the form of the positive judgment – what logical difference is made by the thought of the predicate as a particular? And is it right to talk (as I have) about the *capacity to form* positive and negative judgments, or should we instead focus just on making intelligible the link in the positive judgment itself?

soil [*eigentümlich Boden*]” (6.386/21.322).⁴³ One example Hegel uses is thinking symbolically of living beings as forces. He describes this kind of use of a stage as one in which “categories of the finite are applied to the infinite” and he describes the stages used symbolically in this way as “untrue determinations” for the higher stages (6.386/21.322). On the interpretation of “untrue” which supports the modification view, this passage must mean that in the progression of the *Logic* we examine whether the stage can in fact be used to cognize the unconditioned, or the relatively unconditioned (like life); noting that it cannot, we do not give up on the task of coming to cognize the unconditioned conceptually, reverting to mere symbolism, but rather progress to a more adequate conceptual determination of the unconditioned.

What Hegel actually says is that in philosophy we do not employ concepts like force symbolically but rather “reveal” “their philosophical meaning [*Bedeutung*], that is their conceptual determinacy. When this occurs, they [the concepts as used symbolically – ATW] themselves are superfluous designations; the conceptual determinacy designates its self, and its designation is alone the correct and fitting one” (5.386/21.322). The claim I want to focus on is that, when viewed philosophically, the conceptual determinacy designates itself. A symbol essentially designates something else: force can symbolically designate life, or spirit, or teleology, but it would be meaningless to say that it symbolically designates itself (the point of a symbol, as Hegel is using that term, is to appeal to something we do understand as a way of thinking about something we do not understand). To say that the determinacy designates itself is thus to say that we do not use it to grasp anything else: we grasp just it, or we comprehend just its meaning, and do not evaluate the meaning as an adequate or inadequate means for designating the unconditioned. But this rules out not only a symbolic use of the stage; it also rules out a use

⁴³ He seems to have in mind a Schellingian attempt to grasp the unconditioned as a potency; a discussion of the merits of this as a characterization of Schelling would take us too far afield.

of the stage to designate the unconditioned non-symbolically. The account of force, when properly understood, is one on which it designates itself; it does not designate, symbolically or otherwise, something else which it is unfit to designate. Consequently, the claim that force is untrue cannot mean that it is unfit to cognize the absolute.⁴⁴

I contend that we can only grasp the way in which a stage designates itself, the way in which it agrees with its subject matter (itself) through advancing to the next stage, the stage in which it has its truth. Considered in itself, it is untrue, in that we cannot grasp how it can be objectively valid or a form of being through it alone; rather, we have to advance beyond it to grasp how it can be objectively valid (true). The first stage is in agreement with its subject matter, but that agreement is secured by and grasped in the next stage (which fits naturally with my claim that the progress beyond a stage preserves it). Consequently, we cannot say that the first stage is false, or is not in agreement with its subject matter such that we need to revise it.

Finally, as one last piece of evidence in support of an anti-modification interpretation of what Hegel means by “untrue,” I want to consider Hegel’s claim that the *Logic* examines the truth of concepts and not of judgments (cf. §§24z2, 28A, 33A). This is a difficult claim to understand. I want first to provide an anti-modification interpretation of it, and then suggest that (even if one rejects that interpretation) the interpretation of “untrue” which supports the modification view cannot be made consistent with it.

Hegel claims that when we speak of a sentence (“Satz”) as untrue “the untruth depends on the contradiction which may be found between the subject of representation and the concept predicated of it [*dem von demselben zu prädizierenden Begriffe fände*]” (§33A). He notes that this means that we can ask after the truth of a concept, on an understanding of a concept as itself

⁴⁴ Theunissen (1980: 47-8) sees the passage about symbolism as support for the modification view, but he does not offer an interpretation of Hegel’s claim that the determinacy designates itself.

containing different determinations, such that “each determinacy in general is essentially in itself a unity of different determinations” (§33A). We can ask, of each concept or determinacy, whether it is true by asking whether the different determinations contained in it contradict one another.

To make sense of this, I suggest that we do not start at first with the idea of a concept containing a contradiction but rather with the Kantian notion of objective validity or real possibility: an ordinary, empirical concept (like sorcerer) might be formable, so non-contradictory, but untrue in the sense that it is not a way in which some object can be and so is not an objectively valid or really possible unity of the determinations contained in it. We would not say of such concepts that they have their truth in other concepts, however. To get that in the picture, we have to think of the unity of the different determinations contained in one concept as itself residing in another concept (an idea that would not make sense to Kant, and that I treat more extensively in chapter 6). And at this point we can no longer rest content with the concept as graspable or consistent, but not objectively valid – for that is a perfectly cogent scenario, not one that licenses us to advance to another concept, and so not one that licenses us to talk of one concept as the truth of another. Rather, we have to think of the tension as lying in our very grasp of the concept itself, as lying in its content (hence, I suggest, Hegel’s appeal to contradiction). So, for example, the tension between the means and the realized end lies in the concept of teleology, such that – staying just within that concept – we cannot make sense of how these two can go together in it. The next stage is the truth of the first one in that it makes sense of how the two determinations can go together as they do in teleology.

This interpretation of what Hegel means by a concept’s truth is incompatible with the modification view. So, presumably, defenders of the modification view have to find a different

way to understand what Hegel means. On an interpretation of “untrue” on which it supports the modification view, this is difficult. For on such a view, each stage consists partially in judging that we can cognize the unconditioned through this stage (e.g., the unconditioned is a quantity, or stands in causal relations, or can be cognized using positive judgments), and then we see that that judgment is false. That is, the modification view requires an essential separation between the concept we form of the stage, and that to which we apply that concept; but this separation seems to be part of what Hegel denies when he claims that we are investigating the truth of a concept and not a judgment, for we are investigating something that is itself a unity of different determinations; we are not investigating whether a concept can hold true of something else.⁴⁵

So, in summary, though Hegel notes that various stages in the *Logic* are untrue, that does not by itself entail the modification view. For he claims of these stages that they have their truth in another stage. And this at least opens up space for thinking that the untrue stages are in need of no modification, or are preserved as they are, such that making sense of them (grasping their truth or validity) is advancing to the next stage. Further, I acknowledged that the claim that a stage is untrue has as an implication that the form articulated in it is not the form of speculative cognition, so that we cannot use the form in it to grasp the unconditioned. But this does not entail the modification view, which requires that we progress beyond the stage by attempting to use it to cognize the absolute – a requirement which I dispute.

⁴⁵ A similar point holds for Hegel’s claim that “the logical determinations in general can be regarded as definitions of the absolute, as the *metaphysical definitions of God*” (EL §85; cp. §§87A, 112). Both Kreines (2004: 42-3) and Bowman (2013: 78) take this claim to be evidence for the modification view, because they regard the fact that we give further and further definitions as reason to think that there is something wrong with our non-final definitions (they need to be modified). But the procedure implied by Kreines’ and Bowman’s readings must be that of checking the definition against some conception of the absolute or God. And Hegel explicitly denies that this is the right way to regard these definitions, noting in fact that to call them definitions is misleading insofar as it suggests that we think of the definition as the predicate of a sentence with “God” or the “Absolute” as the subject (cf. §§85, 31A). Moreover, Hegel never says that the initial definitions are wrong or in error. We do not test or check the adequacy of the definition; the definitions are not false or erroneous. Progress is made simply through grasping the definition, each definition in turn yielding another definition, which enables us to grasp, and secures the truth of, the first definition.

Moreover, in examining an instance of Hegel's claim that a stage (positive judgment) is untrue, we found no evidence in favor of the modification view, and at least a sketch of a reading of the transition to the truth of that stage which is opposed to it. Finally, we saw that Hegel's claim that each stage designates its self and his claim that the *Logic* examines the truth not of judgments but of concepts both pose problems for the interpretation of "untrue" which supports the modification view, since both resist decomposing the progression into an account of some stage and an evaluation of its application to some subject matter (the unconditioned).

§8

At this point, I want to consider a non-textual objection that might be raised against my reading, and use responding to the objection as an occasion to consider where my defense of the transformative view and my rejection of the modification view leave us as readers of Hegel's *Logic*. The objection goes as follows: my reading might well accord with what Hegel says, but what I have said about it does not make it intelligible. On the harshest version of this criticism, what I have done is no more than paraphrase Hegel. Noting that other interpreters have fallen short of what Hegel himself says might be useful, but only if it points the way to a helpful account of what Hegel says, an account that amounts to an interpretation and not mere paraphrase. This is, after all, what all of the authors I have discussed in this chapter are trying to do – if I cannot claim to do something like this, then my criticisms will be the work of a dialectical police officer sentencing those who violate the law of Hegel's texts into the jail of "mere Verstand thinking".⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Many thanks to Wolfram Gobsch for pressing this objection to me; the result may not be satisfying to him, but thinking it through has resulted in much greater clarity in my own understanding of what I have accomplished.

It will help to bring out the force of the criticism if I note, at a very high level, a central and yet apparently mind-boggling claim that Hegel is committed to, and then show how the transformative view does not appear to make it less mind-boggling. The central claim can be put like this: a stage is supposed to be identical with the stage that comes before it, and it is supposed to be different from the stage that comes before it. Or, to put the point in the most abstruse way possible: there is an identity of identity and difference. This is surely a Hegelian commitment which any scholar would recognize. Nevertheless, no interpretive work worth anything can just state this claim, as though by itself it could be used to illuminate anything. Rather, an interpretation must explain what it means in such a fashion that it become less opaque. Has the transformative view done so?

The transformative view interprets this identity and difference by inserting the idea of a “way of being” into the formulation: a stage is a way of being the stage that comes before it, and is in that sense identical with it and in that sense different from it. Further, I have attempted to specify the idea of a “way of being” with the claim that a successor stage combines two concepts that cannot be combined (are in tension) within the prior stage. But I have explicitly disavowed attempting to give an account of the tension, what Hegel calls a contradiction, and this idea as it stands is no more or less intelligible than the idea of an identity of identity and difference. And so I have not really specified a sense of “way of being”; moreover, I have not really clarified how a stage can produce a way of being that stage just by itself, since that rests entirely on the emergence of the contradiction. Perhaps I have shown, against the modification view, that we cannot understand this using more familiar models drawn from theoretical cognition. But that is not yet to have offered an explanation of anything.

The first thing I want to do in response to this criticism is make two significance concessions to it. First, it is true that I have not attempted to give an interpretation of the tension. So far what I have said is that we cannot grasp how two component concepts internal to our understanding of a stage can fit together within that stage without advancing beyond it. By the end of the dissertation I hope to have established that it is a manifold that arises from an analysis of a concept, in which we cannot make sense of that concept as the unity of the manifold without further determining it. In describing the tension in this way, I have not explained it – but I hope I have put it into clearer contrast with a recognizably Kantian picture, and thereby at least pointed the way to an interpretation of it. This, anyway, is something I plan on taking up in future work. And the objection is certainly right that, on this score, my interpretation remains schematic and mere paraphrase without taking up that work.

The second concession I want to make is that the transformative view by itself is no more intelligible than Hegel's own account of the method. I do not think, that is, that one can simply cite the transformative view and hope just thereby to have made sense of anything Hegel has said. Any use of the transformative view can only come by nesting it in a more robust account, one which employs examples and arguments surrounding the view so as to make it clearer. In this respect, it is significantly different from the other models I consider in chapter 3, and even from (say) appeals to theoretical or pragmatic contradictions (appeals which can do interpretive work as models on their own, assuming they are right). The uses to which I want to put the transformative model all rely on embedding it in examples and arguments, and I want now to say something general about what light I claim to shed on the method of the *Logic* through arriving at and defending the transformative view.

First, the overall strategy of my dissertation is to clarify Hegel's descriptions of the method of the logic through contrasting his understanding of theoretical cognition and speculative cognition.⁴⁷ So, my hope is that by seeing the ways in which more typical models all rest on a theoretical view of speculative cognition, and by tracing out why that view cannot be made to do the philosophical work that Hegel needs speculative cognition to do, I have shed some light on Hegel's descriptions of the method. Further, I have tried to argue (in different ways in every chapter) that if we recognize the validity of theoretical cognition, then we must appeal to a form of cognition and I have tried to clarify the kind of philosophical task such a form of cognition must accomplish. The transformative view is just a formula for expressing a form of cognition that answers to this task.

For example, consider Hegel's claim that speculative cognition is not subject to the opposition of consciousness (cf. 5.57/21.45), or his claim that what we think about within the *Logic* is nothing other than our thought of it (cf. 5.43/21.33). I have tried to make sense of the opposition of consciousness as theoretical cognition, or cognition which is of what is there whatever we think of it. And I have tried to note that overcoming that requires eliminating the logical space for making errors about the subject matter of the *Logic*, which is a negative way of glossing the claim that our thought and what we think are identical. More positively, I have said that the *Logic* consists in a kind of thought in which simply grasping the thought is recognizing its validity (a gloss I will amplify further in the next two chapters in my discussion of Hegel's response to Kant). All of this may still seem mysterious, and so I have tried to show why we need these claims to make sense of the very possibility of theoretical cognition: that otherwise

⁴⁷ I do not think this strategy is original to me – I think it is in Hegel as well. But I do not think it has been sufficiently appreciated by other interpreters, and so might be of use in making sense of what Hegel means.

we cannot answer the argument that thought is parochial, or that otherwise we are trapped within an alienating account of our capacity to think.

One might object that I have not given any reason to accept the validity of theoretical cognition. That objection is well taken, and constitutes a limitation on my defense of Hegel in this dissertation: I do not explain why we should not give up on the very idea of theoretical cognition (though I do indicate why we might not have to).⁴⁸ Nevertheless, it was not apparent, at least to me prior to my work on the topic, either that or how theoretical cognition depended on another form of cognition; hopefully my work makes that more apparent to Hegel's readers than it has been. And I think failing to see Hegel's insistence on the radical differences between theoretical and speculative cognition has led many readers to make assumptions that make it impossible to understand Hegel's project (for instance, by making it impossible to understand how the method can be anything other than subjective).

Second, there is another way in which the transformative view can be helpful to readers of Hegel: it can serve as a kind of guide to reading Hegel's two *Logics*. I mean that it can serve as a kind of tip to the confused reader. Consider, for instance, being confronted by one of the numerous instances in which Hegel says both A and \neg A. There are lots of reactions a reader might have to this. Perhaps the most natural reaction will be to distinguish between senses, to find a sense in which A is true and a sense in which it is false. If my account has been convincing, then it would instead be helpful to look for a distinction between concepts that is

⁴⁸ Hegel, if I understand him, would attempt to justify the validity of theoretical cognition in two distinct ways: first, from within the *Phenomenology*, which is an attempt to perfect skepticism about our capacity to know the given world and thereby to reveal that its perfection leaves us with an understanding of the validity of our capacity to think; second, from within the *Logic*, by working out how the validity of theoretical cognition follows from the barest concept of what is. I have not attempted to go through either of these arguments, though my project has obvious implications for how to make sense of the second. Part of what motivates readers of the *Logic* to take the modification view is an understanding of how these two arguments go; what I have said against the modification view in this chapter will not touch that motivation. (The only thing that could touch it would be to offer a reading of the relevant arguments, and I am not able to do that in this dissertation.)

responsible for generating the tension (the commitment to both A and $\neg A$). So, when Hegel says that the realized end in teleology is the realization of teleology and that it does not even get as far as the realization of the means, it can be helpful to look for a conceptual distinction made within the stage that is responsible for this. In this case, the tension is the result of distinguishing between the means and realized end, a distinction which is responsible for our inability to grasp, from within teleology alone, how the realized end can genuinely be a realization of the subjective end. Further, the reaction to the tension should then be to identify the two concepts that are separated in the stage: as I have tried to show, Hegel thinks this is the way to overcome the tension in a stage, and thereby to grasp that stage. Moreover, it provides a reader with an initial understanding of the next stage. In the example, life is the identity of a realized end which just is the means for its realization, and nesting the realized end of teleology within our understanding of this later stage enables us to understand how it can be a way of realizing the end.

The transformative view is nothing like a blueprint; using it, one cannot safely navigate through all of the difficult passages of the *Logic*. And certainly one wants a great many more such tips, and perhaps even needs them to have a chance at understanding Hegel's books. But it has nevertheless been very helpful to me when trying to make sense of Hegel's sentences. And I recommend it to Hegel's reader in part for this reason.

Finally, I want to note that the criticism I have made of the modification view should not be taken to imply that the thinkers I have criticized are "mere Verstand thinkers." Every single one of them has passages in which they very insightfully articulate the nature of speculative cognition: for instance, Fulda's explicit claim that speculative cognition is not theoretical cognition because its objects are not pre-given (Fulda 1991: 21), Theunissen's claim that Hegel emphasizes the identity of critique and presentation (cf. Theunissen 1980: 84-90), Kreines' claim

that we can only understand speculative cognition by seeing it as a response to Kant's Antinomies (Kreines 2015: chs. 4 and 5), and McTaggart's explicit recognition that the method as Hegel understood it must not be subjective (McTaggart 1896: §§119-21). What I have tried to do in this chapter is highlight an aspect of their reading that, to my mind, hinders their ability to consistently follow through on this insight in their interpretations. In focusing on a "Verstand" aspect of their reading, I have perhaps presented my criticism as though it were not indebted to their insights and as though I mean to reject their readings wholesale or something like that. But I do not mean to do that; I only present my criticism in this fashion because I have found it helpful to isolate the aspect that I mean to object to, not because it is somehow the only or the most important aspect of their readings.

Chapter 5: Analysis, Synthesis, and the Transcendental Deduction

In this chapter and the next, I fill in a gap that has been present since my first articulation of the topic of the *Logic* in chapter 1: Hegel's response to Kant. This response is crucial, because at several points in my argument in chapters 1 and 2 it might have seemed like we could address the worry that thought is parochial without “going Hegelian” and embracing speculative cognition, by adopting Kant's account of the objective validity of thought. For the sake of getting Hegel's picture in view, I have so far deferred addressing this response. So, to finish making the case in favor of going Hegelian, I must explore why Kant's conception of thought cannot work.

Like Hegel, Kant, I argue, was attempting to address the worry that thought is parochial, and his way of addressing it influenced Hegel. However, Hegel faults Kant's solution for failing to achieve their shared goal of arriving at a conception of thought on which it is not parochial. To make the case for Hegel's claim requires, first, providing a plausible interpretation of Kant's Transcendental Deduction and, second, showing why it fails by Hegel's light.

In this chapter, my focus is primarily on providing an interpretation of the B Deduction. The key to the reading of the Deduction that I defend lies in my interpretation of the roles played by analytic unity and synthetic unity. Analytic unity is a one (a unity) that can be contained in many, while synthetic unity is a one that can contain many.¹ Or, equivalently, analytic unity is a mark, characteristic, or feature that can be *common* to many different representations, while synthetic unity is capacity to combine many different representations into one representation. An example of an analytic unity is the concept furniture in relation to different kinds (or species) of furniture: that is, the concept furniture is contained in and so common to the concepts chair, table, desk, etc. And an example of a synthetic unity is the concept chair in relation to the

¹ In this I follow Engstrom 2013.

concept furniture and (let's suppose) the concept for-sitting: the concept chair is the combination of those two concepts, it contains them.²

Analytic and synthetic unity are forms or ways of relating different representations. A representation considered by itself is neither an analytic nor a synthetic unity – it is an analytic unity in relation to those representations that it is common to, and a synthetic unity in relation to those representations that it contains. Within theoretical cognition, according to Kant, any analytic unity produced by the understanding presupposes an at least possible synthetic unity; or, as he also puts it, the analytic unity of apperception presupposes the synthetic unity of apperception. The first thesis that I defend in this chapter is that Kant sees that to employ these forms of the understanding in objectively valid determinations of objects that can be given to us, one must conceive of a kind of cognitive ability that has a unity that is essentially both analytic and synthetic with respect to the same manifold of representations: that is, it is common to a manifold of representations, it is the combination of that manifold, and it does the one in virtue of doing the other. This cognitive ability or way of representing a manifold cannot be a concept; rather, it must be a form of sensible intuition.

The second thesis that I defend in this chapter is that the analytic unity of the form of intuition has its ground in our forms of sensibility while the synthetic unity has its ground in the understanding. This thesis is my way of reconciling Kant's two-stem doctrine with his claim in the B-Deduction that the unity of the understanding is that “under which every intuition must

² As we go, we will encounter other examples of analytic and synthetic unity. In particular, one synthetic unity we will encounter is that present in the act of representing the connection between two concepts in a synthetic judgment (e.g., the cat is on the mat). This is a synthetic unity because it combines two concepts into one unity. But the most important example will be the way in which a form of intuition is a synthetic unity and an analytic unity: so, on the account I present, space (as a form of intuition) is a representation of a unity that is common to the manifold of spaces contained within it and is the combination of that manifold into one space. I introduce this idea here only to flag that it is where we are going, the reason for which I invoke the ideas of analytic and synthetic unity in this chapter, and not because we are yet in a position to understand why this is a good description of the form of intuition.

stand **in order to become an object for me**” (B138). On the reading I advance the forms of intuition depend on an original act of the understanding in which it provides those forms with the synthetic unity that explains how space and time can be given as one.³ On the other hand, this original act is itself enabled by the analytic unity provided by our forms of sensibility, a unity that cannot be grasped from the understanding alone. Moreover, I argue that we cannot grasp either the analytic or the synthetic unity of the forms of intuition in isolation from one another: to understand either requires at least implicitly grasping its relation to the other.⁴

To make these points, however, I first articulate the nature of discursive cognition, as this is conceived by both Kant and (following him) Hegel (§1), which sets the stage (once more) for the worry about parochialism that both of them faced. Then I show that the B-Deduction is Kant’s response to the worry about parochialism (§2) before turning to give an account of the opening of the B-Deduction (§3) and an account of how the forms of intuition figure in it (§4). Finally (§5), I explain Kant’s argument that the forms of intuition restrict the valid use of the categories, to help set up Hegel’s criticism of Kant in the following chapter.

³ My claim that the forms of intuition themselves depend on a nonconceptual act of the understanding is not new: one finds similar claims in Waxman 1991, Longuenesse 1998, Friedman 2000: 197-9 and Friedman 2012: note 33. What is new with my account is, first, my description of the logical structure of this act as an analytic and synthetic unity of the same manifold and, second, my attempt to specify more precisely what aspect of the forms of intuition is due to sensibility and what is due to the understanding. (I say more about how these aspects of my reading relate to the readings put forward by Waxman and Longuenesse in §4 below.) Of the three, Friedman gives the most thorough account of the form of our pure intuitions (especially for space) as constituted by the understanding: on his account, the aspect due to the understanding is the capacity to access any point of space from any other point of space *via* a continuous motion of one subject (through a series of point-of-view rotations and translations). The unity of the subject stems from the understanding, but the relation between the spaces such that that subject can move through them is due to sensibility (cf. Friedman 2000: 198). Friedman’s account is fascinating, and I have learned much from it. My difference from his is, I believe, primarily one of focus: his focus is on pure space as explaining the possibility of geometry in Kant’s works (cf., for instance, Friedman 2000: 191-3) whereas mine is on explaining the validity of the synthetic unity of apperception. My focus is thus more abstract (about the role any form of intuition must play in an account of that validity), and so I employ the more discursive (as in, from the understanding) concepts of analytic and synthetic unities over the more geometrical concepts of translation and rotation.

⁴ Throughout, my focus will be on the synthetic unity of apperception itself, and not on the categories. (Kant notes that the former is the form common to all of the categories at B 131.) Further, I will speak about the objective validity of the synthetic unity of apperception – this is just a generic way of speaking about the objective validity of the categories.

§1

In this section, I argue that Kant and Hegel agree on the nature of discursive cognition. In the way that I will use the term, the discursivity of discursive cognition consists in three features. First, the intellect engages in a certain kind of activity: an activity of self-determination. Second, for discursive cognition this activity is, in its most fundamental guise, a form of expansion: discursive cognition expands from being ignorant of something to having knowledge of it. On the basis of these two features, a third feature arises: discursive cognition is cognition from general representations (concepts). Moreover, because discursive cognition is cognition from concepts, it expands through specification of those concepts, and the form of this expansion consists in a genus/species (or porphyrean) tree.⁵

Before proceeding, it is important to acknowledge that Hegel's account of the relationship between discursive cognition and the intellect is different from Kant's. For Kant, the unity of our intellect is discursive. But Hegel does not accept this, as I will show in chapter 6. While Hegel does think that we possess the capacity for discursive cognition (as I will show in this chapter), he does not think that that activity characterizes the very unity of the intellect.⁶ I

⁵ My account of discursivity is quite close to that of Stephen Engstrom's: cf. Engstrom 2006 and Engstrom 2009: 97-118.

⁶ Some Hegel scholars may deny that he thinks that our intellects are in any way discursive. The evidence that I provide in this section is meant to show that he in fact does think we can engage in discursive cognition. That evidence is gathered almost exclusively from two places: Hegel's initial introduction of the concept in the first chapter of the third book of the *Logic*, and Hegel's discussion of theoretical cognition as the first shape of "The Idea of Cognition" near the end of the *Logic*. The primary difference between these two places is that in the latter, Hegel introduces the claim that discursive cognition is of what can be given, where that means that the object being cognized is existentially independent of the cognition of it.

Those who think that Hegel denies that we engage in discursive cognition might argue that my evidence is inconclusive, because it comes from non-final stages of the dialectic and so will end up being modified. I have argued against modification views in the previous chapter. My claim in this section that Hegel accepts the analytic/synthetic distinction is dependent upon that rejection being persuasive.

will clarify what kind of activity is characteristic of the unity of our intellects for Hegel in chapter 6.

But now to give an account of discursivity. The first feature of discursive cognition is that it consists in a certain kind of activity: the activity of self-determination. An activity is self-determining if, in it, what is active maintains itself. For instance, a plant grows by taking in sunlight and absorbing water. Growth is an activity in which the plant maintains itself – in growing, the plant does not cease to be, but rather preserves itself. The object of the activity – what is acted upon – is (non-accidentally) the very thing which is acting: the plant acts on itself in growing, in that the activity of growth is one in which the plant maintains itself.

Self-determining activities can be contrasted with changes, which involve something's ceasing to be: for instance, when something changes its color, it ceases to be the old color. In such cases of change, there is an activity: something produces the new color. But the activity does not maintain itself, just as it does not maintain what it acts upon: by the time the change is finished, and the thing is a new color, both the activity and the original color have ceased to be. In organic growth, change also occurs: the plant acts on both the light it takes in and the water it absorbs. But those acts only count as growth (as opposed to, say, experimenting with photosynthesis in a laboratory) because they are ways of maintaining the plant. Hence, these activities merit the title self-determining: they are activities of something (the plant) which in some way determine (growth) the very thing that is active.⁷ But what would it mean for discursive cognition to be an activity of self-determination? How is discursive cognition like organic growth?

⁷ The contrast between activities which maintain themselves and activities which don't corresponds to Aristotle's distinction between *energeia* and *kinesis* in Metaphysics Θ6: cf. Aristotle 2006: 1048b18-34. My account of the contrast follows Hegel's interpretation of Aristotle on this point: cf. Hegel 2006: 234-6 (68-70).

An example might help. Consider the concept cat. We can employ this concept in judgments: for instance, this cat is black. By making use of this concept in a judgment, we move from the mere possession of the concept cat to knowing of this cat that it is a black one. This movement can be seen as a kind of “growth,” in that we bring the concept cat to bear on a new object, or in a new situation, and come to know that it applies there. Moreover, the activity of learning that this describes is one which is accomplished through employing the very concept that “grows,” or that applies to a new object. Hence, it is the very concept cat that is active in the activity of learning. Finally, applying the concept cat to a new object in the judgment maintains the original concept: we have not abandoned or modified the original concept, but rather brought it to bear under new conditions. Since that very concept is active (employed) in these new conditions, and since this activity consists in maintaining the concept in these conditions, this is an activity of self-determination.

Both Kant and Hegel think that discursive cognition is a self-determining activity. The thought is implicit in Kant’s claim that the systematic unity proper to an intellect is one which “can, to be sure, grow internally... but not externally..., like an animal body, whose growth does not add a limb but rather makes each limb stronger and fitter for its end without any alteration of proportion” (A833/B861). The growth proper to a body of knowledge, Kant claims, is one which maintains (indeed, it strengthens) that very body of knowledge. Moreover, the thought is explicit in Kant’s claim at the beginning of the B-Deduction that the understanding’s activity of combining representations is “an act of its self-activity” (B130). The understanding maintains its unity in its different judgments: all of my acts of judgment are acts of the same understanding. In combining a manifold of representations in a judgment, the understanding makes its unity present in that manifold – in a way analogous to the activity of a plant on sunlight and water.

Hence, according to Kant, acts of combination are acts of the understanding's self-activity, or self-determination.

Hegel also claims that discursive cognition is an activity of self-determination.⁸ In his discussion of theoretical cognition, he claims that it is “the drive” “to make its at first abstract reality concrete and to fill its reality with the *content* of... the presupposed world” (*WdL* 12.200). That is, theoretical cognition is an activity which maintains itself through making itself concrete, by taking in content from the world, or bringing its activity to bear on the world. Its initial “abstract” reality, prior to coming to know the world, is a drive to know that world, a drive which maintains itself in expanding its knowledge of the world. Or, as he puts it earlier, the concept is such that determinations of it are “no limit [*keine Schranke*] for the universal, but rather it *maintains itself in the determination*” (*WdL* 12.33-4; cf. also *EL* §163A and *PhG* ¶22). To put this point in Kant's language: it is the same unity of the understanding that is present in all of the diverse acts of judgment.⁹

The second feature of discursivity is closely linked to the first, and already implicit in much of the evidence provided above: that the activity of discursive cognition is most fundamentally one of cognitive expansion, or learning. That is, as Engstrom puts it, “it is built into the very form of such cognition... that the subject passes from ignorance to knowledge.”¹⁰

⁸ We already saw a version of this claim in chapter 1, in the discussion of *EL* §20.

⁹ It is somewhat common to associate Hegel with conceptual holism (cf., for instance, Brandom 2002 and Sedgwick 2012). Often, holism is taken to involve the position that the content of an empirical concept, the meaning of the term we use to express it, is determined by the web of inferential connections in which it stands, such that that content alters whenever some new inferential connection is drawn (so that even applying the concept cat to a heretofore unseen cat involves some slight alteration of its content). There is no good evidence for attributing this view to Hegel and (I am trying to show) plenty of evidence to avoid attributing it to him. From a Kantian and a Hegelian perspective, this form of holism would undermine the generality of concepts, and would in that way undermine the centrality of the unity of the thinker to thought. (Of course, some inferential connections *do* determine the content of our concepts; an account of which do and which do not should make reference to the systematic form of theoretical cognition, which for both Kant and Hegel consists in a genus/species tree: cf. Anderson 2015 and my “Hegel on Kant's Distinction between Analytic and Synthetic Judgments.”)

¹⁰ Engstrom 2006: 12.

As Hegel put the point, theoretical cognition is initially “abstract” and must fill itself with the content of the world to become concrete (cf. also *WdL* 12.35-6). And, as Kant puts it in the B-Deduction, “through the I,” that is, through the understanding alone, “as a simple representation, nothing manifold is given” (B135).¹¹ Indeed, the very example of plant growth already involves this kind of expansion: the sapling becomes a tree, just as ignorance becomes knowledge, in that both activities involve taking in (in perhaps quite different ways) something not already contained in the initial determination of that which grows.¹²

Given that the two features of discursivity are so closely linked to one another, one might wonder whether they can (or why they should) be distinguished. That they can be distinguished, however, is important to Kant: he maintains that one can think of a kind of intellect which is self-determining and which does *not* pass from ignorance to knowledge, but even in its initial determination already knows all that it can know: the intuitive intellect. For an understanding “through whose self-consciousness the manifold of intuition would at the same time be given,” the synthetic unity of apperception would not be valid, though that intellect would still consist in an activity of self-determination (B138). I will postpone discussing Hegel’s position on the possibility or actuality of an intellect whose activity does not consist in learning until chapter 6. Following Kant, however, we will distinguish the first two features of discursive cognition.

From these two features a third feature follows: discursive cognition is cognition from concepts. Discursive cognition maintains itself in its activity, and that activity consists in making its unity present to a diversity. Hence, the unity must be such that it can be present in that diversity, and so the unity must be general: it must be a conceptual unity. The unity must be

¹¹ For a helpful explanation of this point in Kant, cf. Newton 2012: 465.

¹² This sentence raises the important question about how thought is able to make its unity present in a manifold that is not already contained in that unity. Kant argues that it does so through a generic act of the understanding on our receptive capacity of sensibility. I offer an interpretation of this in §4

present in any act for that act to count as an act of discursive cognition. Thus, any act in which the intellect expands or learns has to be one which contains general concepts.¹³

Kant puts this point in a more familiar fashion by dividing representations into two kinds, singular (intuitions) and general (concepts). He notes that the human understanding (being discursive) does not intuit, and (if the previous account of discursivity is on the mark) that means that the manifold which the human understanding cognizes is not already contained in that understanding (cf. B92-3). It follows that the human understanding must order the manifold of representations that it finds or comes upon in such a fashion that they all bear the same unity. Hence, the human understanding must employ concepts.

Hegel makes the same point in his account of theoretical cognition when he describes the activity of thinking as one in which “the form of externality is sublated,” such that thought arrives at “a unity of what is originally separated” (*WdL* 12.200; cf. also *EL* §226). That is, the activity lies in bringing unity to a manifold. As it is the same unity which is found throughout the manifold, Hegel argues that this cognition employs general or universal representations (cf. *WdL* 12.203; cf. also *EL* §227).

The general representations maintain themselves by expanding into a manifold of acts of cognition. Cognitive expansion makes the unity of the intellect present in a determination in which it was not previously present. The example used above was of the concept cat, which gets further determined in the judgment that this cat is black. This example suggests a general pattern in which a concept is brought to a further determination through being linked to another

¹³ It would not be right to say that every act of the intellect must contain general concepts, because the appeal to concepts is grounded on the character of discursive cognition as expanding. That leaves it open that there might be an act of discursive cognition which contains the unity of the intellect in a different fashion. Such an act would then not itself be further determined in learning. Rather, such an act might be what enables the intellect to take in further manifolds of representations. This is what Kant has in mind when he talks about the presence of the “unity of consciousness” in the singular representations of space and time, topics I will treat in §4 (B136-7).

representation. This synthesis is an activity of the understanding through which it learns, and so it is a synthesis which must itself be general: in the example, black cat is itself a general concept. Hence, it too can be further specified. Thus emerges a conceptual hierarchy of genera and species.

This general pattern is present in Kant's account, when he describes a concept as a "mediate representation" which relates to an object through being connected to another representation of that object (A69/B94; cf. A319-20/B376-7). Or, as Kant also puts it, to cognize an object through a concept is to determine it, and so a concept must be related to "some representation of a still undetermined object" (A69/B94). The synthesis of these representations is a specification of the original concept, which in its turn can be further specified without end.¹⁴

The general pattern is also present in Hegel's account. The general concepts that cognition uses to determine an object can only refer to it, Hegel says, in a "mediated" way, and so "must go over into *division*," which is Hegel's term for the genus/species hierarchy (*WdL* 12.214; cf. also 12.38). Hegel's use of the terms "mediation" and "immediate" is importantly different from Kant's in various ways, but here he is making the same point as Kant: to cognize an object (through general determinations) requires specifying those general determinations by relating them to other concepts. Or, as Hegel puts it: "The universal must *particularize* [*besondern*] itself" (*WdL* 12.214; cf. also 12.35-6).¹⁵

One additional feature is fundamental to a genus/species tree: the different species of a genus must exclude one another, such that (put in terms of objects) no individual can fall under both species or (put in terms of concepts) no concept can be a subspecies of both. The exclusion rule also emerges from the fact that discursive cognition employs concepts. To proceed from one

¹⁴ Cf. Kant's claim that there can be no *infirma species* at *Jäsche Logic* §11 (9:97).

¹⁵ Hegel does not explicitly claim that there is no lowest species, but he is clear that species are themselves general: cf. *WdL* 12.38-40.

concept to a specification of it is implicitly to contrast this specification with other ways of specifying the same concept.¹⁶

With these features, we have the porphyrean tree, typically taken to be the traditional theory of the form of science. So, scientific concepts (on this view) are organized into genera, species, subspecies, etc. A species is a concept the content of which consists in a specific differentia (or in specific differentiae) and a genus; the content of its (sub)species consist in it and their specific differentiae.¹⁷ The ‘middle species’ are thus also genera with respect to the lower species: the determination of a concept as a genus or as a species is relative to the other concepts in relation to which one is considering it (cf. Kant, *Jäsche Logic*, §9 (9:96); Hegel, *WdL* 12.217). This matches the way in which analytic and synthetic unity are relative designations, and indeed a genus is an analytic unity of its species and a synthetic unity of its genus and the differentia(e) contained in it.

¹⁶ There are two importantly different forms of exclusion: two species can be either contraries or contradictories. Contradictory exclusion is “dichotomous,” or a division of a genus into two species (since contradiction admits of no “in between”), whereas contrary exclusion can be polytonomous and divide a genus into more than two species. My account is neutral on this question.

There seems to be some unclarity in Kant about whether division should be into contradictories: he says, on the one hand, that “the members of the division must be separated from one another through *contradictory* opposition, not through mere contrariety (*Widerspiel*)” (JL, §111 note (9:147)); but, on the other hand, he also says that division can be either dichotomous or polytonomous and that the former “requires only the *principle of contradiction*,” while the latter “involves *cognition of the object*” (and so “cannot be taught in logic”) (JL §113, note 2 (9:147)).

Unsurprisingly, given the unclarity, there has been debate about whether Kant thought division should be into contradictories or into contraries. de Jong and Proops think that division properly speaking is into contradictories: cf. de Jong 1995: 624; Proops 2005: 599. Anderson, on the other hand, argues that division can be into contraries: cf. Anderson 2005: 29; and, for Anderson’s response to Proops, Anderson 2015: 60-1.

Hegel, like Kant, claims that division is into species which exclude one another: species must “stand over against” one another (*WdL* 12.38). He further claims that division for empirical cognition is polytonomous, while logical division (in Hegel’s sense of logical) is dichotomous: cf. *WdL* 12.38-9 and 12.218. Something like this may be Kant’s point, though his understanding of logic is different from Hegel’s.

¹⁷ de Jong argues that commitment to the porphyrean tree brings with it commitment to a highest genus: de Jong 1995: 625. He notes that Kant accepts that a porphyrean tree has a highest genus (cf. *Jäsche Logic*, §11 (9:97)). Hegel, however, rejects the claim that the genus/species tree has a highest genus: cf. *WdL* 12.217. This difference is quite significant, and a complete discussion of it would have to take into account Kant’s discussion of the porphyrean tree in the Transcendental Dialectic, his account of matter in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, and Hegel’s responses to both of these endeavors. Unfortunately, these issues are too complicated to try to address here. For the purposes of my argument, commitment to the porphyrean tree does not require commitment to a highest genus.

The account of the genus/species tree should not be taken as an account of only scientific cognition – on the view I have argued for, it is characteristic of everyday cognition as well.

Consider, for instance, seeing a new tree whose bark is peeling off. One might at first think that this is a kind of tree that one has seen before with a strange sort of disease - a new species (to you, at least) of tree-disease. You might later try to learn what kind of tree-disease it is – you are now trying to place the disease more precisely in your understanding of tree-diseases. Or perhaps you see a great many such trees and begin to wonder whether it is a diseased tree or a previously unmet kind of healthy tree. It may not be that important to you to try to place the new tree-disease-or-tree exactly, but from the start you are trying to place this newly encountered object into your previous understanding of the world through situating it as a species of some genus.

Or suppose I am reading a book and encounter a puzzling sentence about “the subject.” What sense of subject is it talking about – thinker, subject matter, or sentence-place? It is probably not a completely new use of the term, or the author would have signaled that more clearly. Perhaps it is some hybrid concept, which takes characteristics from the sense of “subject” as one who thinks and the sense of “subject” as the subject place of a sentence. I might reject such a hybrid concept as confused. Or I might accept it and add a new species to my use of the term “subject” – a species which I then carefully set off from the other uses of the term, so as to prevent myself from growing puzzled again. Here the genus is uses-of-the-term “subject.” I have a rough idea of what qualifies as a new use of the term that forms the basis upon which I speciate uses of it, and an author might (intentionally or not) challenge my speciation.

These examples illustrate that the genus/species tree is not meant to be a rarefied idea that applies only to natural sciences, if it applies anywhere at all. Rather, the genus/species tree is, for Kant and Hegel, one of the fundamental forms of discursive cognition, present throughout our

everyday acts of cognizing. It is for this reason that it develops from a reflection just on the nature of discursive cognition. We will return to the structure of the tree in §4 below and in chapter 6. I describe it now as a way of filling out the character of discursive cognition that flows from the three features of self-determination, cognitive expansion, and that it is cognition through concepts.

§2

In chapter 1, I offered an interpretation of §§19-25 of the *Encyclopedia Logic* according to which the form of thought contained in the *Logic* is conceived in response to the worry that thought of the everyday variety is parochial. That worry is generated by the recognition that the form of our sensible representations, in which we are given objects, is different from the form of our thoughts. Since everyday thoughts purport to be true of their objects, and since the form of thought is due not to the nature of the object as given to us but rather to the nature of the thinker, it becomes unclear how thought can be true (or false) of its objects. Thought, it seems, must rather be parochial, or only reveal how things seem to be to a thinking being.¹⁸

The same worry can be expressed about the conception of theoretical cognition articulated in §1. On that conception, the form of thought contributes to the form of theoretical cognition. As both Kant and Hegel note, for me to take up a representation into thought, that representation must be combinable with my other representations. And the form of that combination comes from thought, not from sensibility. So, when we think that an apple is round,

¹⁸ As I noted in chapter 1, the worry that thought is parochial might sound quite close to the Cartesian worry about the possibility of knowledge (on which we can have thoughts about objects, but not knowledge), but it is important to recognize that they have different conclusions and that different worries motivate them. In what follows, I bring out the difference in another way, by emphasizing the connection between the worry that thought is parochial and the Humean worry about cognitive chaos, on which one cannot make sense even of thoughts of objects, whether true or false.

the form of combining these two concepts is supplied by our form of thought, and not by the apple as it is given to us. And when we think of something as a tree, the form of combination in that concept (perhaps through the category of substance) is also supplied by our form of thought, in an active determination of what is given to us in sensibility. How, then, can we avoid the conclusion that thought is parochial?

I have already argued that Hegel was aware of this worry. Now I want to show that Kant is too. Indeed, Kant thinks of the Transcendental Deduction as responding to this worry, by legitimating our use of the categories or forms of combination as they apply to objects that are given to us in sensibility.¹⁹

We can see Kant responding to the worry in the prefatory materials to the Deduction, common to both the A and B edition. There he notes that the Deduction is to show how “**subjective conditions of thinking** should have objective validity, i.e. yield conditions of the possibility of all cognition of objects” (A89-90/B122). That is, we have a form of cognition, in sensibility, about which it is not obvious that it adheres to the conditions on the possibility of thinking. And so we have to show that in fact objects as they are given to us are conditioned by the subjective forms of thinking, thereby revealing those forms to be objective and not merely parochial.

The possibility of parochialism as he considers it is that objects as they are given to us, or as they appear to us, are so constituted that we cannot think about them, for the laws that govern our capacity to think are (on this possibility) not laws that determine what it is for an object to

¹⁹ As Stephen Engstrom puts it, that “the origin of the categories lies in the understanding” raises a doubt about our “right to apply the categories – indeed, to apply them a priori – in synthetic judgments to objects that are external to the understanding in the sense that they are not simply consequences of the understanding’s activity, but are given to the understanding only to the extent that they affect the mind” (Engstrom 1994: 376). Robert Pippin also helpfully brings out the importance of the worry that thought is parochial or a merely subjective imposition on appearances for Kant’s Deduction: cf. 1989a: 27ff.; 2005b: 232-3; so too does McDowell: cf. 2009a: 73.

appear. Consequently, were we to combine representations in thought according to the rule of cause and effect, we could not understand this combination as resulting in cognition of what appears (cf. A90-91/B122-3). For (in the to-be-ruled-out possibility) we could not understand how the unity supplied by thought applied to objects as they appear to us. This would not mean that we could form the thought, but know it to be false – for what is the thought supposed to be false of? We cannot so much as make sense of how the thought is about the appearances. For the synthetic unity of thought is present in the determination of what it is about, and it is that unity which does not characterize objects as they appear.²⁰

My reading of this passage, centered as it is on the worry that thought might be parochial, can be usefully compared to and contrasted with the reading of this passage offered by Henry Allison. Allison usefully describes the worrying possibility that our forms of thought do not have objective validity as “specter.” He notes that the specter in question is not the Cartesian one on which we have thoughts about objects (appearances), but we cannot know these thoughts to be true. Rather, he argues, the specter is a Humean one of “cognitive chaos” in which “nothing would be recognizable” resulting from a “lack of cognitive fit” between sensibility and the understanding.²¹ These points, at least on a natural reading of them, harmonize well with my interpretation.

²⁰ The passage from §13 of the Deduction is the subject of a debate in the literature, because in it Kant appears to assert in his own voice that, were objects given to us in intuition that could not be related to functions of the understanding, intuition would still be able to present us with those objects. This leads many (e.g. Tolley 2013, Allais 2015) to conclude that the forms of intuition themselves cannot depend on the understanding. Here I follow other interpreters who argue that a reading of the passage that situates it in its place before the Deduction reveals that Kant is in fact merely stating how things seem to be, when we are thinking of the conditions of the understanding as merely subjective (cf., e.g., Ginsborg 2007)

²¹ Allison 2015: 8-9; cf. also 2004: 159-63.

Allison goes on to say that the task of the Deduction is to show that this specter is not really possible, but that the Deduction must leave the specter open as a logical possibility. He writes,

[T]he (logical) possibility of such a scenario is a direct consequence of the radical separateness of the cognitive faculties, which underlies the entire problematic of the Deduction. ... [W]e must regard the Transcendental Deduction as an attempt to demonstrate the necessary applicability of the categories to appearances *in spite of the radical separateness of the sensible and the intellectual conditions of cognition.*²²

As his emphases make plain, the logical possibility of the envisioned scenario is important to his overall reading of Kant, in particular to his interpretation of the relation between sensibility and the understanding. So, to show that the specter is not even logically possible would involve, for him, taking back in some way the central Kantian doctrine of the distinction between those two capacities.

I will argue in what follows that Allison's second claim, that the specter is a logical possibility or a coherent thought, is wrong, and indeed that it is incompatible with a proper understanding of his claim that the specter is one of cognitive chaos. It is easy to see that the thought cannot be coherent (although it will take some time to show that Kant could not have thought it coherent). For the thought is of a form of sensibility which, by our stipulation, is not thinkable. But we cannot think what is unintelligible, not even to dismiss it as really impossible but logically possible. There is a logical contradiction involved in the thought of an unthinkable form of intuition, and a form of intuition in which we cannot apperceive its manifolds is one that we cannot think (by the argument of §16 of the B-Deduction).

I will develop this argument in relation to a reading of §16 of the B-Deduction in §4. To conclude this section I want to note another place in which Kant makes it plain that the B-

²² Allison 2015: 191.

Deduction is intended to show that thought is not parochial: §27 of the Deduction. There he wants to rule out other possible strategies for attempting to respond to the worry. Specifically, he is concerned to rule out arguments that first accept that we think as we do because of how we are constituted and not because that is how objects are, and then claim (for whatever reason) that that is nevertheless in fact how things are. Against this possibility, he notes that the conclusion it could establish would be at most “that I am so constituted that I cannot think of this representation otherwise than as so connected; which is precisely what the skeptic wishes most, for then all of our insight through the supposed objective validity of our judgments is nothing but sheer illusion” (B168).²³ That is, the supposed validity of the synthetic unity of apperception would lie in the fact that we cannot help but think like this, because that is how we are constituted, and this renders thought parochial. Thomas Land offers a helpful formulation when he notes that, on the envisioned alternative deduction, our explanation of why we think as we do appeals not to its objectivity, or its validly characterizing the way objects are, but rather to “a psychological disposition to think this way. But that is just to say that we would think in this way whether or not it agreed with the way nature is.”²⁴ Consequently, we cannot grasp our way of thinking as valid – that is, we cannot make sense of the fact that we think as we do because we take our thoughts to be true. So, in our explanation of our thinking, we are forced to conclude that we think as we do because of something about us, whatever is the case with the objects.²⁵ At this point, it is not helpful to add, for whatever reason, that the objects are as we take them to be.

²³ Kant makes the same point in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, in an oft-discussed reply to a criticism by Schultz: cf. 4:474-6, esp. 476. Cf. Allison 2015: 309, 314-5, 430-2 for a helpful discussion of the details of Schultz’s argument, of Kant’s reply, and of the connection to §27.

²⁴ Land 2015: 36.

²⁵ This is true regardless of whether we can form the concept of another way of thinking. Suppose, that is, that we can form no concept of any other way of thinking. The result will be that we are unable to grasp how thought as such can do anything more than reveal how it seems to be to the thinker. That is, we will no longer be able to grasp how thought in any form can be objectively valid. Compare my response to Hösle and Wandschneider in chapter 2; cf. also Bristow 2007: 39 for a particularly clear formulation of this point.

Indeed, that fact is simply irrelevant, because it does not contribute to the explanation for why we think as we do. And so we are left with a conception of thought as parochial, revealing merely how it seems to ones like us and leaving open whether that is how it is in fact. Consequently, we are unable to grasp how we can arrive at the truth in thought, which we take nonetheless to be the constitutive aim of thought, and so we are unable to make sense of thought. It is this possibility that Kant describes as “what the skeptic wishes most,” meaning it is this possibility that we rule out (as unintelligible, on my interpretation) when we secure our right to apply the categories to appearances.

The worry that thought is parochial, then, is not unique to Hegel. Indeed, Hegel seems to have been influenced by Kant in focusing on it. At least, he understood that Kant’s deduction was intended to respond to the worry, and praises the original synthetic unity of apperception for being a genuinely speculative response to it. Thus he notes that, since the synthetic unity of apperception constitutes the objectivity of one’s representations, when “thought appropriates [*aneignet... sich*] a given subject matter, it suffers thereby a change and is made from something sensible into something thought” (6.262/12.23-4). But the Deduction shows that this change is that by which the subject matter first becomes what it is “in its *truth*” and that through concepts one grasps how this subject matter is “*in and for itself*” (6.262-3/12.24). As the reference to suffering a change makes plain, he understands Kant’s deduction to be a response to the worry that, in effecting such a change, one makes thought parochial, and he praises it for this attempt (though he does not think it succeeds, as we will see).

§3

In this section, I develop further Kant's conception of discursivity as it is articulated at the outset of the B-Deduction, to prepare the way for my discussion of the relationship between the understanding and our forms of intuition in the next section. Specifically, I argue that, as Kant understands it, our ability to form any determinate thoughts about the world rests on our prior capacity to form a generic representation of the world as a unified whole. In the next section I show that the fact that the understanding has a prior representation of the whole entails that it is responsible for the synthetic aspect of the unity of our forms of intuition, and that this is what Kant is arguing for in §§15-7 of the B-Deduction.

Before turning to the beginning of the B-Deduction, I want to situate my reading in relation to Hegel's reading of it. The most important point of the B-Deduction for Hegel is the synthetic unity of the understanding, which on his reading is introduced as the ground not only of the understanding but also of intuition. So he says already in *Faith and Knowledge* that “[o]ne and the same synthetic unity... is the principle of the intuiting [*Anschauens*] and of the understanding” (2.305/4.327). That is, on his reading, the forms of intuition themselves depend on the synthetic unity of the understanding.

In what follows, I develop an interpretation of the B-Deduction that is aimed at securing this insight while explaining how it is consistent with Kant's two-stem doctrine, according to which the understanding alone cannot fully explain the forms of our intuition.²⁶ Moreover, I do so using concepts that will be useful in understanding Hegel's alternative to Kant's Deduction and that Hegel himself uses when articulating his alternative (specifically, analytic and synthetic unity). So, the particulars of my reading are guided by my understanding of Hegel's own

²⁶ Hegel also recognizes the importance of Kant's two-stem doctrine (cf. EL §43), though he thinks it is responsible for the failure of Kant's idealism (as we will see in the next chapter).

position. I should note they are not, however grounded in any more detailed fashion in Hegel's own reading of the Deduction: that is, he does not use the notions of synthetic and analytic unity in his reading of the Deduction as I do in mine. (Though I see nothing in what he says that is at odds with my reading either.)

It is, further, worth noting that the claim Hegel finds most fundamental to the B-Deduction is at odds with a recent strand in the literature which has sought to make the B-Deduction consistent with Kant's two-stem doctrine by weakening the desired result of the Deduction: according to these interpreters, the Deduction argues that something more derivative than our forms of intuition themselves are dependent on the understanding. For instance, Henry Allison (in Allison 2004 and 2015) has argued that the only our representation of the forms of intuition (not those forms themselves) is dependent on the understanding, which is thereby a condition on intuitions being of objects.²⁷ And Lucy Allais (in Allais 2015) has argued that the Deduction aims to show only that the categories, or *a priori* concepts of the understanding, are necessary for any empirical thought, or thought of an object given to us in intuition; on her view, the understanding is not necessary for either the forms of intuition themselves or for intuitions to present us with objects, but just for us to think about those objects that intuition presents us with.

In order not to beg any questions against these opposing readings, I will start with the version that assigns the weakest conclusion to the Deduction. Allais' reading makes the aim of

²⁷ For my purposes, it is important to distinguish between Allison's reading of the relationship between intuition and the understanding and the in many respects similar readings put forth in Haag 2007 and Grüne 2011. All three agree that (according to Kant) for something to be an object for me, or (equivalently) for me to have a conscious representation of an object, the understanding must play a role in my representation of that object. And all three agree that there is some mental item that is not, as such, determined by the understanding. But Haag and Grüne both describe this mental item as a sensation, whereas Allison thinks of it as an intuition. So, Allison's reading reflects the fact that he thinks of the description of the forms of intuition in the Aesthetic as one that does not even implicitly reflect the unity of the understanding. Because Haag and Grüne describe the mental item as a sensation, and because they think it has not yet been formed into an intuition, neither are committed to denying the claim that the understanding partially constitutes the forms of intuition as described in the Aesthetic. Hence, though their readings are in many respects similar to Allison's, it is at least not obvious that their positions are incompatible with the reading I put forward in this essay.

the Deduction considerably weaker than does Allison's, since on her reading we can have conscious representations of an object – but not thoughts – without the understanding playing any role (cf. Allais 2015: 168, 263, 268-70).²⁸ So I will assume, for the sake of argument, her characterization of the Deduction's task: to establish that the categories are necessary and universal conditions on empirical thought of any object given to us in intuition. I will show that to justify even this comparatively modest conclusion requires seeing that the forms of intuition themselves are dependent on the understanding, and that this is what Kant is trying to show in the Deduction.²⁹

The topic of the B-Deduction is the form of thought within theoretical cognition. Because theoretical cognition is of what can be given to us, the form of our thought of such objects must, when considered just by itself, contain no manifold of representations. That is, if we abstract from any objects that have been given to us, and analyze just what is present in the form of thought, that form will be empty or without any cognitive content. Kant makes this point in §16, when describing the generic form of thought in relation to the "I."

The generic form of thought has two aspects. Kant describes the first aspect in relation to the representation of the "I think," the representation of what all acts of thought have in common: all of my cognitively significant representations are thinkable. So he notes that the I think must be able to accompany a representation of something for it to have cognitive significance for me (cf. B131-2). Following Allison, we can think of this aspect of the form of thought as its analytic unity, since it is the representation of what is common to the different acts

²⁸ For an earlier version of this claim, cf. Allais 2009: 402-3.

²⁹ An alternative, compatible strategy for responding to Allais would be to try to show that weakening the task of the Deduction yields a result incompatible with Kant's attempt to justify the validity of the categories, because accomplishing only a weaker task would result in "what the skeptic wishes most" (B168) – for an account along these lines (with which I am sympathetic), cf. Land 2015.

of thought.³⁰ The second generic aspect of the form of thought is its synthetic unity, a unity through which we can combine different representations. For example, suppose I judge that the cat is on the mat. To make this judgment, Kant argues, I must be able to take it to be my judgment (first aspect), and I must be able to combine this judgment with other judgments that I make (second aspect) – for instance, to combine it with the judgment that the cat was not on the mat to form the conclusion that the cat moved.

If we consider these two aspects while abstracting from anything that might be given to thought (any intuition of cats, mats, space, etc.), then these representations of unity are empty – or, as Kant puts it, “through the *I*, as simple representation, nothing manifold is given” (B135). As Kant uses the term here, “the *I*” includes both the analytic and the synthetic aspect of the form of thought, since he has just argued that both are together aspects of self-consciousness (cf. B134) and he has just said that the very thought of the “thoroughgoing identity of self-consciousness” “declares as necessary a synthesis” (B135). Considered simply by itself, then, the form of thought sets a condition on determining an object through representing it, but it does not itself determine any object. That is, knowing that I must be able to combine my judgments with one another does not tell me anything about cats or mats or any other object that might be given to me. Nor could it, since the object must be given to us and so not contained in the very form of thought by itself: if I could deduce facts about mats simply from a reflection on thought, then I would have a kind of non-discursive cognition that would not be dependent on being given its objects, and Kant does not think this is possible (for us).

³⁰ Here is how Allison puts it: “this identical *I think*, that is, “the bare representation *I*,” can be seen as the form or prototype of the analytic unity that pertains to all general concepts. In fact, it *just is* this analytic unity considered in abstraction from all content. Consequently, the *I think* is itself the thought of what is common to all conceptualization, which is what makes it “in all consciousness one and the same” (B131)” (Allison 2004: 172; cf. also Allison 2015: 342-3, and Engstrom 2013: 41).

Though the I, considered by itself, does not contain a determination of the object, Kant argues that an account of it does contribute to an account of theoretical cognition. Specifically, whatever the nature of what is given to me, for me to cognize it, my representation of it must be combinable with my other representations such that I *can* represent it along with them as mine.³¹ This claim goes beyond the trivial claim that my representations, as mine, must conform to the conditions on being mine. Rather, Kant's claim is that the combinability of my representations as mine has its source in the form of thought. The generic form of combination which potentially characterizes all of my representations is contributed not by the objects that affect me, not by the form of my affection, but rather by the form of thought itself.³² So, if an object given to me in intuition is thinkable, it must be such that I can combine it with my other representations *via* the synthetic unity of apperception. Moreover, the synthetic unity of apperception has its source in thought alone, which is to say that it logically precedes our thought of any given intuitive manifold.

As I introduced synthetic unity, I described it as a unity through which we *can* combine a manifold; one might have thought, instead, that a synthetic unity must be the unity of an actual combination. We can now see why the capacity to combine is sufficient: if the synthetic unity of apperception is logically prior to any given intuitive manifold, it cannot be a synthetic unity in virtue of actually combining a manifold. Rather, it must be a synthetic unity because it can combine a manifold. For example, I can combine the concepts of cat and mat in the judgment that the cat is on the mat only because I have a prior representation of the unity of a categorical

³¹ The combinability of my representations as mine involves both aspects of the generic form of thought: the representability of all of my representations as mine is the analytic aspect, and the combinability of all of my representations as mine is the synthetic aspect.

³² So Kant notes that "among all representations **combination** is the only one that is not given through objects but can be executed only by the subject itself, since it is an act of its self-activity" (B130). I will not try to explore his reasoning for this claim; for a helpful account, cf. Kitcher 2011.

judgment.³³ It is through representing this unity, a unity that is empty without being given a manifold but that is a principle for combining given manifolds (of concepts to form judgments), that I have the capacity to combine the concept cat with the concept mat. And, according to Kant, it is only because I have the capacity to combine these concepts that I can have them in the first place.

It follows from these considerations that the representation of the synthetic unity of apperception is logically prior to and a condition on having any more determinate concepts, like cat or mat. So, the representation of the synthetic unity of apperception precedes and makes possible the thought of any object.

§4

I have just established that according to Kant the representation of the synthetic unity of apperception precedes and makes possible any more determinate thought of objects given to us in intuition. To sustain this claim, Kant needs to show that this representation can be justifiably applied to the thought of any object given in intuition. By the stipulated concession to Allais, this means to think of it as a justified *a priori* condition on the possibility of any thought of an object given to us in intuition. According to the results of §§15-6, in thinking any manifold, we are constrained to think it through the synthetic unity of apperception. So, if the synthetic unity of apperception does not apply to every manifold just in virtue of that manifold being given to us, then our thought of what is given is rendered parochial: it reveals only how it seems to ones like us, discursive thinkers, whether or not that is in fact how things are with the appearances. So, the

³³ This is why Kant notes, in §15, that the representation of synthetic unity “cannot, therefore, arise from the combination; rather, by being added to the representation of the manifold, it first makes the concept of combination possible” (B131). Kant’s point is that to represent a manifold as combined, I have to represent that unity into which it is combined. Since I am the one who is performing the combination (it cannot be given to me), the representation of that unity must precede and make possible my combination.

synthetic unity of apperception must be applicable to every intuition, simply in virtue of its being an intuition. That is, we must think of an *a priori* form of intuition: otherwise, the validity of the synthetic unity of apperception itself is rendered empirical (as applying to the manifolds it does in virtue of their character, a character not necessarily shared by other manifolds we may be given). Through being applicable to the *a priori* form of intuition, the synthetic unity of apperception is applicable to every intuition.³⁴

So introduced, the pure form of intuition ensures that every intuition can be combined by the understanding in thought. That is, any intuition has in common with every other possible intuition that they can all be combined with one another in thought. So, the pure form of intuition is an analytic unity: it is a feature that can be contained in any intuition (a one that can be contained in many), namely the feature that those intuitions can be combined by the understanding in thought.³⁵

This is striking, because what is common to the manifold is the possibility of being combined with any other member of the manifold, and possible combination implies synthetic unity. That is, the argument shows that we need to represent a synthetic unity (that all of these representations can be combined with one another in thought) as an analytic unity (as a characteristic shared by each of the representations). What does this mean?

I will illustrate this idea in the case of space (bearing in mind that whatever additional content comes from the specific idea of space is not something we are entitled to just from the

³⁴ For this argument, I am indebted to Sebastian Rödl's reconstruction of the Deduction in §2 of Rödl 2007.

³⁵ Kant also makes the claim that the forms of intuition are analytic unities in the Aesthetic. For instance, about space as a pure form of intuition he notes that it “is nothing other than merely the form of all appearances of outer sense” (A26/B42). That is, space is a character common to everything that can be given to us as outside of us. This characterization is also present at the outset of the Metaphysical Exposition of space, when Kant claims that, through outer sense, “we represent to ourselves objects as outside us, and *all as in space*” (A22/B37; italics added). That is, the objects outside of us all have the common character of being in space. And so, by the account of the Aesthetic, forms of intuition are analytic unities.

Deduction). So, consider two non-overlapping regions of space. As non-overlapping, they have something specific to each (their region) that is not shared or common to the two. However, as spaces, both have something in common: whatever properties belong to being a space in general, their spatiality (which we can gloss, uninformatively, as the fact that they are both spaces). And so spatiality is an analytic unity for any manifold outside of us that can be given to us. Moreover, spatiality, as I have introduced it from within the argument of the Deduction, must secure the combinability in thought of whatever is given to us in outer intuition: simply by being spatial, we know that we can combine our thought of the one region with our thought of the other.

At this point, to justify my claim that what we have arrived at from within the Deduction is genuinely a form of *intuition*, I need to show that by the argument of the Deduction it is a non-conceptual representation: that is, that the thought of what is common to every object that can be given to us in intuition is the thought of an intuitive and not a conceptual representation. To show this, it will suffice to examine Kant's argument in §16 that the analytic aspect of the form of thought presupposes the synthetic aspect.

The capacity to employ a general representation, Kant claims, is dependent upon the capacity to recognize that representation in different manifolds. To be able to recognize those manifolds as different, in such a fashion that the concept is common across them, requires the capacity to connect the general concept with other representations. So, for instance, to employ the concept red in thought requires the capacity to recognize that many different things can be red. But to be cognizant of the difference between these things, while nevertheless thinking their common character, requires being able to connect that common character with what differentiates them from one another: red boat, red rock, red table, etc. (cf. B133-4). It follows that the analytic unity of apperception presupposes the synthetic unity of apperception. Or, to be

able to attach the I think to my representations, thereby thinking the character common to them all insofar as they are mine, I must be able to combine them with one another.

So, according to Kant, we can only think a general representation as common to a manifold by being able to combine that manifold through the synthetic unity of apperception, where to combine the manifold means to be able to connect what distinguishes each item within the manifold with what they all have in common (so, I must be able to form the concept of red chair, red rock, red ice, and so on for any object that I can think of as red). If the common character of spatiality were a general representation, then we would only be able to represent it if we have the capacity to combine that general representation with whatever differentiates the intuitions from one another. And so we would have to ask after the explanation of our capacity to combine the manifold commonly characterized by spatiality. But that, in fact, is just our question: with what right can we represent any given manifold as combinable into a synthetic unity by thought? So appealing to the common character of the form of intuition as a general or conceptual representation cannot help us. Since the form of intuition needs to explain the validity of our capacity to combine different intuitive representations in thought, it follows that our representation of the common character of the form of intuition cannot be a conceptual representation.

To illustrate with reference to our example: by Kant's argument in §16, we cannot represent a concept as common to the two regions of space without being able to combine that concept with whatever differentiates the one space from the other. We first invoked the idea of a common character of what is given to us as that which explains our capacity to do that, to connect the different parts of space with one another in thought. But if the common character were a concept, then it would still leave us with the question about our right to combine that

concept with whatever differentiates the two regions of space from one another. And so the common character cannot be a concept, since no concept can secure the validity of our capacity to combine different representations when those representations are of what is given to us.

The same point can be made in another way, by focusing on Kant's understanding of the analytic and synthetic unities of concepts. Our thought of the form of intuition (at this point in the argument) is the thought of the combinability (in thought) of any intuition that can be given to us, and so a synthetic unity. But it is also an analytic unity, and indeed with respect to the exact same manifold, in that we are thinking of this combinability as a character common to every intuition. But Kant thinks that no concept can be a synthetic unity with respect to the same manifold of which it is an analytic unity.

This is easy to see from the account of concepts developed in §1. For there we developed the idea of a concepts in terms of a genus/species tree. As I noted, a concept is the analytic unity of its species and the synthetic unity of its genus and differentia(e). And it is immediately evident from the branching structure of the tree that those relations must be non-overlapping: that what is contained within the concept (the marks of which it is the synthetic unity) cannot be contained under it (the species of which it is the common feature). So, a motorcycle is a combination of the marks motorized, two-wheeled, vehicle; and indefinitely many (more specific) species and subspecies of motorcycles fall under it. But concepts that contain the concept motorcycle are not and cannot be contained in the concept motorcycle. Or, to put the point in its most abstract way, the I think is contained in every concept and so it cannot contain any synthesis of concepts.

So, the form of intuition cannot be a concept, because that which is common to the manifold has to be the same as that which combines them. That is, whatever the regions of space have in common, in virtue of our representation of the synthetic unity of apperception as

applicable to them, this must be the very same thing in which they are combined. We introduced the term “spatiality” as picking out whatever character the two regions have simply in being spaces. Now we can say that spatiality is not only common to the two regions of space, but it combines them: the two regions of space are spaces in virtue of being two parts of a more encompassing space. Put somewhat differently, the principle which differentiates the regions of space, their spatial distance from one another within the whole of space, is the very same principle which gives them their common characteristic as spaces, their being parts of the one space.³⁶

It follows that a form of intuition is a synthetic unity: it is a combination of different representations into one. Further, it is an analytic unity, or common character of different representations, just in virtue of being the synthetic unity of exactly the same representations. So, to grasp the form of intuition as what is common to different intuitions, we must grasp it as what combines those different intuitions – otherwise, we could only be grasping it as a common concept, and so would lose our grip on its status as a form of *intuition*.³⁷

At this point, as a brief interlude, I want to note that Hegel, like Kant, also describes space (and time) such that it is an analytic and a synthetic unity with respect to the same

³⁶ For this last formulation, and for the idea of using regions of space as an example in this part of my argument, I am deeply indebted to some comments by Michael Friedman on an earlier draft.

³⁷ As the discussion of the genus/species tree brings out, the distinction between the analytic and synthetic unity of a concept arises from the distinction between what is contained within a concept and what falls under it. Consequently, it rests on the concept’s *generality*, the fact that it is what Kant refers to as a *mediate* representation of an object – not a representation of the object as it is given to us, but a representation of the object as it is thought by us (cf. A68/B93). Since intuitions, instead, are immediate relations to an object, their form is such that they can only be related by one’s being contained in another or by two being contained in a more encompassing one. No intuition can fall under another intuition. Consequently, the ground for distinguishing between the analytic and the synthetic unity within concepts – the fact that, as representations, concepts relate both to what is contained in them and to what falls under them, and that these two relations are non-overlapping – lapses. And so the form of intuition would have to be both analytic and synthetic, and with respect to the same thing: as a form common to every intuition, it cannot be common by being only analytically contained in every intuition, such that we would create a hierarchy of intuitions with some being more general than others. Rather, it can only be a form common to every intuition by combining them into one intuition.

manifold. As we have already seen in chapter 1, his fundamental characterization of space and time is in terms of their contents being outside of one another, or “self-external” (cf. EL §20A). The idea of a representation or of some representational content that is external to itself is a deliberately paradoxical formulation that Hegel employs to indicate that the kind of representation and content at issue is not self-standing. His point, I take it, is that in representing any bit of this content, we represent it as external to itself and so we represent this content as also outside of the content that we represent. This is difficult to grasp in the abstract, but easy to grasp in the case of space and time. Focusing just on space, the point is that in representing one part of space, I represent (or at least refer my representation to) parts of space which enclose it and which are thereby outside of or external to it. It is only in virtue of situating this part of space in relation to a space that encloses it that I can represent it as a bit of space. Similarly, to represent this more encompassing space, I have to represent it as part of a more encompassing space. And so on, infinitely. Further, in representing this part of space I have to represent it as already external to itself, and so I have to represent it as more encompassing than a space that is within it. Similarly, to represent this space, I have to represent it as containing a smaller space. And so on, infinitely.

These two features correspond to the infinite extension and infinite divisibility of space in Kant. They are not meant by Hegel to indicate any kind of construction (geometrical or otherwise). That is, it is important that the “going outside of” occurs in the representation of the part of space itself, and not by means of adding together spaces (as in, e.g., extending a line segment).³⁸ What I want to focus on now, though, is the way in which the self-externalizing

³⁸ In the terminology Kant uses in his remarks on Kästner’s treatises, the self-externality of space corresponds to the metaphysical space which is the basis for geometrical space. About the relation between the two conceptions of space, Kant writes “that a line can be extended to infinity means as much as: the space in which I describe the line is greater than every one line which I may describe in it; and thus the geometer grounds the possibility of his task of

structure is analytic and synthetic. The analytic unity of this manifold of spaces consists in the fact that every space is external to itself, as this is the character common to all of the manifold. The way in which this is an analytic unity, however, is such that in grasping what this manifold has in common, one has to grasp this manifold as constituting a single thing, one space. Thus, what is common to the manifold (the character of each as external to itself) just is the principle for combining that manifold into one (the whole, infinitely divisible and extended space).³⁹

Returning from that interlude to Kant, I want to make one more argument to support my claim that the form of intuition is synthetic, this time from the Aesthetic. Namely, it is only *part* of Kant's point in the 3rd and 4th arguments of the Metaphysical Exposition of space to argue that our representation of the whole of space cannot be composed out of our representations of the parts. This must be only part of Kant's point because by itself this thought is compatible with the idea that our representation of space is simple, not containing any parts. And if that were all Kant maintained, then he would not have established that the form of intuition is a form of intuition as opposed to thought. For the I think is not composed of any parts, because it is simple. Like the whole of space, the I think also precedes any particular concept in that it is a form common to all of them. Now, it is crucial to Kant's argument in the Aesthetic that the form of intuition not belong to thought. And so it is crucial that the form of intuition not be simple, at least not simple

increasing a space (of which there are many) to infinity on the original representation of a unitary, infinite, **subjectively given** space" (Kant 2014: 309). Kant goes on to say that metaphysical space cannot be geometrically constructed, but is the "ground" of all possible constructions.

Michael Friedman has offered a very developed account (congenial to the interpretation I present here) of the relationship between metaphysical space and geometrical space, and of the relationship between metaphysical space and the synthetic unity of apperception: cf. Friedman 2007: 191-2, 197; and forthcoming: 17.

³⁹ The specific character of this analytic and synthetic unity is that the manifold combined is (as Hegel puts it) originally external to one another (cf. 6.261/12.22; I describe this point in more detail in the next chapter). That is, the different parts of space contained in this representation of space as self-external are represented as occupying distinct spaces (that is why he describes it as an "outside of one another"). I note this here only because that is not in general characteristic of a unity that is analytic and synthetic with respect to the same manifold, but only of that unity as it characterizes sensibility. It will turn out that, for Hegel, the ground of the validity of the synthetic unity of apperception is also a unity that is analytic and synthetic with respect to the same manifold, but not in such a way that the manifold of representations are originally external or outside of one another.

in the way of the I think; it is crucial that it actually contain a manifold, that the parts of space are found within it even if they cannot compose it. So, the form of intuition must be a synthetic unity, or else we cannot grasp why it is not a general concept (like the I think).⁴⁰ And so we cannot grasp the analytic unity of the form of intuition without at least implicitly grasping its synthetic unity.⁴¹

This brings out where Allison's claim that the specter of cognitive chaos is thinkable but not really possible goes wrong. On his reading, the thought of a form of intuition is the thought of an analytic unity and an intuitive representation, but it is not the thought of a synthetic unity. Because it is not a synthetic unity, it is not a contradiction to say that the manifolds within the form of intuition are not thinkable. But if we have the thought that it is an intuitive representation, then it cannot have the analytic unity of a concept – it cannot be a common character by being a general representation. It can only be a common character by containing within it that of which it is the common character, and it can only do that by being a synthetic unity. If, as I will establish in the next step, this synthetic unity must be and be understood to be supplied by the understanding, then – contrary to what Allison claims – it just is a logical contradiction to think of intuitions within our forms of intuition as cognitively chaotic or incapable of being determined by a function of the understanding.⁴²

Having shown that the forms of intuition as derivable from §§15-6 of the Deduction are indeed forms of *intuition*, and that they have an analytic and synthetic unity, all that remains is to show that the synthetic unity of these forms comes from the understanding. By the argument of

⁴⁰ Indeed, we find Kant making this point in §17 of the Deduction: “Space and time and all their parts are **intuitions**... they are thus found to be composite, and consequently the unity of consciousness, as **synthetic** and yet as original, is to be found in them” (B136).

⁴¹ My thanks to Adwait Parker for help thinking through this point.

⁴² Bowman makes the same mistake of thinking that the specter of cognitive chaos is thinkable in his response to Allison at Bowman 2011: 422.

§3, we represent the synthetic unity of apperception prior to representing any more determinate representation. The Deduction introduces the idea of a pure form of intuition as that which secures the validity of this original representation of the synthetic unity of apperception. As it turns out, this form of intuition cannot be completely determined by the synthetic unity of apperception, for it must not only be the *a priori* synthetic unity of any more determinate representations – it must also be their analytic unity, and this analytic unity cannot be provided for by the understanding. So, a pure form of intuition must consist in the application of the original synthetic unity of apperception to our specifically human forms of sensibility. For no other synthetic unity can ensure that any given manifold will be combinable by the understanding. So, the act of the understanding on which the unity of the form of intuition depends is the act of applying the original representation of synthetic unity to the *a priori* way in which we can be given a manifold of representation.

One final note about my reading, which I do not have the space to work out in detail: if my reading is correct, then it paves the way for a new and more satisfying reading of the infamous “form of intuition”/“formal intuition” distinction in the footnote to §26 of the B-Deduction. For, on my interpretation, we can read “form of intuition,” that which supplies the manifold, as referring to the analytic unity common to every intuitive representation, while “formal intuition” refers to the synthetic unity of that same manifold. So, rather than thinking (with Longuenesse 1998: 221-3, 2005 69-71 and Waxman 1991: 95-7) that the “form of intuition” of the footnote is an abstraction from a capacity to represent objects, and so has a different referent than the same expression has in the Aesthetic, we can rather think of it as isolating one aspect (that of the analytic unity of our intuitive representations of space and time)

of our representation of objects in space and time, the same aspect that it is used to highlight in the Aesthetic (cf. A26/B42).

This completes my case in favor of the claim that, even if we grant a weakened reading of the Deduction (according to which its aim is to vindicate the validity of the categories for all empirical thought), we still arrive at the conclusion that the form of intuition depends on the understanding and more specifically that it contributes synthetic unity to our forms of intuition while sensibility contributes analytic unity to those forms. In the remainder of this section, I will indicate briefly why we still need the Aesthetic on my account, and so why my account is consistent with (indeed, explains the need for) Kant's two-stem doctrine.

As noted, the common character of the form of intuition contains the manifold of which it is the common character. So, this common character cannot be provided for by the form of thought (because thought, considered by itself, contains no manifold); rather, it must be provided for by another faculty, the faculty by which we are given objects: the common character must belong to sensibility. And so we need a transcendental account of sensibility, the Aesthetic. Somewhat more specifically, the understanding is incapable of determining the specific character of our sensibility (cf. §24 of the Deduction). That is, for all we can know from an account of the understanding alone, the forms of our intuition might be different – all we know from the account of the understanding is their synthetic unity. And so we need the Aesthetic to give us an account of the specifically human forms of sensible intuition, which I describe as the analytic unity of our forms of intuition. So, far from obviating the need for the Aesthetic, and far from destroying Kant's two-stem doctrine, my account explains the necessity for both from within an account of the higher stem, the understanding.

This last point bears further elaboration. For a primary motivation against the claim that our forms of intuition are dependent upon the understanding is that it would undermine the “radical separation” of the two stems (Allison 2015: 191) or that it “would make nonsense of the Aesthetic” (Allais 2015: 169). I do not know about “radical separation,” but the account I have provided shows the need for the distinction of the two stems. And it does not make nonsense of the Aesthetic – not only because it shows the need for our forms of intuition, but because it shows that the act of the understanding on which those forms depend is a non-conceptual act, and it explains why it must be non-conceptual. For no conceptual act can explain the validity of the categories for all empirical thought. Only an act that is analytic and synthetic with respect to the same manifold can do that, and that act would have to have its source in two distinct faculties, the understanding and sensibility.

§5

In concluding this chapter, I want to draw one further implication of my reading: it provides a way to understand the important Kantian thought, established in §§22-3 of the Deduction, that the deduction of the objective validity of the categories, by appealing to our forms of intuition, constitutes a restriction on their valid use.

As noted above, on my interpretation the unity of the form of intuition has its source in the understanding. That unity is synthetic: any given manifold can be combined in space and/or in time. But it is not only synthetic – it is also analytic. The fact that the synthetic unity determines the common character of every manifold that can be given in intuition is due, not to the understanding, but rather to our manner of being affected by objects. For, on Kant’ picture, the understanding is unable by itself to produce a manifold, and so is unable to produce a

synthetic unity that is also an analytic unity. And so it follows that there can be no “the form of sensible intuition,” but only “*our* form of sensible intuition.” For the understanding cannot fully determine the character common to all of the manifold; it can only supply the combinability of that manifold. Our forms of sensible intuition constitute a condition on the valid application of the categories, in cognition, but because it is not supplied by the understanding itself, it does not determine or condition the use of the categories in general, in thought. So, as Kant puts it, “to **think** of an object [*Gegenstand*] and to **cognize** an object [*Gegenstand*] are thus not the same...; for if an intuition corresponding to the concept could not be given at all, then it would be a thought as far as its form is concerned, but without any object, and by its means no cognition of anything at all would be possible” (B146). Consequently, the restriction of the valid use of the categories is a consequence of the fact that the understanding – or, more generally for Kant, thought – cannot itself produce a unity that is both analytic and synthetic with respect to the same manifold.

It further follows that we have to distinguish between the act of grasping or thinking the synthetic unity of apperception (and the categories grounded in it) and the act of grasping or determining its validity: to grasp its validity, we need to grasp that act in which it determines sensibility, determining thereby our forms of intuition. But grasping that act goes beyond the mere thought of the synthetic unity of apperception, since it must be applied in a circumstance such that it determines (by unifying) the common character of a manifold, and that circumstance cannot be provided for by the understanding alone (and so cannot be contained in any account of the understanding alone). Hence Kant argues in §24 that we can think objects of intuition in general (thereby employing the synthetic unity of apperception) “without it being determined whether this intuition is our own or some other but still sensible one,” but this does not yet

suffice to account for cognition (B150). Rather, beyond the mere synthetic unity of apperception, we have to think of that unity under certain conditions, as applied to the “certain form of sensible intuition *a priori*” which lies “in us” (B150). This gives us the concept of the figurative synthesis, or the transcendental synthesis of the imagination, in which the understanding determines our form of sensibility. More than that, it is the ground upon which we distinguish between the (metaphysical) deduction of the *a priori* character of the synthetic unity of apperception (and the categories), and the (transcendental) deduction of its objective validity. We grasp or think the synthetic unity of apperception in the Metaphysical Deduction, but the act of thinking it is not the same as the act of grasping its validity. This is not because, as Allison must think, it is thinkable that it is not valid of what is given to us in sensibility; it is because it is not, of its own nature, restricted in its use to what is given to us in sensibility. Consequently, to understand its validity we must do more than merely grasp it - we must grasp its use within sensible conditions, in the Transcendental Deduction. I only want to mention this difficult topic now; understanding it will turn out to be essential for understanding Hegel’s criticism of Kant and his alternative.

Chapter 6: Hegel against Kant

In the previous chapter, I argued that to explain the objective validity of the categories, Kant recognized that we need to have a synthetic unity that is also an analytic unity. He also recognized that the understanding could not by itself be responsible for such a unity, and so located that unity in sensibility. Hegel argues that by locating this analytic/synthetic unity within sensibility, Kant's conception of thought is parochial. On Kant's view, the understanding cannot be responsible for the character common to the manifold of representations within each of our forms of intuition (the analytic unity of those forms). Consequently, we can think of other forms of intuition, and this entails (Hegel argues) that we can only grasp our form as a subjective imposition on what appears. That is, we cannot explain our right to represent what appears as in space and time, since those forms stem from the subject and we cannot see our way clear of thinking of them as merely subjective impositions on what appears. Since the synthetic unity of apperception is valid only in relation to these merely subjective forms, it too is rendered a mere subjective imposition on what appears. And so the Deduction fails.

Hegel's alternative to Kant's Deduction is to nest the forms of theoretical cognition within speculative cognition. I argued in the previous chapter that Kant and Hegel share a conception of the form of theoretical cognition (as a self-determining activity that goes from ignorance to knowledge by employing concepts). By the argument of chapter 3, to nest this conception within speculative cognition, we have to articulate a tension within it and then make sense of theoretical cognition (as valid) by overcoming the tension through moving beyond it.

Hegel thinks that an account of analytic unity, as it is found in theoretical cognition, reveals a requirement, that the understanding also be capable of forming synthetic unities. And, he argues, we cannot make sense of how the understanding can also be the capacity to form

synthetic unities within theoretical cognition itself. This is the *tension*. This means that there must be a transformation, one which lies in thinking of a unity which is both analytic and synthetic, and with respect to the same manifold. But we no longer think of this as residing in the form of sensibility, or as a form in which we are given a manifold. Rather, we think of this as a form of thought. And it is this transformation which grounds the validity of the synthetic unity of apperception (and thereby also the analytic unity of apperception) as it applies to what can be given to us. Because the synthetic unity of apperception occurs within the speculative progression, the worry that thought of this form is merely parochial can get no grip on it.¹ Finally, I show that the form of speculative cognition, as I described it in chapter 3, is the same as the idea of a form of cognition in which a unity is both analytic and synthetic with respect to the same manifold.

In §1 I give an account of Hegel's criticism of Kant's Deduction. In §§2-3 I relate my interpretation to that offered by Robert Pippin and John McDowell. Finally, in §4, I articulate Hegel's speculative alternative to the Deduction, drawing on the account of speculative cognition defended in chapters 1-4.

§1

In this section, I want to offer an interpretation of Hegel's argument against the Deduction. My focus will be on his argument (presented both in *Faith and Knowledge* and the *Science of Logic*) that Kant did not complete or realize the implications of his thought of an original synthetic unity of apperception.

¹ One limitation of my argument in this chapter is that I skip past the transformation of theoretical cognition into practical cognition. The description I give of speculative cognition is correct, but there is a more immediate transformation of theoretical cognition that explains its validity. I hope to offer an account of this, and how it fits into my overall reading, in future work.

To start with, I want to note again that Hegel, like Kant, thinks that the original synthetic unity is prior to, or more fundamental than, the analytic unity of apperception: it is that in virtue of which there can be an analytic unity. So he writes, in his introduction to the *Logic of the Concept* (the second volume of the *Science of Logic*), that the view of the “concept” on which “all manifoldness stands *outside of the concept*” is “superficial.” He notes, for instance, that this superficial conception neglects the fact that “the specification [*Angabe*] of a concept or the definition of [*zu*] the species [*Gattung*]” requires “the *specific determinacy*” (6.260/12.22). The appeal to the definition of the species and its specific determinacy are references to the first form of synthetic cognition, as he describes it towards the end of the *Logic of the Concept* in “The Idea of the True.” There he notes that the determinateness of a concept, or the fact that it is a determination of an object, depends upon that’s concept’s being a connection of two or more concepts. Thus, the form of a definition of a concept, he thinks, is Aristotelian: one defines concepts in terms of a genus and a specific differentia. Only because concepts are capable of being defined in that way can they be used to determine objects in thought (which is to say, used to think about objects).² This is a specific version of the basic Kantian point from §16 of the Deduction that analytic unity presupposes synthetic unity. Moreover, this requirement is a formal one, necessary to make sense of the concept as a concept of an object, and so it characterizes the concept or form of theoretical thought as such.

Moreover, Hegel acknowledges that the point he is making is a Kantian one. The passage continues: “Kant introduced this consideration through the highly important thought that there

² Hegel does not claim that empirical concepts can ever be defined in a fully adequate way: as he notes in his discussion of definition, there is an ineliminable arbitrariness in how one defines an empirical concept, and as he notes in his account of the genus/species tree, our definitions of empirical concepts are always going to be in a process of revision as we acquire more empirical cognitions: cf. 6.514-7/12.212-3, 6.525-6/12.219-20. So his talk of the definitions of concepts is not in any tension with Kant’s claim that empirical concepts can never be defined in an adequate way (cf. A727/B755ff.).

are a priori *synthetic judgments*. This original synthesis of apperception is one of the deepest principles for the speculative development; it contains the beginning of the true understanding [Auffassen] of the nature of the concept and is completely opposed to that empty identity or abstract universality, which is no synthesis in itself" (6.260-1/12.22).³ (We will have to wait until §4 to understand why Hegel thinks this makes superficial the equally Kantian claim that the form of thought, considered by itself, is "empty.")

But he goes on to note that Kant's way of understanding this point is inadequate. Specifically, he claims that Kant failed in the "further development [Ausführung]" of his insight, because the synthetic unity of apperception remained a merely external unity in relation to the manifold that it united (6.261/12.22). As Hegel puts it: "Already the expression *synthesis* leads easily again to the representation of an *external* unity and *bare connection* [Verbindung] of such as are *in and for themselves separated*" (6.261/12.22).⁴ I want to unpack this claim slowly.

First, focus on the form of theoretical cognition, as understood by both Kant and Hegel. Theoretical cognition is cognition of what can be given to the thinker. Consequently, we can conceptually distinguish between the thinkability of the object and its "giveability," or the conditions under which it is given to be thought about. I further argued in the previous chapter that the thinkability condition (from the understanding) supplies the synthetic unity or combinability of that which is given while the giveability condition (from sensibility) supplies the analytic unity or that which any giveable manifold has in common with every other giveable manifold (being in space and/or time). Conceptually distinguishing between these two aspects, we can attend just to the analytic unity of any possible manifold as it is sensibly given. So

³ Hegel also makes this point in *Faith and Knowledge*: cf. 2.305-6/4.328.

⁴ Hegel makes the same point about the word "synthesis" at 5.100/21.83. He elsewhere makes the same criticism without focusing on the word "synthesis": for instance, at 2.309-313/4.330-3.

thought, we have in view the manifold in its manifoldness, and not in its combinability into one.⁵

Of course, for Kant we cannot grasp this analytic unity without also grasping the same manifold as combinable into one by the understanding (and Hegel agrees): the difference between these two unities is a merely conceptual distinction, not a real separation of distinct acts or anything like that. But, nevertheless, we can make the conceptual distinction and abstract from the synthetic unity and attend only to the analytic unity. This is a way of representing the manifold as separated from one another, or a way of representing the sensible as external to itself, such that bits of sensible content are next to, before, and after one another (as we saw Hegel put it in the previous chapter).

Hegel makes the point that the manifold is “in and for itself” separated, and that goes beyond claiming simply that there is a way of thinking about the manifold on which the many representations in it are separated. Hegel’s point is that this separation constitutes their inner nature, and this fits with his characterization of the sensible manifold as such as external to itself. We arrive at the characterization that the manifold is in and for itself separated when we note that the manifold must be given to us: that is, in Kantian terminology, that the intuitions by means of which we immediately represent appearances are not always already contained within the understanding. From this it follows that the manifold is originally not combined, since it is not originally contained within the unity of thought as such but must be given to thought and since thought is the origin of the combination of the manifold. We might say that the manifold is originally combinable, and that this undergirds the merely conceptual distinction between the

⁵ We have to be able to think this, for Kant, for otherwise we could not think of thought – as opposed to sensibility – as responsible for synthesis or combination. If we could only think of the manifold as combined, then we wouldn’t be able to distinguish sensibility from combination, and so we could have no ground for attributing the act of combining the sensible manifold to the understanding. Hegel agrees with all of this.

analytic and synthetic unity of our forms of intuition. But it is not originally combined: its combination must be effected by the understanding, and so it is originally separated.⁶

On my reconstruction of Hegel’s argument so far, it turns on nothing more than an understanding of theoretical cognition that is *shared* by Kant and Hegel. This might be somewhat startling. For, after all, Hegel intends to criticize Kant by making this point. And that might suggest that Hegel must be criticizing Kant’s way of thinking about the relation between the understanding and sensibility, a criticism of Kant for thinking that the understanding can only achieve a merely external unity. It would follow that Hegel’s picture of the relation between the understanding and sensibility would have to be different, a unity that was not merely external. This is a common way of understanding Hegel’s criticism of Kant on this issue, both by Hegel scholars and by Kantians who worry about or respond to Hegel’s charge.⁷ I contend that this common way of reading Hegel’s criticism gets him wrong.

First, the common reading gets Hegel’s attitude towards Kant’s mistake wrong. On the common reading, Hegel’s attitude is something like this: “Kant, you saw (or almost saw) what theoretical cognition and the relation between the understanding and sensibility ought to look like, but then you betrayed that insight and stuck with a bad view of theoretical cognition. You just needed to make the understanding (more) internal to the manifold of sensibility!” But

⁶ I explore the relation between the original combinability of the manifold of intuitions and the actual acts of combination of that manifold in §3 of my paper “Forms of Intuition in the Transcendental Deduction.” Kant makes the point that syntheses proceed from part to whole (cf. A77-8/B103), which has led some scholars to conclude that synthetic unity must be built up from such actions (cf. McLear 2015, Onuf and Schulting 2015, and Allais 2015). This goes too far: there is an original synthetic unity, one that is involved in determining the forms of intuition as such, which does not proceed from part to whole (but rather enables such a proceeding). I have tried to articulate the nature of this original synthetic unity in the previous chapter; at present I just want to note that it is not an actual combination of empirical intuitions but rather the unity of all possible empirical intuitions as originally combinable.

⁷ For Hegel scholars who interpret Hegel’s criticism in this way, cf. Stern 1990: 38-41; Sedgwick 2012: chapter 5. For Kant scholars who characterize Hegel’s challenge in this way, cf. Engstrom 2006: 19-20; Merritt 2007: 87; Friedman forthcoming: 5. There is quite a bit of diversity amongst these scholars about what Hegel means when he notes that the unity is merely external in Kant, and also about what Hegel’s alternative to that external unity looks like. But all think that Hegel means to be criticizing Kant’s conception of the relation between the understanding and sensibility as merely external, and that Hegel’s successor story is meant to make that unity non-external.

Hegel's attitude seems much more like this: "Kant, you are the first to have seen the finitude or conditioned-ness or non-absoluteness of theoretical cognition – but you somehow missed that that was a reason to go beyond theoretical cognition! Since the understanding is external to the manifold of sensibility, it cannot be the last word!"⁸ So Hegel writes, continuing the passage we are discussing, that Kantian philosophy "did not pronounce the cognition of the understanding and experience as an *appearing* content because the categories are themselves finite, but rather from the ground of a psychological idealism, because they are *only* determinations that come from [*herkommen*] self-consciousness" (6.261/12.22-3). The point of this passage seems to be that Kant was right to recognize that theoretical cognition only yields cognition of appearances, not of things in themselves or what Hegel elsewhere refers to as "the rational" (cf. 6.320/12.67), but that Kant blamed this limitation on self-consciousness when in fact the limitation lies only in the categories (by which I take him to mean: lies in the forms of thought employed in theoretical cognition). What this leads one to expect (especially with the emphasis on "only") is that Hegel thinks that Kant's idealism is psychological because it restricts our cognition to theoretical cognition. The alternative to this is not to deny that the unity of the understanding is external to the manifold of sensibility. Rather, the alternative is to argue that we have to advance beyond theoretical cognition to make sense of it, taking us beyond Kant's "psychological reflex" of locating the source of the limitation of theoretical cognition in self-consciousness itself, to show that the limitation lies in the particular form of cognition in question (6.261/12.22-3; cf. also the assessment of Kant's idealism at 2.302-3/4.325-6).

Moreover, we see the exact same attitude expressed in Hegel's introductory remarks to his account of theoretical cognition. For he notes that this cognition retains its "*finitude*" even

⁸ The externality in question is that the manifold of sensibility is not originally or always already combined by the understanding; both Kant and Hegel think the understanding is internal to the forms of sensibility, such that the manifold is originally combinable.

when it achieves cognition of what is given, and goes on to wonder at anyone who could see this and then insist that this is nevertheless the highest form of cognition of which we are capable: “Strangely [sonderbarerweise], in newer times this side of *finitude* is held onto and taken as the *absolute* relation of cognition – as if the finite as such should be the absolute!” (6.499-500/12.200-1; cf. also 6.264/12.25) He does not mention Kant by name (though he does go on to describe this position as positing a “*thinghood-in-itself*” “*behind cognition*”) but his point is clearly that Kant correctly understood theoretical cognition to be finite but wrongly and strangely insisted that it was nevertheless our only or highest or most rational (“absolute”) form of cognition. Hegel’s attitude, in this passage and in the passage that is our primary focus, is inconsistent with the common reading. Both passages suggest that Hegel’s criticism concerns Kant’s thought that we are limited in our cognition to theoretical cognition, and not Kant’s conception of theoretical cognition. Both suggest that it is precisely Kant’s conception of theoretical cognition which shows the necessity of advancing to a higher, speculative form of cognition, and so suggest that Hegel accepts Kant’s account of that cognition.⁹

My second and final point against the common reading is that Hegel explicitly defines his conception of theoretical cognition in exactly the terms that he uses to describe Kant’s. So, Hegel himself uses the term “synthesis” when he characterizes theoretical cognition, which he divides into the headings of “Analytic Cognition” and “Synthetic Cognition.”¹⁰ If it is the term which

⁹ By theoretical cognition throughout I am referring to that form of cognition that is the subject matter of the 1st *Critique*: empirical and *a priori* cognition of appearances. Hegel agrees with Kant’s conception of this. He does not agree with Kant’s conception of philosophical knowledge of this form of cognition, what one might call critical knowledge which is meant to explain the validity of our cognition of appearances. Precisely not, since he thinks Kant’s conception of critical knowledge is not up to the task of explaining the validity of our empirical and *a priori* cognition of appearances (we need, instead, speculative knowledge). (My thanks to Robert Pippin and Karin de Boer for pressing me to clarify this point.)

¹⁰ In the *Encyclopedie Logic*, he does not divide theoretical cognition (there called simply “Cognition”) into sub-headings, but he first discusses the “analytic method” (§227) and then the “synthetic method” (§228). His use of “synthetic method” (instead of “synthetic cognition”) might suggest that he is no longer talking about synthetic

suggests that the unity is external, and Hegel preserves the term, then that is some reason to think that Hegel also took the unity in theoretical cognition to be external. Moreover, he notes, in a passage I quoted in the previous chapter, that it “comes only to a *neutral* unity or a *synthesis*, that is, a unity of what is originally separated” (6.499/12.200). If we take this as a statement of Hegel’s own position on theoretical cognition, and it seems to be just that, then the common reading of Hegel’s criticism can no longer be a live option.¹¹

Having made these two points against the common reading, we are now in a better position to understand Hegel’s criticism. For if we start from the thought that Hegel accepts Kant’s description of the form of theoretical cognition, on which the synthetic unity of apperception arrives at only an external unity of what it combines, then we are forced to conclude that Hegel must think this conception demands or requires advancing to another form of cognition, presumably one which does not have the same external unity. Which is to say that he thinks we are forced to arrive at a form of cognition which is not of what is given, such that the manifold is of representations that are united in and for themselves. But before we describe this form of cognition in more detail (the task of §4), we still need to get in view why Hegel thinks we have to advance beyond theoretical cognition.

Hegel claims that Kantian philosophy amounts to a form of psychological or subjective idealism. This is a way of noting that, for Kant, thought winds up being parochial. Consider, for instance, the way that Hegel praises and then criticizes Kant about the synthetic unity of apperception. First Hegel praises Kant for recognizing that the source of objectivity of our

unity. But he is clearly thinking about the synthetic method as characteristic of a form of cognitive activity that combines a manifold (so he talks about definition in §229 and the genus/species tree in §230).

¹¹ One might try to sustain it as a live option, however, by insisting that Hegel is describing a position he means to reject (by adopting some version of the modification view). I tried to argue against this kind of view in chapter 4. It also strikes me as a very implausible reading of what Hegel says in this passage, as I tried to argue in my first point about Hegel’s attitude in criticizing Kant.

thought lies in “*the unity of self-consciousness*,” such that thought achieves “*the truth*” through self-consciousness (6.262/12.23-4). But then he notes that in Kant’s view we cannot actually achieve cognition of the truth but only cognition of appearances “because the content is only the manifold of intuition” (6.263/12.24). That is, Kant’s notion of the synthetic unity of apperception is such that it could have led him to a conception of thought on which it was not parochial, but he failed to achieve this conception because he thought that the only manifold which that synthetic unity could combine is the manifold of (sensible) intuition.

Why, though, think that Kant’s picture, on which thought produces no manifold, leads to parochialism? We saw in the previous section that Kant vindicates the objective validity of the synthetic unity of apperception by appealing to a form of intuition which is both analytic and synthetic. Because it is both analytic and synthetic, this unity does not belong to the understanding. Part of what that means is that we have to appeal to the ways in which we are given objects, ways which cannot be deduced from the form of thought itself. And so, in our cognition of the form of appearance, we are constrained to think of it as merely *our* form of sensible intuition (as noted at the end of the last chapter). We are able to comprehend that we cognize things as they are given to us; but we are not able to comprehend the subjective conditions that come with being given to us as objectively valid. We can think of things as given otherwise, in a different form, though we can have no cognition of such forms. It follows, Hegel argues, that we cannot exclude the thought that our forms of sensible intuition are mere subjective impositions on things as they are given to us, such that we cannot grasp them as they are in truth.¹²

¹² As Hegel puts it, the categories are “conditioned through the given material [*Stoff*], for themselves empty, and have their application and use only in experience, whose other component [*Bestandteil*], the determinations of feeling and intuition, is likewise only something [*ein*] subjective” (EL §43). That is, Hegel thinks of the subjectivity

It is important to note that my argument is not about the impossibility of knowing things in themselves. My argument is that we cannot comprehend how we can validly think about appearances, what we represent as real in space and time. For we can raise the question: with what right do we think of what is given to us as in space and time? Our answer to that question cannot simply consist in pointing out the *a priori* character of our forms of intuition. For that just means that we have to represent things as in space and time, that that constitutes what it is for us to represent something as given to us. But it does not reveal the objective validity of the peculiar constitution of our forms of intuition. Nor can we appeal to the understanding as that which reveals the objective validity of our peculiar constitution. For the common character of being in space and time belongs to sensibility; the understanding can be the source of the synthetic unity of our form of intuition, but it cannot be the source of the common character of the manifolds given in it, and so it cannot ground the objective validity of that character. Finally, we cannot appeal to the fact of the pure natural sciences either – not because there is no such fact, but rather because we seek to comprehend how there can be such a thing as a pure natural science. Indeed, this fact motivates Kant to give his account of space and time as forms of intuition – doing so is part of his attempt to explain how pure natural science is possible. But Hegel's argument is that Kant's attempt to do so fails, because it prevents us from grasping how our forms of intuition can be valid of appearances.

Kant, it seems, does not feel the force of this argument. In §13 he notes that “since an object can appear to us only by means of such pure forms of sensibility, i.e., be an object of empirical intuition, space and time are thus pure intuitions that contain *a priori* the conditions of the possibility of objects as appearances, and the synthesis in them has objective validity”

of our forms of intuition as tied to the emptiness of thought when considered by itself. My argument in this paragraph is an attempt to spell out the connection.

(A89/B121-2).¹³ But his explanation of why this synthesis is objectively valid reveals that other forms of intuition are thinkable. Consequently, the fact that an object can appear to us only as in space and/or time is a fact about us, such that we can indeed ask how it is valid of appearances. That is, the arguments of the Aesthetic do no more than show the subjective necessity of representing appearances as in space and time, and the argument of the Deduction establishes that they can do no more than that: thought cannot from within its understanding of itself as valid (as that understanding is provided for within theoretical cognition) arrive at the sensible conditions of its validity. But that means that thought is forced to regard these forms as mere subjective impositions on appearances.

Since the synthetic unity of apperception is understood as objectively valid only in relation to our forms of intuition, that those forms are a mere subjective imposition has as its result that the synthetic unity of apperception is also a mere subjective imposition. Not on our forms of intuition – the argument of the Deduction reveals that the synthetic unity of apperception is no imposition on that, but constitutes the unity of it as a form of intuition. Rather, it is a subjective imposition on what appears to us within our forms of intuition. This is what I take Hegel to mean by the “remaining conditioned-ness of the concept through a manifold of intuition” (6.261/12.22). Consequently, on this conception, the synthetic unity of apperception itself is parochial, such that we cannot grasp how the laws that determine it are also the laws that determine nature, or the objects that are given to us.

So, while Kant realized that the form of thought is originally synthetic, he thought that the only manifold of which it could be the synthesis was the manifold of sensibility, which is only given an external unity in the combination provided by thought. The implication for our understanding of Hegel is that there is another manifold, one which comes from thought itself, so

¹³ For a helpful account of the argument behind Kant’s claim in §13, cf. Merritt 2010: esp. 25-6.

that the unity of it is not merely external, and that understanding this will enable us to see how thought is not merely parochial. Before attempting to see what Hegel can possibly mean by thought producing a manifold, however, I want to relate my reading of his criticism to some other accounts in the secondary literature.

§2

I am certainly not the first to articulate this interpretation of Hegel's criticism of the Deduction. At least two other interpreters have offered it: Robert Pippin and, drawing on his work, John McDowell.¹⁴ Borrowing a phrase from McDowell, I will refer to this criticism as the "brute fact" criticism, since the fact that our forms of sensibility are as they are is nothing other than a brute fact about us, the objective validity of which is thereby vitiated.¹⁵ My interpretation is deeply indebted to both of these scholars, but it will help clarify my view if I explain where I diverge from them. I will focus first on Pippin, and then turn to McDowell.

¹⁴ Here's a particularly clear expression of this interpretation from each:

Pippin: "What we want to know is how to deal with the "merely our way of categorizing" suspicions, especially if we are not appealing to any empirical fact of the matter to establish our being so minded. One way (Kant's way, I think) would be to show that the sensible presence of the world in our immediate, receptive content with it just *could* not violate the requirements of our mindedness. To do *this*, though, we have to be able to formulate a way to describe formally, "all at once," as it were (a priori), something necessarily characteristic of such a putatively prejudgmental manifold that we can then "use" to make the argument about the impossibility of any "non- or bad fit" with conceptual requirements. We need the mere *forms* of givenness as such, and to do their job, they have to be "outside" thought, independent conditions. This leads to the standard picture of transcendental idealism, because this latter move has to look like a restriction and like a strangely psychological fact about our finitude" (Pippin 2005b: 212-3).

McDowell: "What spoils things is that when we widen the picture to take in transcendental idealism, it turns out that the "objects" that we have contrived to see empirical intuitions as immediately of, thanks to the fact that the intuitions have a kind of unity that must be understood in terms of apperceptive spontaneity, are after all, in respect of their spatiality and temporality, mere reflections of another aspect of our subjectivity, one that is independent of apperceptive spontaneity. If we can contrive not to have transcendental idealism framing the picture, we are not subject to this disappointment. Discarding the frame is just what we need in order to arrive, at least from this angle, at a Hegelian radicalization of Kant" (McDowell 2009a: 81).

¹⁵ McDowell 2009a: 85.

Pippin thinks that both Kant and Hegel aimed to respect the “unboundedness of the conceptual,” or the “autonomy” of the “normative.” This is a claim in the first instance directed at empirical cognition: empirical cognition depends on both sensibility and the understanding, but no part of the contribution of sensibility is intelligible without grasping its unity with the understanding. In the Allison-inspired terms I have been using to characterize Kant, this amounts to showing that the specter of a manifold of sensibility which is not as such informed by the understanding is ruled out.¹⁶

At this point in getting Pippin’s view on the table, we need to draw a distinction between two Kants. First, there is the Kant of the Transcendental Deduction, who is fully on board with the autonomy of the normative. But, second, there is another Kant, one who thinks that there is intuitional content that is cognitively significant and intelligible independently of the understanding, content which is meant to guide or constrain our judgments about the world. As Pippin interprets Hegel, the first Kant is the Kant that Hegel praises; the second Kant is the Kant that Hegel criticizes for understanding the relation between sensibility and the understanding “merely mechanically.”¹⁷

On this point, I think Pippin gets Hegel’s criticism wrong – as I tried to argue above, I do not think Hegel criticizes Kant for taking up the second position. I want to focus, though, on Pippin’s account of Hegel’s relationship to the first Kant, the one who wholeheartedly embraces

¹⁶ Or, at least, ruled out if we desire to think of that manifold as in any way cognitively significant – cf. Pippin 2007: 417. I am unaware of any place in which Pippin commits himself either to its being ruled out in terms of its real possibility or also in terms of its logical possibility.

¹⁷ Cf. Pippin 2005a: 26, 28; cf. also 1989a: 77-8. Both passages refer to Hegel’s claim at 2.328/4.343, that the “productive power of imagination” as it figures in Kant’s Deduction is “organic” and that nevertheless Kant “loses” this idea in the “mechanical relation of a unity of self-consciousness that is in opposition to the empirical manifold.” I read these passages along the lines suggested in the previous section: that is, what is organic is the realization that thought is as such synthetic; what is mechanical is the realization of this synthetic unity only within theoretical cognition in which sensibility provides the manifold to thought. As noted in the previous section, I think Hegel accepts Kant’s characterization of theoretical cognition as one in which the unity is “merely mechanical”; Pippin embraces a version of the more common reading, according to which Hegel disagrees with Kant’s picture of the merely external or mechanical unity of the sensible manifold.

the claim that it characterizes what it is to be a manifold of sensibility that it combinable by thought through the synthetic unity of apperception. For Pippin, this claim raises a question (for both the first Kant and Hegel) about the justification for our synthetic *a priori* judgments: “if the conceptual is unbounded (by anything non-conceptual), the normative domain autonomous, what *does* help account for the determinate principles constraining and guiding (normatively constraining and guiding) thought and action? What is the non-metaphorical meaning of the notion of the Concept’s ‘self-determination’ (in Kant’s *Groundwork* terms: our self-authorship of the law)?”¹⁸ Pippin means, I take it, to be talking no longer about empirical cognition, but about the *a priori* elements or aspects of our empirical cognition: what justifies our empirical claim-making having the *a priori* forms that it does?

The first Kant’s answer to this question consists, on Pippin’s account, in an appeal to the *a priori* forms of our intuition. As noted above, Pippin thinks that the problem with this appeal for Hegel lies in the brute fact character of those forms, such that they are turned into mere subjective impositions on what is given to us which thereby renders thought parochial.¹⁹ On Pippin’s view, the role of the *Phenomenology* is to establish at least two claims: first, that thought is free, such that the standard to which it must hold itself when determining whether it is merely parochial or objective is a standard it sets itself.²⁰ This is, I believe, a way of putting a point I stressed in my first chapter: we think in accordance with what we take to be true; consequently, we have to be able to grasp what we think as true, or make sense of our capacity to think as not merely parochial, but the sense of truth that figures in this account will be the very

¹⁸ Pippin 2007: 420.

¹⁹ At least, this is how he often puts it, and this is the reason on which I want to focus. It may be that Pippin’s understanding of there being two Kants sometimes carries over into his argument for Hegel’s conclusion that Kant’s appeal to the pure forms of intuition fail (at least, this is what McDowell argues: cf. 2009a: 82-5). But I will not discuss this aspect of Pippin’s reasoning here.

²⁰ Cf. Pippin 1989a: 141-2.

one that is internal to our claim, in thinking, to arrive at the truth. Second, the *Phenomenology* establishes that there must be some level of empirically unrevisable concepts (let's follow him and call them “Notions”) which set conditions on the possibility of objects, described in the *Logic*.²¹ These Notions are empirically unrevisable, though they are revisable non-empirically, such that there can be a Notional development. The goal or aim of the *Logic*, for Pippin, is to articulate both these concepts and their nature. In doing so, it must explain how it is possible for thought to determine itself in such a way that it is not parochial.²²

The *Logic* does this, according to Pippin, by starting from the thought that there are Notional determinations of reality. It then shows that all Notional determinations lead to an adequate Notional determination – in other words, by showing how there is a development from any *a priori* concept to a particular, fully unrevisable set of *a priori* concepts.²³ On Pippin's reading, Hegel cannot actually achieve this goal, because the development from one putative Notion to another is illicitly guided by Hegel's conception of what the adequate Notional determination looks like. The guidance is illicit because it is precisely the development that is supposed to justify Hegel's conception, and yet we can only make sense of this as a development by presupposing Hegel's conception.²⁴

²¹ Cf. Pippin 1989a: 169, 176-7.

²² It seems plausible, given his interpretation of the Objective Logic as a refutation of a pre-critical realism and as a refutation of the skepticism induced or created by Kant's critical philosophy, that both of the claims made in the *PhG* are, on his view, also made again in the *Objective Logic*: cf. Pippin 1989a: chapters 8-9. If this is right, then it would be better to say that only the *Subjective Logic* explains how it is possible for thought to determine itself in such a way that it is not parochial. I do not know which claim represents Pippin's actual position, but I do not believe it matters for my argument.

²³ Cf. Pippin 1989a: 236.

²⁴ As Pippin writes, Hegel “does not seem to notice that his very recollective *explanation* also undercuts the *justification* of the claim that there is a fundamental, empirically unrevisable, internally self-determining, “free” Notional level, constitutive of all possible knowledge of objects. The *Logic* was to demonstrate that this was so by showing how the assumption that this was not so, that this Notional level was, in Hegel's terms, “unfree” (realistically determined) or only relatively free (subjectively “posited” or “reflected”), was self-defeating, could be shown to presuppose such a wholly “free” Notationality. But now we find that this demonstration presupposed its result” (Pippin 1989a: 255).

Pippin's Hegel's *Logic* fails to accomplish the goal he at least sometimes sets himself. I want to focus not on that, but rather on Pippin's alternative account of what Hegel's goal should have been (and, Pippin thinks, often was). Hegel's goal should have been to demonstrate that any Notional inadequacy is situated within a development of Notions, in such a way that we can recognize the inadequacy of any set of Notions we might ever arrive at without that resulting in the conclusion that Notions as such are not objectively valid. So, for instance, Pippin notes that

the resolution in question is an absolute comprehension of the nature of the incompleteness of thought's determination of itself, of the necessity for reflectively determined Notions, and yet the instability and ultimate inadequacy of those Notions. Hegel's *Logic*, that is, does not conclude by proposing a "new" logic.... It proposes only a comprehension of the limitations of such a logic for a full "self-understanding." Such a strain in Hegel is inconsistent with what appears to be the surface meaning of his claims about completion and Absolute Truth, but it is quite consistent with all the earlier quoted passages about the *eternal* opposition of thought with itself and about the importance of method. It would mean, for example, that a truly determinate reflection is not a resolution of the opposition between positing and external reflection, but a continuation of such a constantly unstable reflective enterprise in a suitably self-conscious (and so, in a speculative sense, satisfied) way.²⁵

So, on Pippin's reconstruction, the goal of the *Logic* should be to show that the empirically unrevisable level of concepts that formally determine any possible object of experience are in a process of development such that the form of this process resolves or dissolves the worry that thought is parochial. This process is, for him, unending or permanently "incomplete" or "constantly unstable," but that does not mean that thought is parochial.²⁶

²⁵ Pippin 1989a: 257; cf. also 1989a: 141, 233, 240.

²⁶ Part of Pippin's claim that the categories are constantly unstable is grounded in his interpretation of Hegel on history (cf., e.g., Pippin 2007: 422-7.). I think that Pippin is clearly right (and much closer to Hegel than McDowell on this point) that Hegel thinks that our knowledge of history (in Hegel's sense) is Notional, so not empirical knowledge but something else, and that it does involve some kind of unending development. (On Pippin's account of the relation between historical knowledge and empirical knowledge, cf. Pippin 2007: 425.) But we need to distinguish between this kind of Notional development and the kind that is present in the *Logic*. About the latter, I want to claim (as we'll see) that there is no unending development of them, and that Pippin's conception of this unending development does not adequately respond to the worry that thought is parochial.

I contend that this view of the *Logic* does in fact make thought parochial. As Pippin emphasizes, the worry that thought is parochial emerges from recognition of the fact that the Notional determinations that structure its cognition of possible objects of experience have their source in the nature of the subject as a thinking being; this raises the worry that they might be merely subjective, characteristic not of what is but only of how it seems to thinking beings. As I understand his position, Pippin seeks to respond to this worry by noting first that there must be Notional determinations, that we are stuck with them, and then by noting that any particular challenge to them as parochial can be resolved in a development from one Notion to another. But the second part of his response does not work: collectively, for every possible Notion, I know it to have its source in my nature as a thinking being, and I know it to be a determination of a possible object of experience (or what can be given to me). If I remain stuck within this kind of Notion, no matter its specific content, then I am forced to conclude that thought is parochial, for I cannot comprehend how it could be a valid determination of the object. Consequently, the worry cannot be answered by noting that there is a constant instability in the Notions, or an unending process of transition. Once the worry has emerged in its proper form, we cannot grasp the Notion as merely unstable: we have to grasp it as parochial. And so we cannot grasp any development as one which resolves or responds to this form of the worry.

§3

McDowell's primary focus is on the externality of the forms of intuition in relation to the understanding. He is certainly right to note that, for Hegel, this externality vitiates the Deduction. But as he conceives of it, the alternative consists in thinking about the relation between understanding and sensibility differently, such that we can grasp the forms of intuition

themselves just through grasping the form of thought. So he notes that the Transcendental Deduction would have been a success “if Kant had not attributed brute-fact externality to the spatial and temporal form of our sensibility. In that case, the Deduction would have succeeded in showing how what first comes into view in the guise of the capacity of a finite understanding can be reconceived as the unlimited form of reason.”²⁷ The idea seems to be that we validate the synthetic unity of apperception through changing our conception of its dependence on the forms of intuition: we no longer think of that dependence as one which constrains or restricts or conditions the validity of the synthetic unity of apperception.

McDowell does not go into what would be required actually to do this, and it may well involve (on his view) radical revisions of a momentous sort such that the very architecture of the *Critique* (its way of being divided into parts) is no longer recognizable. But whatever the details of such an account, it will not work to create a successful Deduction – as Kant shows us.

For McDowell thinks of a revised deduction as essentially appealing to the *a priori* forms of sensibility, though in such a fashion that those are now somehow or other understood to be the forms of sensibility required by the understanding itself.²⁸ But, as we have seen, Hegel follows Kant in thinking that the right account of theoretical cognition is one on which the understanding is indeed restricted by the forms of sensibility, such that it can only achieve an external unity of the manifold contained therein. (Keep in mind that the externality concerns not the combinability of the manifold contains therein but the actual combination of it.) And we have also seen Kant’s argument for why this must be so: theoretical cognition, being cognition of what is given, must have a form such that it is empty without the contribution of sensibility. The form of this

²⁷ McDowell 2009a: 85.

²⁸ Pippin also sometimes talks as though the way to fix Kant’s Deduction is to arrive at a conception of a pure (sensible) intuition which is not separated from the understanding: cf. cf. 1989a: 85-7, 127, 169; 2005a: 29-30, 36-7. What I am saying against McDowell also applies to this strand in Pippin.

contribution cannot be fully determined by theoretical thought, such that it is contained within an account of the form of theoretical thought, because to do that requires thought producing an analysis that is also a synthesis. And theoretical thought – Kant and, following him, Hegel realized – cannot produce such a unity. No form of thought which is of what is given can.²⁹ So, McDowell is right that the error in Kant consists in the brute fact character of our forms of intuition. But the solution does not lie in rethinking the relation between the understanding and sensibility, since our forms of sensibility must be grasped as brute from within the understanding. Rather the solution is to recognize another form of thought, from which we can grasp the validity of the forms of the understanding and also the validity of the forms of sensibility.³⁰

To say that the understanding must remain external to sensibility can sound like I am saying that it must remain a brute fact about us that we have the forms of intuition that we have. I do not want to say that, obviously, since that is the source of the flaw in Kant's Deduction. But I do not have to say that, so long as we distinguish between two questions. First, there is the question which the Deduction is meant to address: with what right do we think that the *a priori* forms of our thought validly apply to objects? How can we exorcise the specter of cognitive chaos? And, second, there is the question of the valid deduction of our forms of sensibility: with what right do we think that space and time are the forms of sensibility or are themselves

²⁹ I take this to be what Sebastian Rödl means when he says that McDowell's *Mind and World*, his version of a Transcendental Deduction, does not go past the first half of the Deduction and, in particular, does not give an account of how we are to conceive of the validation of the categories in relation to the forms of intuition: cf. Rödl 2007a: §3. My alternative account of how Hegel does this is deeply indebted to Rödl's interpretation in §4 of the same paper.

³⁰ A consequence of this is that speculative cognition cannot be modeled on theoretical cognition. And McDowell does not appreciate this. For instance, against Pippin, McDowell wants to think of the “free development of the Notion,” which is one of Hegel’s terms for the logical progression and so for speculative cognition, as “fit[ting], for instance, the evolution of empirical inquiry. (This is the right instance to begin with if we approach Hegelian thinking from Kant’s Deduction.)” (McDowell 2009a: 86). The paradigm for the free development of the Notion, for the spontaneity exercised within that development, is precisely not empirical inquiry.

objectively valid? Are other forms of sensibility thinkable? My point against McDowell is that Hegel's answer to the first question does not involve reconceiving Kant's account of the relationship between the understanding and sensibility. We will explore his answer in greater detail in the next section, but the gist of it is that what validates the synthetic unity of apperception is that thought of it occurs in the logical progression, and the form of the logical progression is such that there is no difference, within it, between the mere thought of something and its validity. This answer turns on accepting Kant's characterization of the relationship between the understanding and sensibility, such that *the understanding* – or the theoretical form of thought – cannot achieve anything more than an external unity with the forms of sensibility, so that its way of grasping its unity with sensibility (and sensibility's *a priori* forms) cannot exclude the thinkability of other forms of intuition. But that is consistent with thinking that we can also cognize sensibility and its *a priori* forms speculatively, such that we can know their validity in that way. One way of putting this is to note that the apparent thought of other forms of sensible intuition can be ruled out – *but not by the understanding*. It can only be ruled out by speculative cognition.³¹ McDowell fails to separate the two questions, however, and so can see no room for this possibility.

§4

In this section, having offered my interpretation of Hegel's criticism of the Deduction and having situated that interpretation in relation to other, similar interpretations, I want to turn to Hegel's alternative Deduction. It is here that the work on the method of speculative cognition done in chapters 1-4 really begins to pay off. According to the interpretation I provided there, the

³¹ This does not occur in the *Logic*, of course, because a form of intuition is characteristic of us as thinking beings, and so is properly investigated in an account of reason as the principle for the existence of a particular kind of being. Hence, it is investigated in the *Encyclopedia of Spirit* (cf. §§399-421).

situation should be as follows: we have an account of theoretical cognition which we cannot make sense of without advancing beyond it, such that to advance beyond it requires transforming it in a way which preserves and makes sense of our initial account of theoretical cognition. Using the example of the transition from teleology to life as our model, I will show how we can make this out for theoretical cognition, starting from the conception of it shared by Kant and Hegel, and I will show how the resulting transformation explains the validity of the synthetic unity of apperception.

In the account of Kant's Deduction and of Hegel's criticism of it, we saw that to grasp the objective validity of the synthetic unity of apperception, we need to grasp a unity that is both analytic and synthetic with respect to the same manifold. In this way, we can understand the validity of the synthetic unity of apperception in relation to the manifold of such a unity. But, against Kant, we need to think of this unity as fully determined by thought, or as belonging to thought, and not as determining a form of sensibility. Part of what I want to show is that we can achieve this through transforming theoretical cognition.

To see this, it will help if I briefly rehearse the three components of my interpretation of speculative cognition. First, there is the tension: in our account of a stage, a requirement is generated which stands in tension with our account of the stage. Second, there is the transformation: we advance beyond the stage by grasping a form of it in which it is inseparably united with that which is in tension with it in its form in the first stage. And, third, there is the preservation: the transformation is such that it preserves the first stage as we originally accounted for it.

To rehearse our primary example again: teleology is a power to change the world by realizing an end through using means. The means are mechanical and chemical objects; they are

not the realization of the end but are used to realize the end. The realized end is unlike the means in that it is by its nature an end (not a merely mechanical and chemical object). But the realized end is just the same as a means, since it is nothing other than a mechanical and chemical object. How can we conceive of the completed end as an end if it is by its nature just a means?

To understand an end that is just by its nature a means, we must think of a means that is no mere mechanical/chemical object – we must think of a means that is already and as such the end – which is also to say, from the side of the end, that we need to think of the end as already as such realized in its means (and not as simply using those means to realize itself). This is the thought of life: the parts of the organism (its means for sustaining itself) are constituted by the end of the organism, and that end (of sustaining itself) is already realized in the organism itself. Indeed, it is through reference to the use of a realized instrumental end by a living being that we can make sense of it as an end: the clock is an end because it can aid me in my activity of sustaining myself (it can remind me that it is time for dinner).

Using the transition from teleology to life as our guiding example, we can see that the tension within theoretical cognition is discernable already from the account of it common to both Kant and Hegel. Within teleology, the end turns out to be by nature the same as the means, but we cannot grasp how the end can be a means. Within theoretical cognition, the analytic unity of thought presupposes the synthetic unity of thought, but we cannot grasp how. The analytic unity is potentially common to all of my representations, in that they can all be taken up into thought, but presupposes that these representations are also different from one another. But because the I think is simple, and does not contain a manifold within it, the analytic unity cannot explain the possibility of combining the manifold of different representations into one. Nevertheless it requires that they can all be combined, as it is only on that basis that it is possible to take them up

into thought, to represent them as mine. Consequently, the account of theoretical cognition – more specifically, of the analytic unity that constitutes the common character of all theoretical thought – generates a requirement, that I can combine my representations, and we cannot grasp how that requirement can be met within theoretical cognition itself (or, Kant would say, just by appeal to the understanding or the form of theoretical thought).

As shown above, Hegel does not take the Kantian route of resolving the tension by appealing to a form of intuition, external to thought. Rather, he thinks we can grasp theoretical cognition by transforming it, and thereby advancing beyond it.

In the transition from teleology to life, we have to grasp an end which just is a means, or a means which just is an end – we have to advance to life. For such an end and such a means there is no longer even a question about how the end can be the same as a mere means. If we follow through on the parallel, then advancing beyond theoretical cognition consists in articulating an analytic unity that is just as such, and with respect to the same manifold, a synthetic unity. This is just what Kant thought too, but with Hegel we conceive of this as a form of thought, and not as a way of being given objects. This analytic unity, to be an analytic unity, must be able to be common across a manifold of representations; but, just as such, it must also be able to combine that manifold into one representation, and so be a synthetic unity. Or, to put the point from the side of synthetic unity: to be a synthetic unity, it must be able to combine a manifold of representations; but, just as such, it must be able to be what those representations have in common. That is, what it is for this to be the common mark across a manifold of representations just is for it to be the principle which combines that manifold; this is a transformation of what it is to be an analytic unity (and equally a transformation of what it is to be a synthetic unity). For such an analytic unity and such a synthetic unity, the question about

how the analytic unity can ground the capacity to combine representations is no longer intelligible.

But what would it mean for this analytic and synthetic unity to be a form of thought, and not a way of being given objects? What manner of thing have we arrived at? And, further, how does this transformation effect the preservation of theoretical cognition? That is, how does this move to a simultaneously analytic and synthetic unity secure the objective validity of the synthetic unity of apperception as it applies to what is given?

Before attempting to really answer these questions, it is important to note that in the transformation we can still conceptually distinguish between the analytic unity and the synthetic unity. Just as in life, we can distinguish between an organ thought of as a means for the animal's survival and that very organ thought of as (part of) the end, part of the surviving animal. These two aspects constitute an inseparable unity, in that we cannot grasp what it is for an organ to be a means without also grasping that it is a part of the animal that constitutes the end of that means (and vice versa), but we can nevertheless conceptually distinguish between these two aspects. Similarly, we cannot grasp what it is for a unity to be analytic in speculative cognition without also grasping that it is an analytic unity by being a synthetic unity, but we can still distinguish between these two aspects (and, as we'll see, Hegel does distinguish between them).

To see that what we have arrived at is speculative cognition, we just need to turn to Hegel's descriptions of speculative cognition in "The Absolute Idea." There he notes, following Plato, that cognition should observe things "*in and for themselves*," staying away from examples and sticking to "bring[ing] what is immanent in them to consciousness" (6.557/12.242). He goes on:

The method of absolute cognition is in this respect [*insofern*] *analytic*. That it *finds* the further determination of its initial universal entirely alone in it is the

absolute objectivity of the concept, of which it is the certainty. – It is however just as much *synthetic*, in that its subject matter, determined immediately as *simple universal*, shows itself as an *other* through the determinacy that it has in its immediacy and universality themselves. This connection of a difference [*eines Verschiedenen*], that it thus is in itself, is nevertheless no longer what is meant as synthesis by finite cognition; it differentiates [*unterscheidet*] itself fully from that synthetic [*Synthetischen*] already through its just as much analytic determination in general, that it is the connection in the *concept* (6.557/12.242).³²

This passage is very important, and it will take some time to unpack it. First, note that the end of the passage is further confirmation of my interpretation of Hegel's response to Kant – in particular, that Hegel accepts Kant's characterization of theoretical cognition (or finite cognition) but thinks that we have a higher form of cognition, one in which the synthetic unity is not of a merely externally united manifold but of an originally united manifold (a manifold already contained in the starting concept).

Second, note Hegel's interesting association of objectivity with the analytic moment: it is because the further determination is contained in the starting concept that the progress to that further determination is “absolutely” objective. This contrasts with the kind of objectivity which we have seen in finite or theoretical cognition, in which we have to go outside of the initial concept to find a manifold such that we can arrive at a further determination of it: the I think, as Kant would put it, is simple and empty when considered by itself, and so we need to have a way of being given a manifold to further determine it. This confirms my claim that Hegel's alternative to the Deduction, specifically his claim that the synthetic unity of apperception is objective, consists in its being contained in the speculative cognition of the concept.

Third, it is not obvious how to relate his use of “analytic” and “synthetic” in this passage to Kant's use of analytic unity and synthetic unity as we have been using the terms. The point in the passage seems to be that we analyze a concept, or articulate that which we think when we

³² Cf. also §§238z and 239. Hegel also makes a similar claim in some lectures on logic he delivered in 1809-10: cf. 4.160, 162 (§§74-6 and 85).

employ this concept. This analysis reveals a relation between that concept and something else, but in such a way that we arrive at that something else just through the analysis (and so it is somehow contained in the starting concept). The articulation of this relation demands a synthesis, and in effecting this synthesis (which we must do in thinking the original concept) we advance to another concept. This is all consistent with (even suggestive of) the transformative view I advanced in chapter 3, but it is not clear how it relates to analytic and synthetic unity.

An analytic unity, recall, is that which can be common to a manifold of representations. What might the manifold be in this case? There are two manifolds to consider: first, the manifold that arises in the analysis of the starting concept, prior to advancing to the next concept. So, for instance, in an account of teleology we arrive at the manifold of subjective end and means; and in an account of theoretical cognition, we arrive at the manifold of analytic and synthetic unity. Second, there is the manifold of the starting concept and the concept we arrive at by advancing beyond it: the manifold of teleology and life, or of theoretical cognition and speculative cognition. Let's start with the first manifold, Hegel's topic in the passage at hand.

Abstractly, it is easy to appreciate that Hegel identifies analytic and synthetic unity in this passage. For the further determination of the initial starting point is that with respect to which the starting point is an analytic unity, since the more determined concept would be (in theoretical cognition) contained *under* the starting point. And Hegel's point is that this further determination is contained *within* the starting point, so that it is part of the manifold combined by the starting point. But it is hard to see what he can mean by this.

His point seems to be that the further determination is contained within the starting point but arrived at as something other than or different from the starting point. If we focus on our two examples, the starting point does not seem to be the general header (teleology, theoretical

cognition); rather it seems to be the first moment, or initial determination or characterization of that header: subjective end in the case of teleology and analytic unity or, to make the terminology a little less confusing, analytic cognition in the case of theoretical cognition. The “other,” then, is the second moment: the means and synthetic cognition. The second moment is clearly something other than the first moment: this is precisely what creates the tension, that the second moment is different from the first and that we cannot grasp the relation between them (without advancing to the next stage). So, within teleology, means are fairly clearly other than the subjective end which employs them. And yet it turns out that to make sense of teleology we need to grasp how the means can just as such be the subjective end. Similarly, within the form of theoretical thought, synthetic cognition, as the combination of a manifold, is fairly clearly not the same as analytic cognition, as what is common across a manifold of different representations. And it turns out that to make sense of analytic cognition we need to grasp how it can just as such be synthetic cognition.

For Hegel’s point to work, this relation of “otherness” needs to also be a further determination of the starting point, so that the starting point is contained within the further determination. This is more difficult to see. I take his point to be that the second moment is itself unintelligible without grasping its relation to the first moment, so that the first moment is in that sense contained in the second moment. So, his point is that we cannot grasp what a means is without grasping it as for the sake of some (subjective) end; consequently, we cannot grasp what a means is without grasping its relation to the subjective end. Similarly, we cannot grasp what synthetic cognition is without grasping it as that which enables analytic cognition: the combination of the manifold only makes sense in relation to my capacity to take up into thought

any of the elements of the manifold combined. So, the first moment is contained in the second moment.

If we combine that with his thought that the second moment is contained within the first moment – that an analysis of subjective end yields the concept means and that an analysis of analytic cognition yields the concept synthetic cognition – then we have a unity that is analytic and synthetic with respect to the same manifold. In other words, the manifold that is combined in the starting point (subjective end and means; analytic and synthetic cognition), by being contained in it, is that with respect to which it is an analytic unity: the starting point combines this manifold by being that which is common across it.

We can further elucidate this analytic/synthetic unity by comparing it to the analytic/synthetic unity of a form of intuition. The sense in which the further determination (means, synthetic cognition) contains the starting point (subjective end, analytic cognition) is different from the sense in which one part of space contains another. Both have in common the following important feature: to represent the further determination or the larger space requires representing the starting point or the enclosed space. But clearly the concept means does not contain the concept end in the way that the intuition of a larger space contains the spaces enclosed in it. Hegel is attentive to this difference, and indeed insists upon it: so he notes that the “progress [*Fortgang*]” is not “a flowing from an *other* to an *other*” and he claims that “each new stage of *going outside of itself* [*Aussersichgehens*], that is, the *further determination*, is also a going into itself, and the greater *extension* [*Ausdehnung*] is just as much *higher intensity*” (6.569-70/12.250-1). As we have seen, the self-externality of space and time is an “*Aussereinander*”; in it, we essentially distinguish between the movement outward and the movement inward. The structure of the logical progression is different.

But what I have said so far should enable us to see how to think about the second manifold of stages. The most natural thing to say about the transformative structure is that the analysis of the first stage is also the synthesis which generates the second stage. And that seems to be part of what Hegel is saying in the passage. Kant would have said about an analysis in this sense that it rests on a prior (at least possible) combination. But here, rather than resting on a prior synthesis, the analysis of the first stage just is the synthesis of the marks into the next stage. Consequently, here too we see a version of the claim that the analytic unity is a synthetic unity. That which is common to the concepts we can analyze out of the first concept, in the sense that they are all mine or concepts that I can think, just is the combination of them: their being mine (or their being thinkable) just is my combining them to form the next concept (that without which I cannot think the first, because of the tension).

The relation of analytic unity to synthetic unity evident in both manifolds would make no sense within theoretical cognition. For within theoretical cognition we oppose that which is contained within a concept to that which falls under it (recall the branching structure of the genus/species tree). Consequently, a further determination cannot be contained within the concept of which it is a further determination; moreover, what is thought as common to a manifold cannot be that which combines the manifold into one. The analytic unity of apperception rests on but is not identical with the synthetic unity of apperception. Moreover, Hegel notes that the relation of analysis to synthesis would make no sense within theoretical cognition when he notes that the synthesis in question is not like the synthesis in finite cognition; he might also have noted (and does elsewhere: cf. 6.515-6/12.212) that the analysis in question is not like the analysis in finite cognition.

Having briefly articulated how analytic and synthetic unity are at work in Hegel's description of speculative cognition, I want to consider some further evidence which will clarify what kind of concept we are left with when we do not oppose what is contained within it with what falls under it.

The evidence that I want to turn to now is his description of the circular structure of the *Logic*. The structure of a circle contrasts with the branching structure of a genus/species tree. The latter structure makes sense wherever we distinguish between that which falls under a concept and that which is contained within it. The concepts that fall under it can be represented, graphically, as lower nodes on a tree, while the genus concept contained in it can be represented as a higher node in the tree. And wherever we have this tree, we can oppose that with respect to which a concept is analytic (the nodes falling under it, or its species, and their species, etc.) and that with respect to which a concept is synthetic (it combines the *differentia(e)* and the genus concept).

Hegel describes the method of cognition suitable to the genus/species tree as engaging in an “infinite *backward* going progress in proof and derivation” and also in a progress that “rolls forth just as much *forwards* into the infinite” (6.567/12.249). That is, for each node on the tree, we can further determine it downwards, into species and subspecies etc. And for each node on the tree, we can analyze it, seeking its genus; and we can do the same for the genus, and the genus of that genus, etc.³³ Hegel insists that, unlike the method of theoretical cognition, the method of cognition appropriate for the *Logic* does not separate out the two movements – in progressing forward, or further determining the starting point, one also regresses backward and grounds that very starting point. As he puts it, “It is in this way that each step of *progress*

³³ The infinite descent is equivalent to Kant's point that there is no *infirma species*: cf. *Jäsche Logic* §11 (9:97). The appeal to an infinite ascent is a somewhat more difficult issue to relate to Kant, and hangs on whether the genus/species tree has a highest genus; neither point is worth discussing at present.

[Fortgangs] in further determination, in that it recedes from [*entfernt sich von*] the undetermined beginning is also an *approach back* [Rückannäherung] toward the same, so that what initially appears as different [*verschieden*], the *backward going grounding* [rückwärtsgehende Begründen] of the beginning and the *forward going further determination* of it, falls into each other and is the same” (6.570/12.251).

This description reinforces my claim that we do not oppose what is contained within a concept with what falls under it for the concepts of the *Logic*. That is, by combining the starting point with a further determination, we do not branch down to a lower species, one that is contained under the starting point – rather, we return to the starting point (now transformed). Or, to put the same point a little differently, the synthetic unity is not an external unity of what is originally separated: it is a unity of what is already contained within the starting point, and so is not originally separated.

Nevertheless, that the starting point is transformed means that we do distinguish between the way in which the further determinations are contained in the first stage and the way in which they are contained in second stage. This is no longer the distinction between what is contained in and what falls under. Rather, this is a distinction between containing within in such a way that generates a tension, and containing within in such a way that there is no longer any tension.³⁴

³⁴ The point that the kind of conceptual containment that occurs in the *Logic* is not one in which we distinguish between containing within and falling under is bound to sound bizarre. Indeed, it might seem like it entails that the concepts that occurs in the *Logic* are not thought by Hegel to have instances. That is, it might seem to entail that there are no qualities, quantities, judgments, living beings, distinct acts of synthetic cognition – to take just a few of the concepts in the *Logic*. And that is so bizarre-seeming as to border on the unintelligible. But I do not think this follows from my claim about the form of speculative cognition.

First, my claim is about the relation between the stages in the *Logic*, or about the presence of these concepts within speculative cognition. It is not about how these stages would relate to things in the world. Second, though this is not an aspect of the *Logic* that I have tried to explain in this dissertation, the tension that arises within any non-final stage explains the possibility of indefinitely many instances of that stage. For instance, within teleology, the subjective end seeks to employ its means through an intermediary means; this not only opens up the possibility for multiple means, but also of multiple ends since the original means is now a new end. Similarly, the fact that the unity achieved in synthetic cognition is external to the manifold it combines also entails that there can be distinct

Moreover, we can now say a little bit more about the relation between this speculative structure and the form of intuition: within the form of intuition, the manifold is given to thought; but here, the manifold is produced by thought in that it is also responsible for separating the manifold and not just for combining it. That is, what produces the manifold of determinations in their difference (subjective end and means; synthetic and analytic cognition) is thought itself.

I am not certain whether what I have said suffices to make sense of the structure of Hegel's *Logic*, and in particular the way in which it is both an analytic and synthetic unity. But it is, at least at the moment, all that I know how to say to make it intelligible. I now want to turn to clarify how this structure explains Hegel's alternative to Kant's Deduction. What I have said so far is that his alternative consists in the occurrence of the synthetic unity of apperception within the logical progression, the structure of which I have just finished describing. But I have not yet said how its occurrence in this structure is supposed to secure its objective validity. That is, the critical question still needs to be addressed.

The critical question emerges because the synthetic unity of apperception is valid of objects as they are given to us. For thought of what can be given to us, we distinguish between what is cognized and the activity of thought: we grasp that our thought has a certain form, a form which stems from our nature as thinking beings, and we think of that form as applying to what is given, which is not thought of as having that same nature. There are thus subjective conditions of cognition, about which we can wonder with what right we take them to be objective conditions. Thus, the critical question: how do I know that the form that I contribute to cognition is valid of objects as they appear to me?

acts of synthetic cognition. So, rather than foreclosing the possibility that objects in the world fall under the concepts in the *Logic*, the different containment structure actually explains how they can. One needs, to be sure, a more worked out explanation of this, but that will have to await future work.

That question is only intelligible because the form of thought is of what can be given. Where instead the form of thought is no longer grasped in relation to what can be given, then we can no longer distinguish between what is cognized and the source of the form of our cognition of that. Consequently, there is no longer any room to ask about the validity of that form. The thought behind Hegel's alternative Deduction is that we can validate the synthetic unity of apperception by grasping it in this way.

In the abstract we can see that this is precisely the cognitive position at which we need to arrive, whether Hegel manages to do it or not. For that which validates the synthetic unity of apperception must be such that it enables us to comprehend how the form of thought can be the same as the form of the world, so that the form within theoretical cognition can then be understood to be no mere imposition. The form of thinking of this common nature cannot be one in which we think of that form as arising from us (and so as having its source in thought as opposed to the world). For such a form would remain saddled with the question about the validity of the form of our thinking of this common nature. Rather, the form of our thinking of this common nature must also be (part of) the common nature, such that we do not think of it as having its source in the cognizing subject as opposed to what is cognized. By a thought's having this form, by its being thinkable in this way, we know it to be valid, because its thinkability is inseparable from its objectivity.

Speculative cognition is intended by Hegel to have this form. Because speculative cognition is not of what can be given, we can no longer intelligibly ask about the validity of some subjective condition. For with respect to what, of what object, are we asking about the validity? In relation to what are these conditions subjective as opposed to objective? Nothing. The characterization of the form of speculative cognition as subjective lacks purchase. The

method is the movement of the subject matter itself, as Hegel often says, and so there can be no question about the validity of the method as it applies to the subject matter. Since the synthetic unity of apperception occurs in the speculative progression, it is valid; the critical question disappears because we have grasped the validity of the synthetic unity of apperception not by relating it to what is given but by thinking it speculatively.

We can put this point in more Kantian language by recalling that a consequence of Kant's conception of the Deduction is that we distinguish between the Metaphysical and the Transcendental Deduction: that is, we distinguish between the act of thinking the synthetic unity of apperception, an act in which we grasp it as an *a priori* form of thought, and the act in which we apply that synthetic unity to the form of intuition, thereby determining that form, validating the synthetic unity of apperception for what appears within that form, and restricting its validity to what appears within that form. But a result of Hegel's objection to Kant is that we cannot distinguish between the act of thinking the synthetic unity of apperception and establishing its objective validity. This fits well with the transformative view of speculative cognition. For, on it, the very act of thinking a concept yields a manifold which cannot be combined without advancing to another concept. Advancing to the next concept validates the first concept, but it does so just by being the condition on our thinking or grasping it.

Rationalists, as both Kant and Hegel understand them anyway, fail to draw the distinction between the conditions of thought and the conditions of cognition. Hegel does draw this distinction, within theoretical cognition. But no such distinction is drawn within speculative cognition, because it is the form of cognition in which being and thinking are inseparably united. That is, it is the form of thought of the identity of the laws that determine thinking and the laws that determine being. This identity is not available within theoretical cognition itself: we see this

when we grasp the tension between analytic unity and the capacity to combine; it is this lack of identity which forces Kant to appeal to the pure forms of intuition. But the right response is rather to preserve theoretical cognition in advancing beyond it.

Someone might object: how can this explain how cognition can be valid of what is given? After all, the manifold contained within the *Logic* is not the manifold given to us in experience. In appearing within the logical progression, we know the synthetic unity of apperception to be the way in which being is, for the progression is inseparably both thought and being. There is a separation between thought and being within theoretical cognition (hence the need to appeal to a form of intuition there, an appeal which – I repeatedly emphasize – Hegel also acknowledges). But there is no such separation within speculative cognition, and so the objection is no longer intelligible. Consequently, we know the validity of the stages that occur in speculative cognition because we know them to constitute the nature common to thought and the world. For Hegel, the synthetic unity of apperception is objectively valid of appearances not because it applies to the *a priori* forms of our intuition (though it does do that). Rather, it is objectively valid of appearances because they are in *the world*, the *a priori* forms of which are articulated in the *Logic*.

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