*Hegel’s Critique and Development of Kant:*

*The Passion of Reason*

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This concern with aim or results, with differentiating and passing judgement on various thinkers is therefore an easier task than it might seem. For instead of getting involved with the real issue, this kind of activity is always away beyond it; instead of tarrying with it, and losing itself in it, this kind of knowing is forever grasping at something new; it remains essentially preoccupied with itself instead of being preoccupied with the real issue and surrendering to it. To judge a thing that has substance and solid worth is quite easy, to comprehend it is much harder, and to blend judgement and comprehension in a definitive description is the hardest thing of all. (*PS*: 3)

Abstract

This is a study of Hegel’s critique and development of Kant’s theoretical philosophy. The main purpose of this thesis is to do justice to *both* of theseaspects of Hegel’s complex and notoriously difficult philosophical relationship with Kant. My aim in Part I is to present in a sympathetic light Hegel’s various objections and negative response to certain Kantian doctrines. My aim in Part II is to argue that Hegel’s positive relationship with Kant does not consist in accepting and merely carrying through Kant’s transcendental philosophy, but rather in him hoping to derive from Kant clues to a superior form of logic; an understanding of how to make transcendental claims; an account of conceptual form; and a conception of philosophical enquiry as involving self-transformation. Understood in this way, we can make better sense of Hegel’s critique of Kant and also his fundamental debt to him as well.

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Abbreviations

I shall use the following abbreviations for the following works:

Kant:

*CPR* – *Critique of Pure Reason*

Hegel:

*DFS* – *The Difference Between Fichte’s and Schelling’s System of Philosophy*

*F & K* – *Faith and Knowledge*

*PS* – *Phenomenology of Spirit*

*LHP* – *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*

*SL* – *Science of Logic*

*EPSO* – *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline*

*EL* – *Encyclopaedia Logic*

*BP* – *Berlin Phenomenology*

Peirce:

*CP* – *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*

*EP1* – *The Essential Peirce, Volume 1*

*EP2 – The Essential Peirce, Volume 2*

Wittgenstein:

*PI* – *Philosophical Investigations*

McDowell:

*M & W* – *Mind and World*

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# Introduction: The *Pharmakon* of Analytic Philosophy

Hegel is one of the few philosophers who have aroused as much contempt as they have admiration. In academic philosophy, Hegel came to be arguably the main target of attack by the founders of the analytic movement, Russell and Moore. As Paul Redding writes, “[f]or Russell, the revolutionary innovations in logic starting in the last decades of the nineteenth century had destroyed Hegel's metaphysics by overturning the Aristotelian logic on which, so Russell claimed, it was based, and in line with this dismissal, Hegel came to be seen within the analytic movement as an historical figure of little genuine philosophical interest”.[[1]](#footnote-1) Furthermore, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that part of the mantra of the Logical Positivist movement of the Vienna Circle, with its aim to commit metaphysics, theology, and arguably ethics to the flames, was a reaction to Hegelianism, which was increasingly perceived as a pernicious and sickly philosophical position which needed to be destroyed, because it was ostentatiously Aristotelian. For philosophers such as Russell, Moore, Mach, Schlick et al., the development of mathematics, logic, natural science, and formal semantics meant that philosophy could now receive the welcome antidote to cure it from the pathology of Hegelianism. The question now is why did these philosophers regard Hegel in such a light, why did they consider Hegel as a poison to philosophical thought?

The first reason for this is a stylistic difference between Hegel’s writing and the writing of Moore et al. Reading certain passages from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Science of Logic* is often a taxing task – as Frederick Beiser writes, it is “the intellectual equivalent of chewing gravel”.[[2]](#footnote-2) Hegel’s writing is filled with verbose terminology, obscure expressions, and convoluted syntax. This stands in contrast to the more down-to-earth exoteric prose of philosophers such as Moore, whose writing style is easier to follow and digest. Indeed, the analytic tradition prides itself on a clear and accessible writing style as a necessary device for good philosophical thought, which means that the work of those whose prose is at times impenetrable is taken to be of less value than those who express their ideas in a clearer fashion. The basic premise behind the connection between clarity and philosophical virtue, and obscurity and philosophical vice, is that clearer writing aims to dialectically engage one’s reader or opponent, which is something that obscure writing fails to do. An obscure point is sometimes a cover for intellectual confusion on the part of the writer. Furthermore, obscure writing is usually not the kind of writing to invite possible criticism (whether this is acceptance or rejection of the point being made), since one cannot reasonably judge a point to be good/bad, right/wrong, acceptable/unacceptable if the kind of point one is confronted by is shrouded in mystery. This is often why, when one is confronted with an obscure concept or idea, the natural reaction is to withhold assent to *any* understanding of the concept or idea until the matter has been clarified. To put it in the form of an analogy, reflecting on obscure concepts, etc. is like trying to firmly grasp an eel. With clear and unambiguous claims, the meaning of the claims is immediately accessible for rational agents to reflect upon, with the consequence that interpretations and judgements about the claims can be genuinely made. To put the point in a more Sellarsian way, a clear point is one which will figure in the logical space of reasons, the locus of justification, whereas an obscure point will not feature in this space. Thus, mysticism and obscurity, because they cannot figure in the space of reasons, can be seen as (i) aiming to cover trivial or shallow points and impress the reader with a veil of complex terminology – following Harry Frankfurt (2005), this is often why obscure remarks are labelled as ‘bullshit’; or (ii) aiming to cover the obscurantist’s own lack of understanding of the relevant concept/topic - to quote John Searle’s famous remark: “… if you can’t say it clearly you don’t understand it yourself”;[[3]](#footnote-3) or (iii) aiming to win debates by forcing one’s opponent to become speechless or concede that the point cannot be refuted. Unsurprisingly, (i), (ii), and (iii) all count as serious failings; for a large number of analytic philosophers, Hegel commits at least one of these epistemic vices, given his obscurity.

However, before rushing to condemn Hegel for his stylistic flaws, a crucial point must be made: clarity is hardly a ubiquitous property of analytic philosophical writing. At the core of Frege’s ‘Sense and Reference’ lies the notorious expression ‘mode of presentation’, an obscure idea that has prompted varieties of interpretation in the secondary literature on Frege; Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* is hardly a paradigm of philosophic clarity; and more recently, Christopher Peacocke’s work on mental content is challenging and demanding to follow. One could go on. Certainly, Hegel is very obscure, and all things being equal, clarity is always to be preferred to obscurity. However, the reason why some philosophers write obscurely is not necessarily due to a sophistical motive, etc., but rather sometimes because of the difficulty of the problems that they are dealing with: Frege, one of the most important and celebrated figures in analytic philosophy, in working on one of the most fundamental issues in philosophical logic, could not find a clearer way of expressing what he meant by ‘Sense’, not because his point was a shallow one or that he was intending to trick his readers or didn’t know what he intended to say, but because he was confronting a very deep philosophical issue, the depth of which pushes human language and cognition to its limits. The same can be said for philosophers like Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, Wittgenstein, John McDowell, and Robert Brandom, who all write quite obscurely (some more than others), but who confront philosophic questions of immense complexity and sensitivity. Whilst this does not completely exonerate them from writing obscurely, my point here is that any derision of their work on grounds of obscurity is often unfair, because their critics fail to appreciate just how difficult are the questions that they ask.

Furthermore, the prevalent worries about Hegel’s writing also seem to stem from the great struggles that the analytic tradition has in interpreting Hegel’s *Phenomenology*: the text is structured in a specific way to place the reader in the position of the work’s protagonist, namely human thought.[[4]](#footnote-4) This is why Hegel intends *us* to transform our conception of ourselves and the object of knowledge as we move through thought’s dramatic and heady development through history. Of course, such a way of writing philosophy – as a kind of *Lesedrama* – is not just unique, but is also in stark contrast with more traditional styles, such as Hume’s or Kant’s. Hence, an important reason why Hegel is regarded as obscure is that many struggle with reading the *Phenomenology* as Hegel intended it to be read, because some philosophers have looked at the work as if it is meant to be a typical philosophical treatise. If, however, one approaches the *Phenomenology* from the appropriate perspective, underlying difficulties will remain but these will at least have their initial preconceptions somewhat removed.

So, having set aside some of the more superficial grounds for the animosity towards Hegel and his work, I would now like to discuss what I think is the more fundamental reason why Hegel is treated as the ‘poison’ of philosophy in general by analytic philosophers.

Such derision has principally emanated from accepting the traditional interpretation of Hegel’s idealism as a thesis claiming that there is a single super-individual entity, *Geist*, and that all else that exists is to be thought of as part of the conscious development of this being.[[5]](#footnote-5) As far back as the Neo-Kantian movement in 19th century Germany, philosophers have in general looked at the Hegelian notions of ‘the Absolute’, ‘the Idea’, ‘dialectic’, ‘Spirit’, ‘Subject’, ‘Being’, etc., which lie at the centre of Hegelianism, as instantiations of obscure concepts harking back to an elaborate and fanciful metaphysical tradition that Kant had rejected. According to Hegel’s critics, from Schopenhauer to Popper, Hegel’s theoretical philosophy is to be viewed with great hostility: the absolute idealist corpus is composed of a metaphysico-theology that is at odds with more secularised analytic concerns; Hegel’s dialectical method violates the principles of logic; and his philosophy of history has eerie connotations of extreme conservative thought. In sum, for his critics, Hegelianism is “a dismal failure, representative only of Teutonic smoke, self-indulgent excess, and the ugliest prose style in the history of the German language”.[[6]](#footnote-6) More specifically, with regard to Hegel’s critique of Kant’s theoretical philosophy, it seems hopeless to interpret Hegel as criticisingKant in a way that does not result in Hegelianism being simply a return to the metaphysical tradition of Plotinus, Leibniz, and others. This is because Hegel is usually treated as exemplifying the type of pre-Critical metaphysics against which Kant had reacted,[[7]](#footnote-7) and as advocating a return to a theological conception of philosophy to which Kant had been opposed. With regard to Hegel’s natural philosophy, as Beiser writes, “it was speculative, used a priori reasoning rather than patient empirical investigations, and it seemed anthropocentric, reviving final causes, occult powers, and essences”.[[8]](#footnote-8) Such a way of conceiving scientific enquiry became, for the Positivists, the model of how science should not be done. Hegel was being portrayed as the bête noire of the intellectual movement of the early 20th century with both philosophers and scientists unified in their contempt for his ideas.

Thanks to the traditional interpretation of Hegel as a spirit monist, analytic philosophy was subject to two competing anti-Hegelian pressures: from Russell and Moore,[[9]](#footnote-9) who defined themselves against Hegel generally, and from the Logical Positivists who defined themselves against Aristotelian-Hegelian metaphysics and a non-secularised conception of philosophical enquiry. What this signifies is not that Hegel’s analytic critics failed to make much of an effort to engage with him, but that they were embarrassed to attempt to, because they believed that the *Zeitgeist* had moved from religiosity to secularism, from Aristotelianism to naturalism. It was not just that Hegel was asking the kinds of questions that were now rendered antiquarian, but that those very questions that he regarded to be of great philosophic importance were nonsensical. Hegel was seen as poisonous, because he was interpreted as being squarely opposed to the scientific and secular culture of the early twentieth-century, in which not only did European man no longer have a penchant for the Absolute, but he regarded having such a penchant as something fundamentally harmful.

Since the 1970s, the derogatory aspect of analytic philosophy’s *pharmakon* has been placed under great scrutiny. Hegel may have been poison to the early generation of analytic thinkers, but by the turn of the 21st century, Hegel was being seen by some (but not generally, though) as a cure for analytic philosophy, rather than its poison. By this I mean that not only were some analytic philosophers rejecting the portrayal of Hegel as the bête noire of philosophy, they also began to explicitly use Hegelian ideas in certain topics. At first, features of Hegel’s social and political philosophy were being applied to contemporary problems in those particular disciplines. This is most clearly seen in the work of Charles Taylor at the time. However, some analytic philosophers then started to explicitly use Hegelian ideas in their work on epistemology and philosophy of mind. I think that there are three reasons for this: firstly, since Kripke and others made talk about natural kinds acceptable, and Putnam, though a pragmatist and not an Aristotelian, posed objections to the fact/value distinction, Aristotle’s stock, after years in steep and steady decline, began to rise again. And if positive talk about Aristotle was now being encouraged, then it is natural that positive talk about Hegel would eventually follow, given Hegel’s intimate connection to the great philosopher. Secondly, the traditional interpretation of Hegel has come under heavy criticism in recent decades.

For, in contrast to the spirit monist reading of Hegel, two rival schools of thought have recently emerged: the first of these camps is the non-metaphysical interpretation of Hegel, as advanced by J. N. Findlay (1958), Klaus Hartmann (1972), Robert Pippin (1989, 1997, 2008), Terry Pinkard (1994, 2000), and Robert Brandom (2002, 2009). All these philosophers agree that there is ultimately nothing in the Hegelian text that genuinely supports the spirit monist interpretation, and that the way one ought to understand Hegel is by regarding him in a thoroughly non-metaphysical manner.[[10]](#footnote-10) Findlay suggests that Hegel’s concerns are restricted to providing a criterion for explanation which regards teleology as indispensable for our understanding of nature. Hartmann interprets Hegel as a category theorist who is interested in developing a conceptual framework necessary for meaningful discourse about the objects of experience. Pippin argues that Hegel is working within a transcendental framework like Kant, focusing on the transcendental unity of apperception and developing the necessary conditions required for possible experience. Pinkard claims that Hegel should be viewed as a social epistemologist concerned with the development of norms through social interaction. Brandom interprets Hegel as a normative inferentialist who aimed to ground an inferential conception of meaning on the logical notions of mediation and determinate negation. Though there are important differences between these readings of Hegel, the most important point is that Findlay, Hartmann, Pippin, Pinkard, and Brandom reject *any* metaphysical understanding of Hegel partly on the basis of interpretive charity: this is made clear by Pippin, who writes,

... how could he have accepted, as he did, Kant’s revelations about the fundamental inadequacies of the metaphysical tradition, could have enthusiastically agreed with Kant that the metaphysics of the “beyond,” of substance, and of traditional views of God and infinity were forever discredited, and then could have promptly created a systematic metaphysics as if he had never heard of Kant’s critical epistemology. Just attributing moderate philosophic intelligence to Hegel should at least make one hesitate before construing him as a post-Kantian philosopher with a precritical metaphysics.[[11]](#footnote-11)

The second camp that rejects the spirit monist interpretation is what has been called the revised metaphysical interpretation.[[12]](#footnote-12) This has been advanced by Beiser (1993, 2005), Thomas Wartenburg (1993), Rolf-Peter Horstmann (2006), Stephen Houlgate (2005, 2006), Robert Stern (2002, 2008, 2009), Kenneth Westphal (2003), and James Kreines (2006, 2008). All these philosophers agree with Pippin et al. that the spirit monist interpretation of Hegel is not correct. Beiser et al. do not attribute to Hegel the type of baroque metaphysics, *pace* the more traditional interpretation of Taylor and others. Furthermore, like the non-metaphysical reading, the revised metaphysical reading stresses how important Kant’s rejection of transcendent metaphysics was in shaping Hegel’s philosophical commitments. However, in opposition to the non-metaphysical interpretation, Beiser et al. reject the idea that Hegel’s acceptance of the Kantian critique of metaphysics prevents the motivation and development of a genuinely metaphysical system of a distinctively Hegelian kind.[[13]](#footnote-13) As Beiser writes,

There is indeed much truth behind the non-metaphysical interpretations. These scholars rightly emphasise Hegel’s rejection of traditional metaphysics, his endorsement of Kant’s critique of Leibnizian-Wolffian rationalism, and his purely immanent conception of philosophy. On the other hand, these points do not imply that Hegel was not a metaphysician at all. If Hegel abjured metaphysics as a science of the transcendent, he still pursued it as a science of the immanent ... For Hegel, the problem with traditional metaphysics is not that it attempted to know the infinite, but that it had a *false interpretation* of the infinite as something transcending the finite world of ordinary experience.[[14]](#footnote-14)

In other words, the revised metaphysical interpretation of Hegel sees Hegel as opposing *transcendent* metaphysics, but as espousing a form of immanent (naturalist) metaphysics that combines elements of Aristotelianism with Spinozism. In this way, Hegel is understood to have pre-Critical ambitions whilst developing a philosophically intelligible enquiry into the basic structure of reality. The ‘extravagance’ of Hegelianism then,[[15]](#footnote-15) according to this interpretation, is *not* its *particular* understanding of the infinite, etc. but rather is its philosophical scope and systematic ambition.

Thirdly, in conjunction with the rehabilitation of crucial areas of Hegel’s theoretical philosophy has been the development of a hybrid analytical-Hegelian epistemology and philosophy of mind, partly inspired by Wilfrid Sellars’s famous rejection of the Myth of the Given. Such a philosophical position is to be found in the work of McDowell (1994) and Brandom (1994, 2002), where Hegel’s arguments against non-conceptual content, foundationalism, scepticism, and the fact/value distinction are a major influence on these analytic philosophers: they seek to shift the analytic tradition from its fondness for ‘bald naturalism’ to a position that instead of rigidly separating normativity and meaning, freedom and nature, and the like, unifies them in a meaningful and coherent manner. What I have in mind particularly is how McDowell develops Hegel’s Aristotelian realism into a position which is not only supportive of a direct realist account of perception, but one which is also critical of the British Empiricist-inspired model of experience. By this, I mean that McDowell sees Hegel as building on a crucial insight of Kant’s – that without concepts, representational content is blind – to the point where experience is no longer just providing causal inputs, but that these inputs in and of themselves possess conceptual content. This expansion of Kant’s Discursivity Thesis, as McDowell has it, is necessary to overcome the apparent gap between mind and world. Conceived in this way, Hegel’s idea that all experience is conceptually informed plays a crucial role in the scheme/content dualism debate, and the representationalism/inferentialism debate, both of which are regarded as important topics in contemporary analytic philosophy.

Before I outline where my allegiances lie, I wish to discuss a basic problem facing Hegel interpretation in general: it should now be clear how Hegel has been and continues to be understood in a multitude of different ways. We have seen that there are three principal schools of thought concerning the understanding of Hegel’s philosophical doctrines: (i) the spirit monist (traditional) interpretation; (ii) the non-metaphysical interpretation; and (iii) the revised metaphysical interpretation. However, each school of thought has methodological problems. If we adopt the spirit monist reading, then it seems impossible to make Hegel intelligible and both historically and philosophically relevant. If we adopt the non-metaphysical reading, then we run the risk of imposing doctrines on Hegel that make the *actual* Hegel out to be completely different from the Hegel whom take to be relevant to our concerns. To some extent, this is also a potential problem for the revised metaphysical interpretation of Hegel. This point is also made by Beiser, who writes,

The danger of [the non-metaphysical interpretation] is anachronism. We make Hegel alive and relevant, a useful contributor to our concerns; but that is only because we put our views into his mouth. What we learn from Hegel is then only what we have read into him … On the other hand, the trouble with the [traditional interpretation] is antiquarianism. Although we are more likely to concern ourselves with the philosophy of a real historical being, it is of less interest and relevance to us because his ideas and problems are so specific to his age. What we are left with, it seems, is like an historical portrait from a museum.[[16]](#footnote-16)

In response to these methodological worries, it must always be noted that *no* interpretation – by virtue of being an *interpretation* – is free from problems. Having said that, what makes an interpretation a good interpretation is if it satisfies the following criteria: the interpretation has strong textual justification,and the interpretation results in making the philosopher in question out to be of great philosophic value and interest without having improperly imposed doctrines on the philosopher. With regard to Hegel-interpretation, it seems to me that rather than tossing-and-turning about the problems of adopting a specific school of thought, we ought to jump into the literature, aiming to accurately interpret the historical Hegel without making him out to be someone insane, unoriginal, or completely unrecognisable. This hermeneutical practice may not be presuppositionless, but I think it is something that Hegel would not have rejected.

Turning now from general issues concerning the interpretation of Hegel’s theoretical philosophy to specific issues concerning Hegel’s relationship with Kant, the traditional understanding of Hegel’s relationship with Kant *qua* theoretical philosophy is an entirely negative one: Hegel is seen as opposed to Kant, because Hegel appears to be simply reasserting the views of the metaphysical tradition that Kant had undermined. This is certainly one way of reading Ivan Soll’s ambiguous remark that “Hegel's entire program and conception of philosophy depended upon refuting Kant’s limitation of reason”.[[17]](#footnote-17) However, a more careful way of reading Soll’s remark, which I ascribe to, is that Hegel was both critical of Kant whilst in some way more than sympathetic to the idea of a transcendental philosophy. Hegel’s critique of Kant does not consist in a basic return to dogmatic/transcendent metaphysics; rather, as I shall argue, Hegel chastised Kant for (i) not developing a robust *immanent* metaphysics, for (ii) separating thought from being, given the Kantian form/matter distinction, and for (iii) failing to properly surpass the early modern conception of the mind-world relation. This means that Hegel should be understood to have developed his theoretical commitments out of Kant’s transcendental philosophy. What this shows is that, if anything, Hegel was fully aware of Kant’s transcendental philosophy and that he did not see his critique of Kant to signify a complete opposition to Critical Philosophy. In presenting such an account of the connection between transcendentalism and Hegelianism, I thereby hope to open up a new way of understanding the crucial Kant/Hegel relation.

This thesis is composed of two parts. Part I is entitled ‘Hegel’s Critique of Kant’. Part II is entitled ‘Hegel’s Development of Kant’. In I§a, I argue that Kant’s form/matter distinction provides the basis for his formal/critical idealism, the thesis that only the form of representations is ideal. Such a thesis amounts to the following: the order and unity that we find in nature is not an intrinsic property of empirical reality, but is rather a contribution of the mind: empirical reality is in itself lacking in formal unity, and can only be unified by discursive consciousness. I then move on to present two models of interpreting Kant’s Methodological Copernicanism (MC), the Imposition Model and the Limitation Model, where I attribute the latter to Graham Bird. I argue that both models of interpretation fail to do justice to MC. Whilst the Imposition Model tends to simplify the relationship between matter and form, between objects and us, Bird’s reading, for fear of making Kant out to be Berkeleyean or a phenomenalist, only does justice to the limiting aspect of Kant’s transcendental methodology: the positive thrust of Kant’s transcendental methodology is the wholesale revision of the concept of objectivity, which Bird underplays. Because, for Kant, the determining features of objectivity, namely lawfulness, order, and regularity are derived from *us*, specifically our faculty of rules, the objects of possible experience are dependent on us. This is not adequately accounted for in Bird’s reading, I believe. Crucially, however, structuring objects in accordance with our cognitive mechanisms does not necessarily amount to *imposing* on objects a formal structure, but just to *applying* our conceptual scheme to objects, which have certain characteristics already that are required for them to be possibly experienceable. I conclude the section, by claiming that Kant’s Copernicanism is not a commitment to Berkeleyean idealism. I argue that Kant’s concern is not a straightforward metaphysical one, namely what is it for an object to be whatever it is. Rather, his enquiry is directed at understanding the relationship between subject and object *qua* how the object of (possible) experience is to conform to the *structure* of experience. Objects are dependent on the subject *only* to the extent that they are to be brought under certain conditions that make experience of objects possible. There is nothing in the idea of subsuming objects under the conditions of experience that suggests bringing the existence of objects under the subject. As Kant himself notes in A92/B125, “representation in itself does not produce its object in so far as *existence* is concerned”. What, therefore, the expression ‘objects must conform to the subject’ means is not that the subject creates/produces representations (or that the subject imposes form on matter), but rather that it structures objects in a specific way that is in accordance with its *a priori* cognitive mechanisms. This is what Kant means by ‘formal’ – as opposed to ‘material’ – idealism.

In I§b, I present and analyse the central tenets of formal idealism, namely the ideality of space and time, the apriority of the Categories, and the relationship between the Categories and the Principles of Natural Science. The essential claim I hope to make is that the tenets of formal idealism amount to the idea that the *form* or structure of nature is determined by the mind. In other words, the way nature manifests itself, namely as a unified totality composed of physical objects that are causally interrelated, is not something that can be derived from the world, but is derived *a priori* and then applied to experience. On this view, it is not the case that without (discursive) minds, there is no world, *contra* Berkeley. Rather, Kant’s argument is that without (discursive) minds, there is no *order* and *regularity* in the world. This position is not committed to the idea that the world is ontologically dependent on the cognitive activity of the human mind, but to the idea that the structure of the world is dependent on the activity of the human mind.

In I§c, I discuss four models of interpreting formal idealism, the Imposition Model, the Articulation Model, Hoke Robinson’s Filtration Model, and my Filtration Model. I reject the Imposition Model as a compelling interpretation of formal idealism, because I think that just as having objects conform to our mode of cognition does not imply that we impose form on objects, having the formal structure of reality derived from us and then applied to objects does not amount to imposing a conceptual structure on objects. I claim that the Imposition Model incorrectly conflates ‘structuring objects in accordance with *a priori* rules’ with ‘imposing an *a priori* conceptual structure on objects’; and it incorrectly conceives of the pre-conceptualised world as a lump of Aristotelian prime matter, by conflating ‘rhapsody of sensations’ with ‘indeterminate content’. I reject the Articulation Model (also known as the Internal Realist model) on the grounds that the model cannot apply its idea of conceptual-articulation to the transcendental level, because such an account of concept-employment *only* works at the empirical level and cannot work at the transcendental level. I reject Robinson’s Filtration Model on the grounds of its apparent failure to respect Kant’s idealism, despite recognising Kant’s realism. I conclude that whilst my Filtration Model has its problems, these are less severe than those facing the other models of interpreting formal idealism, and that, therefore, my Filtration Model is to be preferred to the Imposition Model, the Articulation Model, and Robinson’s Filtration Model.

In I§d, I move on to Hegel’s fundamental critique of Kant, namely that Kant’s idealism is subjective. I argue, following William Bristow, that there is ambiguity in the expression ‘subjective’, and that because of the ambiguity, it is not all that hard to misinterpret Hegel’s critique. I argue that Hegel’s claim that Kant’s formal idealism is subjective should be understood in the following manner: the subjectivism of formal idealism, for Hegel, consists in holding that the formal structure, order, and unity of empirical reality are derived from us and that thought and being are fundamentally separate from one another. In other words, Hegel sees Kant as incorrectly separating thought from being, by regarding the world as only having its structure by virtue of the application of certain forms, namely the Categories, which are derived from our cognitive constitution. The interpretation of Hegel’s critique that is offered here stands in contrast to those which take Hegel’s charge of subjectivism to be that Kant is a ‘phenomenalist’ or ‘Berkeleyean’, which is how Bird (1987) interprets this critique.

In I§e, I start to shift concern to specific problems that Hegel finds with Kant’s theoretical philosophy. I first focus on Hegel’s critique of Kant’s theory of self-consciousness. After introducing the basics of the transcendental unity of apperception, I develop four specific criticisms of Kant’s transcendental subject made by Hegel. The first is named ‘The Problem of Heterogeneity’, and is concerned with how a transcendental self which stands outside experience can interact with representational content. The second criticism is the charge of a specific kind of solipsism, namely that because the transcendental subject is the source of unity, order, and rationality, the kind of knowledge we have of the world turns out to just be a special form of self-knowledge. The third criticism is focused on a rejection of Kant’s doctrine of transcendental synthesis, specifically its idea that the self unifies objects. The fourth criticism is named ‘The Problem of Indeterminacy’, and is concerned with how a formal ‘I’ can establish the grounds of identity in both the subject and in differing subjects. The final criticism, which is the more general one, is focused on the idea that the ‘I think’ of transcendental apperception is just a formal mechanism, which, under Hegel’s account, Kant limited to the domain of psychology, rather than expanding it to the societal realm, which is something that he ought to have done. Not only that, because the Kantian ‘I’ is not *Geist*, Hegel believes that it cannot achieve absolute knowledge. In other words, I interpret Hegel here as critiquing Kant for having a conception of self-consciousness that is too close to the Cartesian conception of the self. I regard Hegel’s specific objection here to naturally emanate from his negative attitude to Kantian subjectivism, which for Hegel leads in this case to an unpalatable dualism between the ‘I’ and the world of experience. I then argue that such a critique is not justified, given Kant’s views on self-consciousness in the Refutation of Idealism. This importantly suggests that Kant was opposed to Cartesianism.

In I§f, I focus on Hegel’s critique of Kant’s conception of experience (*Erfahrung*). I begin by introducing Hegel’s charge that Kant has a narrow (or thin) notion of experience. I argue that Hegel bases this charge on a much larger worry about the Enlightenment’s philosophy of nature and conception of phenomenology. The discussion then moves to how Hegel’s connects his objections to the Enlightenment with his concerns about Kantianism. I argue that the charge of thinness effectively amounts to Hegel claiming that Kant has failed to sufficiently surpass what Paul Abela (2002) calls the Cartesian-Humean epistemic framework. The significance of such an interpretation, I think, is that it points to a much larger philosophical difference between Hegel and Kant: Hegel is seen as a member of the Merleau-Ponty/Heidegger/Wittgenstein/Rorty opposition to the Cartesian mirror of nature account of experience, where the former regards the mind-world relation as one of cognitive intimacy not voyeurism, whereas Kant is regarded as either a halfway house between the two or just as a member of the Cartesian school of thought – i.e. that Kant either could not truly escape from the Cartesian tradition or just that he was squarely committed to that tradition. I then present a dialectic between Kantians and Hegelians on the subject of whether or not Kant can be judged to be part of the Cartesian-Humean epistemic framework. The chapter concludes by suggesting that whilst Kantians are justified in claiming that Kant’s doctrines in the *Critique of Pure Reason* provide compelling reasons for regarding him as staunchly opposed to the Cartesian-Humean epistemic framework, they must accept that Hegel’s worry that transcendental idealism is committed to various dualisms prevents Kant from breaking free completely from the early modern tradition.

In I§g, having established the specifics of Hegel’s critique of Kant’s theoretical philosophy and offered some Kantian rebuttals, I then move on to discuss Hegel’s views on Kant’s understanding of the possibility of metaphysics. I argue that Hegel accepted Kant’s critique of the Leibniz-Wolff tradition, and the Kantian commitment to immanent metaphysics. However, despite this, Hegel offers two main objections to Kant’s views on the status of metaphysics. The first objection to Kant concerns what I call the Second Neglected Alternative, which claims that Kant presents us with a false dichotomy between error-strewn pre-Critical and transcendent metaphysics, and post-Critical error-free but *modest* immanent metaphysics. I then discuss a potential Kantian critique of the idea that a *robust* but immanent metaphysics is possible. Hegel’s second objection is his ‘moral’ / ‘cultural’ critique of the transcendental idealist doctrine of humility, a doctrine which Hegel finds repugnant. I argue that we have good reason to suppose that the actual targets of Hegel’s critique are not Kantians, but rather a collection of neo-Lockeans and government officials who are solely concerned with a conception of value that is crudely measurable. However, whilst this would suggest that Hegel’s critique of Kant here should be rejected, important features of Hegel’s critique of a positivistic culture apply to Kant’s doctrine of humility.

In Part II, the focus of this thesis turns to Hegel’s positive relationship with Kant. II§a discusses the connection between logic and dialectical logic. After detailing Pippin’s account of the Kant-Hegel relationship, I offer three criticisms of his transcendentalist interpretation of Hegel. I argue that whilst those criticisms work well against Pippin’s reading, there is still space to regard Hegel as doing transcendental philosophy. I then proceed to show how this is possible, by differentiating the project of transcendental argumentation and the project of making transcendental claims. I argue that Hegel is committed to the latter project and not the former project. I go on to claim that one can regard Hegel’s argument for an immanent conception of infinity, his use of Spinoza’s ‘All Determination is Negation’ principle, and the argument for mutual recognition as legitimate examples of Hegel doing transcendental philosophy in a non-orthodox Kantian manner. In the last part of the chapter, I briefly discuss a recent claim made by Stern (2012a), who criticises Beiser’s reading of the argument for mutual recognition. I argue that Stern is correct to reject Beiser’s account, but that even though there is little reason to suppose that Hegel’s aim in the argument for mutual recognition is to refute metaphysical solipsism, one ought to regard Hegel’s argument here as aiming to undermine a solipsistic account of freedom. If my arguments are successful, then one has good reason to understand the positive relationship between Kant’s theoretical philosophy and Hegel’s idealism in a more nuanced manner than Pippin’s approach is able to do so. Such a reading will avoid the perils of either regarding Hegel and Kant as fundamentally opposed to one another or regarding Hegel as squarely committed to Kantianism and only differing from Kant in non-substantial manners. As such, I think there are important consequences for the secondary literature on both Kant and Hegel, if my account is an attractive one.

In II§b, the focus shifts to discussing the connection between Hegel’s theory of conceptual form and Hegel’s forms of consciousness. After providing a brief overview of the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories, I offer a reading of how Hegel aimed to free up the Categories in such a way as to develop Kant’s idea that conceptual structures have a normative function. I argue that Hegel hopes to accomplish such a task by showcasing the intimate connection between theoretical reason and practical reason in the forms of consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. After focusing in particular on how Stoicism, Scepticism, the Unhappy Consciousness, and also Absolute Knowledge, best exemplify the idea of regarding conceptual structures as comprising world-views (*Weltanschauungen*), I then argue that Kant’s and Hegel’s emphasis on normativity and the existential significance of discursivity places them in the quietist tradition, which conceives of philosophical enquiry as therapeutic. Such a claim consequently leads to a discussion of Wittgenstein’s quietism in relation to Kant’s and Hegel’s respective forms of diagnosis and therapy.

In II§c, the thesis concludes with a study of how both Kant and Hegel conceive of philosophical critique as self-transformational. The chapter begins with a discussion of how Kant conceives of the philosophical critique that enables self-transformation to occur. I then move on to explain how Hegel was inspired by this Kantian idea. This leads to a way of interpreting Hegel’s famous idea of the ‘pathway of despair’ and how Hegel draws parallels between the development of Consciousness and the Passion of Christ. Having argued that Hegel is developing Kant’s idea of self-transformational criticism into a novel form, I then propose some objections to the idea that philosophical critique’s connection to self-transformation and human flourishing is a uniquely Kantian/Hegelian thesis. This involves comparing my reading of Kant and Hegel with the apparent self-transformational critical philosophy of Plato, Descartes, and Spinoza. I argue that whilst there are good reasons to regard the notion of self-transformation as present in the works of Plato, Descartes, and Spinoza, there are better reasons to regard the notion of self-transformation as a specifically Kantian/Hegelian contribution.

If the arguments of this thesis are convincing, then I hope to have successfully presented the Kant-Hegel relationship in an interesting and original way. Though my interpretation of some of Hegel’s criticisms of Kant will already be found in the works of Hegel scholars, what is distinctive about my approach is how I not only link the negative attitude towards Kant with the positive attitude towards Kant, but also how I conceive of Hegel and Kant as transcendentalists and how there is a fundamental unifying concern and theme to their various philosophical projects in their theoretical enquiries.

# Part I: Hegel’s Critique of Kant

# *§a Kant’s Form/Matter Distinction*

In order for us to get a clear sense of what exactly Kant’s form/matter distinction amounts to, it is worth first considering in some detail Kant’s transcendental methodology. Our first port of call is Kant’s famous remarks in Bxvi-Bxviii and B1:

Up to now it has been assumed that all our cognition must conform to the objects; but all attempts to find out something about them *a priori* through concepts that would extend our cognition, have, on this presupposition, come to nothing ... If intuition has to conform to the constitution of the objects, then I do not see how we can know anything of them *a priori*; but if the object (as an object of the sense) conforms to the constitution of our faculty of intuition, then I can very well represent this possibility to myself. Yet because I cannot stop with these intuitions, if they are to become cognitions, but must refer them as representations to something as their object and determine this object through them, I can assume either that the concepts through which I bring about this determination also conform to the objects, and then I am once again in the same difficulty about how I could know anything about them *a priori*, or else I assume that the objects, or what is the same thing, the *experience* in which alone they can be cognised (as given objects) conforms to those concepts, in which case I immediately see an easier way out of the difficulty, since experience itself is a kind of cognition requiring the understanding, whose rule I have to presuppose in myself before any object is given to me, hence *a priori*, which rule is expressed in concepts *a priori*, to which all objects of experience must therefore necessarily conform, and with which they must agree.

But although all our cognition commences with experience, yet it does not on that account all arise from experience. For it could well be that even our experiential cognition is a composite of that which we receive through impressions and that which our own cognitive faculty (merely prompted by sensible impressions) provides out of itself.

Kant is understood to have heralded the Copernican Revolution in philosophy. This refers to his claim that rather than trying to match our concepts onto objects, we should try to grasp how objects must conform to the cognitive structure of the epistemic subject. It is not obviously clear what he means by objects having to *conform* to the knowing subject. As I read it, the B1 passage elucidates his Copernican principle, by aiming to establish the following idea: If we understand experience, i.e. our ordinary empirical cognition, as a compound of causal inputs or stimuli and formal *a priori* features, then the epistemic subject is not in possession of Cartesian innate ideas nor is it acting as the mirror of nature. Rather, the mind plays an active role in the determination of both individual objects and the empirical world as a whole. What I understand to be the principal element of Kant’s thesis here is that we should understand the content received from the external world as being a legitimate candidate for a component of experience only if that content is necessarily explicated as being something *for us*. The negative aspect of this idea seems to be that the things we regard as comprising our cognitive experience are not (and should not be seen as) objects *simpliciter*, mereological unities that are thus-and-so because of how the world is independently of cognitive activity. The positive aspect of the idea seems to be that in conceiving the objects we experience as objects *for* *us*, objectivity is dependent on human subjectivity, specifically the activity of representation. Conceived in this manner, what I would like to call Kant’s ‘subjective turn’ signifies that subject and object, despite being conceptual contraries, are bound up together.

Kant’s next move is to connect methodological Copernicanism to transcendental philosophy. As he writes,

I entitle transcendental all knowledge which is occupied not so much with objects as with the mode of our knowledge of objects, insofar as this mode of knowledge is to be possible *a priori*. (A12/B25)

What then transcendental philosophy is concerned with is an analysis of the *structure* (i.e. the ‘mode’) of experience and human cognition. However, whilst the analysisof the form of human cognition is mainly performed in the Transcendental Logic, Kant presents his first thoughts on the concept of form in A20/B34, where he announces the form/matter distinction:

I call that in the appearance which corresponds to sensation its matter, but that which allows the manifold of appearance to be intuited as ordered in certain relations I call the form of appearances. Since that within which the sensations can alone be ordered and placed in a certain form cannot itself be in turn sensation, the matter of all appearance is only given to us *a posteriori*, but its form must all lie ready for it in the mind *a priori*, and can therefore be considered separately from all sensation.

As I understand the passage, Kant is making the following claims:

[1]: Appearances – i.e. ordinary, middle-sized empirical objects – are composed of formal elements and material elements. The form of appearance is what provides **determinacy** to appearances. Such a position can be cashed out in two ways: in one sense, form is what provides our *experience* with its “… certain unified coherence, structure, and determinacy”.[[18]](#footnote-18) In another sense, form is what provides *objects* with their unified coherence, structure, and determinacy. The matter of appearance, i.e. the content, is the **determinable** element of experience. In other words, matter is what requires a structuring principle to make it a candidate for property-ascription and reference.

[2]: The matter of appearances is derived from objects themselves, i.e. matter is derived *a posteriori*. The form of appearances is derived from the subject of experience, i.e. form is derived *a priori*.

Given the emphasis on matter and form, it is more than reasonable to regard Kant as working within the hylomorphist tradition. ‘Hylomorphism’ is traditionally attributed to Aristotle’s mature reflections on metaphysics, particularly with his account of the mind-body relation in *De Anima*, and his theory of substance in the *Metaphysics*. In the case of hylomorphism in *De Anima*, the soul is the form of the organism, i.e. the soul is the principle of life: in other words, Aristotle regards the concept of form as being intimately connected to the concept of life/actuality to the extent that nothing that is not ‘ensouled’ / ‘enformed’ can be said to be alive.[[19]](#footnote-19) With regard to the hylomorphic categories in the *Metaphysics* (cf. *Metaphysics* VII 17), Aristotle held that form was epistemically prior to matter, in that without form, no object can be intelligible. Kant himself writes the following, which echoes Aristotle’s idea of the priority of form:

The form of intuition (as a subjective property of sensibility) is prior to all matter (sensations); space and time come before all appearances and before all data of experience, and indeed what make the latter at all possible. (A267/B323)

Kant’s reflections on form, though, are not merely consigned to his theory of space and time. For, a significant amount of weight is placed on how form is related to the concept of *unity in nature*. By this, I mean the following: one of Kant’s chief concerns, I believe, is with the relationship between form and the unity we see manifested in the natural world as a whole. With regard to the natural world, the objects that comprise the world of our experience manifest themselves as members of a unified realm. What we are confronted with in our phenomenological appreciation of empirical reality, i.e. with *how* the empirical world strikes us in experience, is that objects appear to be part of a collective unity. According to Kant, what is responsible for the presentation of this kind of unity is *form*, particularly conceptual form,[[20]](#footnote-20) which is tied to the idea of a *law*. As he writes in A127-8:

All appearances as possible experiences, therefore, lie *a priori* in the understanding, and receive their formal possibility from it, just as they lie in the sensibility as mere intuitions, and are only possible through the latter as far as their form is concerned. Thus as exaggerated and contradictory as it may sound to say that the understanding is itself the source of the laws of nature, and thus of the formal unity of nature, such an assertion is nevertheless correct and appropriate to the object, namely experience. To be sure, empirical laws, as such, can by no means derive their origin from the pure understanding, just as the immeasurable manifoldness of the appearances cannot be adequately conceived through the pure form of sensible intuition. But all empirical laws are only particular determinations of the pure laws of the understanding, under which and in accordance with whose norms they are first possible, and the appearances assume a lawful form, just as, regardless of the variety of their empirical form, all appearances must nevertheless always be in accord with the pure form of sensibility.

The question now, then, is what exactly does *formal* unity amount to? Looking at the following passage should help us find a good answer:

The sensible faculty of intuition is really only a receptivity for being affected in a certain way with representations, whose relation to one another is a pure intuition of space and time (pure forms of our sensibility), which, insofar as they are connected and determinable in these relations (in space and time) according to the laws of the unity of experience, are called objects. (A494/B522)

By ‘objects’, Kant seems to means things that have *determinacy*, i.e. things that are unified, organised, and capable of having properties ascribed to them. In sum, for Kant, *objects* are entities that are rule-governed; and it is their rule-governed status that enables them to be cognised *as* *objects*, rather than as a buzzing confusion of sensory items. In this sense, the rules which govern these entities are said to provide unity, insofar as these rules provide the formal characteristics of object-hood, particularly the ideas of determinacy and property-ascription (i.e. *f* is predicated of *x*). Determinacy is bound up with the concept of formal unity, because all determinate entities (e.g. this particular bottle of water) are experienced as having *objectual* characteristics. Property-ascription is bound up with the concept of formal unity, because only something that is objectual can be ascribed predicates, e.g. “This table **is brown**”. However, for all of the contribution of form with regard to the metaphysics of objects, I do not want to claim that the role of *matter* is not crucial: the importance of matter consists in the idea of determining the particularity of objects, i.e. what makes *this* table *this* table specifically, is *principally* its matter. Such a role differs to the role of form, which is concerned with the *structuring* of matter into something objectual. Perhaps the clearest passage to explain what is formal unity is the following:

Thus we ourselves bring into the appearances that order and regularity in them that we call nature, and moreover we would not be able to find it there if we, or the nature of our mind, had not originally put it there. (A125)

What then form fundamentally provides is a mechanism which confers on the matter of experience *order* and *regularity*. Whilst synthesis provides unity in the narrow sense of enabling an array of sensory data to be organised into something whole that can then be conceptualised, form provides unity in the broad sense of enabling a collection of mereological sums to be experienced as *objects* comprising a *public* and *causally interactive* world.[[21]](#footnote-21)

Unlike Aristotle, Kant postulates that form is *a priori*. By *a priori* here, Kant means that form is derived from the subject of experience. Under this account, the epistemic subject provides order and intelligibility to a world of representations that, without discursive minds, would be unintelligible, undetermined. Such a world would be akin to Aristotle’s notion of prime matter, matter which has no form, and, as such, is regarded as indeterminate and unknowable.

Combining then Kant’s claim that form is the principle of order and unity in nature with his thesis that form is derived from us, enables us to understand the essence of Kant’s form/matter distinction: the structural elements of objects and the empirical world as a whole differ from the merely sensory elements of objects and the empirical world as a whole. Crucially, what Kant’s form/matter distinction provides is the basis for his formal/critical idealism, the thesis that only the form of representations is ideal. Such a thesis amounts to the following: *the order and unity that we find in nature is not an intrinsic property of empirical reality, but is rather a contribution of the mind: empirical reality is in itself undetermined and lacking in formal unity, and can only be determined and unified by discursive consciousness*.

It is worth noting that the way in which I have discussed the form/matter distinction can be seen as very much in keeping with the tradition of regarding Kant as advocating what can be called an Imposition Model of the relation between matter and form: according to such an interpretation, Kant is claiming that we first encounter an indeterminate and inchoate content, and only by imposing space and time and our conceptual scheme on it does that content become structured and possibly knowable. For some philosophers, such as James Van Cleve, such an interpretation of the relationship between form and matter appears to commit Kant to some kind of ontological phenomenalism/classical idealism.[[22]](#footnote-22) However, I disagree with Van Cleve in two respects: first, I do not think that the Imposition Model entails Berkeleyeanism; but secondly, I believe that the basic idea of reading Kant as suggesting that we impose form on matter (cf. Devitt, 1991) is over simplified, so I reject this Imposition Model reading itself.

The Imposition Model has been challenged by those such as Graham Bird, who regards Kant’s theory in a more ‘revolutionary’ manner:[[23]](#footnote-23) under this interpretation, there is no Berkeleyean idealist undertone to Kant’s hylomorphism (and transcendental idealism), where Bird argues that commentators on Kant have misunderstood his talk about representations, appearances, and nature. I agree with these claims. To my mind, what seems to be the fundamental issue here is the understanding of Kant’s Methodological Copernicanism (MC). The central tenets of MC can be expressed in the following manner:

1. The mind is not a passive spectator of objective reality.
2. The objects of knowledge are appearances not things in themselves.

If one is to follow Bird’s opposition to the Imposition Model, then one can claim that there is nothing in either (A) or (B) that suggests the idea of the mind imposing a formal structure on inchoate matter. With regard to (A), it can be reasonably asserted that Kant’s opposition to the mind as the mirror of nature does not obviously commit him to either a straightforward constructivism, which regards the mind as *creating* objects in the activity of thought and reflection, or to a more nuanced thesis, which regards the mind as *imposing* certain forms on objects. Indeed, it could well be the case that when Kant claims that “objects must conform to the constitution of our faculty of intuition” – or just that ‘objects must conform to us’ – he merely means that objects must conform to the conditions under which we can represent them as objects. For example, objects must manifest themselves spatiotemporally if we are to experience them. But it may be claimed that such (conditional) necessity does not obviously suggest that the spatiotemporal form of objects is provided by *us* and then imposed on objects. To make an analogy, the activity of breathing is partly necessitated by us, given certain physiological processes, such as intercostal muscle movement and diaphragm contraction/relaxation. However, as part of the necessary condition for breathing, environmental factors have to be in a certain way, namely that there must be air, where this fact is independent of those activities. As such, for Bird, all that is being admitted in talk about conforming is merely that objects need to manifest themselves in certain ways in order to be experienceable. With regard to (B), it is not clear that in claiming that because the objects of our cognition are appearances (i.e. ordinary empirical objects) and not things in themselves, we are committing ourselves to claiming that the mind imposes a formal structure on certain kinds of object.

However, I believe that this reading of MC is as problematic as the Imposition Model. The Imposition Model tends to simplify the relationship between form and matter. However, Bird’s reading, which I would like to call the Limitation Model, for fear of making Kant out to be Berkeleyean or a phenomenalist, only does justice to the limiting aspect of Kant’s transcendental methodology: the positive thrust of Kant’s transcendental methodology is the wholesale revision of the concept of objectivity. Because, for Kant, the determining features of objectivity, namely lawfulness, order, and regularity are derived from *us*, specifically our faculty of rules, the objects of possible experience are dependent on us. This is not adequately accounted for in Bird’s reading, I believe. Crucially, however, structuring objects in accordance with our cognitive mechanisms does not necessarily amount to *imposing* on objects a formal structure, but just to *applying* our conceptual scheme to objects, which have certain characteristics already that are required for them to be possibly experienceable. I would like to call this interpretation the Articulation Model.

In response to this, the Imposition Model theorist could claim that my reading of MC fails to do justice to Kant’s idealism, because applying an *a priori* structure *to* objects and the world does not seem to capture the idealist sense as adequately as imposing an *a priori* structure *on* objects and the world. However, I shall discuss this objection in the next section. Two other ways that Allison (1983, 2004) and Bird may critique my reading of MC is that (i) it fails to do justice to Kant’s empirical realism, and (ii) interprets the anthropocentrism of MC incorrectly.

Regarding (i), in emphasising passages where Kant often talks about how objects and the natural world in general are dependent on our discursive activity in the way I do, it may then seem difficult to fit transcendental idealism together with empirical realism. However, I do not think that this objection is very strong: it is correct to note the importance of Kant’s empirical realist commitments, such as that the possibility of experiencing an objective order of objects and events is itself a necessary condition for the possibility of any subjective order in our own perceptions (cf. A193/B238). As I understand Kant, though, I believe that empirical realism depends on a key feature of transcendental idealism, Kant’s theory of *a priori* form: on Kant’s account, empirical reality is dependent on the subject of experience as far as its *form* is concerned. For example, a necessary condition for there being an objective order of objects and events is the application of *a priori* concepts, such as ‘substance’ and ‘cause’, that are naturally geared to represent a world of *objects* and *events*. In other words, for Kant, the reason why the world of experience is empirically real is principally because of our transcendental cognitive operations. If anything, highlighting the importance of the way in which the world depends on us does justice to empirical realism. Concerns about whether or not the dependency of empirical realism on transcendental idealism is ultimately persuasive are made explicit in Hegel’s objections to Kant. I shall address these concerns in due course.

Regarding (ii), it may be claimed that the spirit of MC is not to make the world dependent on us, but rather to alter how philosophical investigation is supposed to work. Specifically, what Kant’s anthropocentrism consists of is the move to investigate how the mind works, rather than revise a traditional metaphysical concept. For example, it seems that the entire thrust of transcendental philosophy (particularly, transcendental logic) is to alter the standard focus of the philosophical enterprise, by making epistemology the basic philosophical discipline. MC revises the relationship between metaphysics (ontology) and epistemology, in such a way that makes epistemology prior to traditional *prima philosophia*. By contrast, pre-Copernican philosophy, i.e. from Plato to Kant,[[24]](#footnote-24) had made the relationship between metaphysics and epistemology clear: metaphysics was prior to and independent of epistemology. Metaphysics was prior, because it was concerned with determining the constitution of reality (in itself), whereas epistemology was concerned with determining if and how we do attain knowledge of reality (in itself). Metaphysics was independent of epistemology, because questions about the structure of reality were regarded as separate from questions about the structure of belief and cognition. In place of this Hellenistic model, Kant’s transcendental model of enquiry, where the emphasis is on *first* establishing the necessary conditions of possible experience and then proceeding to metaphysical enquiry, made epistemology ‘first philosophy’. Under this account, these *metaphilosophical* commitments, namely commitments to *how* philosophy ought to be structured, do not commit Kant to the idea that objects must be subject to certain *a priori* cognitive rules. It seems then that those who favour the Imposition Model of MC tend to overinflate Kant’s anthropocentrism, by regarding it as a reversion to particular metaphysical concepts, such as objectivity.

However, I do not believe this argument to be particularly convincing: I agree that MC involves a revision of metaphilosophical commitments. But what Kant is trying to achieve by his MC is to change metaphilosophical commitments by *first* trying to show how exactly objects and the empirical world depend on us in an important way. In other words, the metaphilosophical shift, for Kant, is underwritten by particular aspects of his idealism. By this I mean the following: Kant’s first aim with his form/matter distinction is to show how the *structure* of ordinary objects is contributed by us. His second aim is to show how the *structure* of nature as a whole is contributed by us. He then uses a transcendental idealist conclusion, such as the claim that the causal and intersubjective nature of empirical reality is determined by us *a priori*, to then revise the relationship between metaphysics and epistemology in the following way: the *explanation* for why the empirical world is composed of objects and objective time-sequences (events) is because we apply certain schematised *a priori* concepts (like substance and causality) that enable the empirical world to have its empirically real character. In this way, for Kant, metaphysics is posterior to epistemology. The normative requirement, then, of MC is that because of the activity of the human mind in determining the formal structure of nature, we needto revise our metaphilosophical commitments. Before concluding this section of Chapter I, though, I wish to make one more defence of my interpretation of Kant as not advocating the Limitation Model.

One additional reason for thinking that Kant’s MC and hylomorphism cannot be interpreted in terms of either the Imposition Model or the Articulation Model, is a desire expressed by Henry Allison (1983, 2004) and others to prevent Kant’s transcendental idealism from being reduced to phenomenalism plus noumenalism. Their concern is that both these models of interpreting Kant’s form/matter distinction and Copernicanism suggest that the distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves is a commitment to a two-worlds distinction between Berkeleyean mind-dependent ordinary objects and mind-independent things-in-themselves. However, *contra* Allison and Bird (and also, though for different reasons, Strawson, Guyer, and Van Cleve), it is not clear that Kant’s MC and hylomorphism, when interpreted *qua* the Imposition Model or the Articulation Model, make Kant out to be Berkeleyean about the empirical world. It may be that *prima facie*,by placing a considerable emphasis on the cognitive activity of the human mind, it seems that Kant is proposing an idealist critique of realism: the pre-Copernican model of cognition – where we ‘conform’ to objects – would claim that if the subject cognises the object, then the explanation for the subject’s cognition lies ultimately in the constitution of the object, so that if the object had been different to the way it was initially cognised, or if the object had not existed, then the subject would either have cognised the object differently, or she would not have cognised it at all. By contrast, it may appear that for, because he emphasises that objects must conform to the subject, Kant seems to claim that the constitution of objects is fundamentally determined by the subject of experience: the explanation for the structure of reality ultimately lies in the constitution of the subject, so that if the subject had been different, i.e. if the subject possessed a *different* cognitive make-up, or if there were no minds at all, then the object would be experienced differently or have different metaphysical features.

Under this understanding of Kant’s MC, one may naturally ask whether Kant’s thesis avoids Berkeleyean idealism or Nelson Goodman’s ‘irrealism’, given that Kant apparently claims that the mind constitutes objects: *prima facie*, it seems reasonable to regard the idea of the mind constituting objects as tantamount to claiming that objects are ontologically dependent on minds or that the mind makes/constructs objects.

In response to this worry, I believe that such a problem only arises from a misunderstanding of Kant’s Copernicanism: Kant’s concern is not a straightforward metaphysical one, namely what is it for an object to be whatever it is. Rather, his enquiry is directed at understanding the relationship between subject and object *qua* how the object of (possible) experience is to conform to the *structure* of experience. Objects are dependent on the subject *only* to the extent that they are to be brought under certain conditions that make experience of objects possible. There is nothing in the idea of subsuming objects under the conditions of experience that suggests bringing the existence of objects under the subject as such. As Kant himself notes in A92/B125, “representation in itself does not produce its object in so far as *existence* is concerned”. What, therefore, the expression ‘Objects must conform to the subject’ means is not that the subject creates/produces objects (or that the subject imposes form on matter), but rather that it structures objects in a specific way that is in accordance with its *a priori* cognitive mechanisms. This is what Kant means by ‘formal’ – as opposed to ‘material’ – idealism.

This leads me to my final comment on Kant’s Copernicanism. I have claimed that Kant’s methodology aims to show how objects must be subsumed under the subject’s *a priori* epistemic operations. Crucially, this did not involve making objects ontologically dependent on the subject, but rather involved making the structure of objects dependent on the subject. Understood in this manner, it seems that one has good reason to see Kant as advocating an anti-realist line of philosophic investigation: Kant’s principal interlocutors are on the one hand those who claim that objects have their nature independently of “… whatever we believe, think, or can discover: [they are] independent of the cognitive activities of the mind”,[[25]](#footnote-25) and on the other those who claim that in representing objects minds bring those objects into existence. As Paolo Parrini writes, “one of the principal teachings of the *Critique* remains the demonstration of the inevitable conditioning exercised on the known object by certain forms of knowledge”.[[26]](#footnote-26) Such a position is set against realism. Furthermore, in claiming that objects are “… not completely determinable by the knowing subject”,[[27]](#footnote-27) Kant is rejecting the notion that the dependency of objects on the subject of experience amounts to the idealisation of objects. What Kant, therefore, is trying to do, is not only to steer a middle-course between rationalism and empiricism, as standardly expressed. Rather, Kant also aims to find safe passage between Scylla and Charybdis, between realism on the one extreme and idealism on the other extreme.

With this claim in mind, I would now like to turn to the central tenets of Kant’s formal idealism and then see how these tenets are understood by Hegel.

# *§b Kant’s Formal Idealism*

To begin our foray into formal idealism, it would be best to understand Kant’s views on space and time, which are essential to his critical (formal) idealism. According to Kant,

*Time is not something objective and real*, nor is it a substance or an accident or a relation, but it is the subjective condition necessary by the nature of the human mind for coordinating with each other by a fixed law whatsoever things are sensible. (*Inaugural Dissertation*,§14.5, 2:400)

*Space is not something objective and real*, nor is it a substance or an accident, or a relation, but it is *subjective* and ideal and proceeds from the nature of the mind by unchanging law, as a schema for coordinating which each other absolutely all things externally sensed. (*Inaugural Dissertation*,§15, 2:403)

Kant’s denial of the ‘reality of space and time’ here is not meant to advocate the thesis that space and time are illusory. Instead, Kant is rejecting both the Newtonian principle that space and time are absolute existents and the Leibnizian principle that space and time are relations of some kind. His positive move is to claim that space and time, considered as *forms* of sensible intuition, are derived from the subjective constitution of the mind. It is important to note that despite the fact that Kant claims spatial and temporal forms are mind-dependent, he does not conclude from this that the objects we sensibly represent are *ontologically* mind-dependent. Kant’s commitments seem clearer whenone considers the following three passages:

Space is nothing other than merely the form of all appearances of outer sense, i.e., the subjective condition of sensibility, under which alone outer intuition is possible for us. (A26/B42)

Time is the *a priori* formal condition of all appearances in general. (A34/B50).

Now although phenomena are properly species of things and are not ideas, nor do they express the internal and absolute quality of objects, nonetheless cognition of them is most veridical. For first of all, in as much as they are sensual concepts or apprehensions, they are witnesses, as being things caused, to the presence of an object, and this is opposed to idealism. (*Inaugural Dissertation*,§11, 2:397)

The principal thesis that Kant is concerned to establish in the *Critique* is that the brute sensible fact of human experience, i.e. spatiotemporal *form* – what Savile calls the “pervasive [element] throughout experience”[[28]](#footnote-28) – is ascribable not to the nature of the world itself but to the conditions of sensibility. This thesis is supported by §11, 2:397 from the *Inaugural Dissertation*, where Kant claims that the forms of intuition are ideal; but he makes it clear that such a position is neither synonymous with nor entails idealism about the *objects* that we intuit. There is a strict separation of *formal* idealism from *material* idealism; something which Kant makes caustically clear in *Prolegomena*, 4:289-4:293.[[29]](#footnote-29)

To better understand Kant’s position, it will help to consider the difference between Kant and Locke on the aetiology of space and time. According to Locke,[[30]](#footnote-30) the concepts of space and time, like other concepts, have their origin in experience itself. His basis for this thesis is seemingly uncontroversial and persuasive: we encounter objects and events that stand in spatiotemporal relations to one another, phenomena that have location, dimension, etc. We then remark on these empirical properties, and come to fashion general concepts. Thus, the concepts of space and time are derived from experience, according to Locke. To put it crudely, it is just because the world is inherently spatiotemporal that we acquire and then employ these fundamental sensible concepts; and “if the world that had presented itself to our senses had been very different, then maybe it wouldn’t have presented itself to our senses as a spatiotemporal world at all”,[[31]](#footnote-31) meaning that we could not even form these concepts. Understood in this manner, it seems clear that Locke’s theory of concept-formation is a paradigmatic realist theory: we experience a spatiotemporal world, because the world is inherently spatiotemporal, not because of any particular epistemic mechanisms that are imposed on the world to give it a certain form, namely a spatiotemporal one.

For Kant, Locke’s account, i.e. the realist account of sensibility, is fundamentally misguided. We have seen that Kant maintains that spatiality and temporality are the forms of sensibility, and that because of this, they are derived *a priori*. Realism at the level of the matter/content (*Inhalt*) of experience holds, insofar as formal idealism does not extend to material idealism, and also because we acquire our empirical concepts from the world itself The crucial point of Kant’s understanding of space and time, then, is that Kant aims to show that the human mind is the source of the forms of intuition, and that the sensible structure of objects and empirical reality is not an intrinsic property of objects and empirical reality.

We have seen that in the Transcendental Aesthetic, Kant aimed to show that space and time were the formal conditions of sensibility, and that the empirical world’s spatiotemporal form is something derived from the subjective constitution of consciousness but applied to empirical objects. In the Transcendental Analytic, however, Kant’s concern is not with the sensible aspects of intuitions and *a fortiori* the sensible aspects of the world of experience. His concern in this section of the *Critique* is with the second type of representation: concepts. More specifically, Kant’s focus is on the conceptual aspect of experience, and by extension the intellective aspects of the world of experience. The reason why Kant devotes such attention to conceptual conditions[[32]](#footnote-32) is simple: Firstly, to remain consistent with his methodology, if Kant is fundamentally interested in the idea of representation, and discusses intuitions at length, he must also discuss concepts at length. Secondly, and more importantly, just as spatial form and temporal form are brute facts about the sensible structure of the world, the brute fact about concepts is that we use them in the everyday activity of judgement. As such, Kant’s first port of call is with the logical notion of judgement.

Judgements are propositions that are composed of a subject-element and predicates; e.g. ‘The cat is sitting on the mat’, ‘Every event has a cause’, and so on. What is immediately noticeable in judgements is the involvement of concepts. Some of the concepts that are used in the content of a judgement are empirical, like ‘cat’, ‘mat’, ‘table’ and ‘chair’. They are empirical, simply because they are derived from empirical objects. However, the concepts of ‘cat’, etc. are obviously not the most basic kinds of concepts that we possess. According to Kant, there is a special set of concepts that serve as the necessary conditions of possible experience. These basic concepts are the twelve Categories, i.e. the fundamental concepts of an object in general, the forms for any particular concepts of objects. The question now is whether these categorial concepts are derived from experience. To answer this, Kant presents the following challenge: find any categorial concept, which is both directly associated with the logical functions of judgements and capable of contributing to the organisation of intuitions,[[33]](#footnote-33) that can be said to be derived *a posteriori*. If a categorial concept fails to meet these two criteria, then this concept is obviously not empirical. This is what he is claiming in A79/B104-5:

The same function which gives unity to the various representations in a judgement also gives unity to the mere synthesis of various representations in an intuition; and this unity … we entitle the pure concept of the understanding. The same understanding, through the same operations by which in concepts … it produced the logical form of a judgement, also introduces a transcendental content into its representations …

Empirical concepts, such as ‘cat’ and ‘dog’ cannot play these two roles, because empirical concepts do not play the transcendental role in organising intuitions. For an intuition to form a genuine component of judgement, it needs to be organised in a specific manner. It needs to be unified. Pure intuition, therefore, must be unified by something that corresponds to the logical *form* of judgement. Only a pure concept can fulfil this function, as only a pure concept gives rise to unity in both judgements and intuitions. For instance, the categorial concept, ‘causality’, whereby the conceptual content is ‘If *x*, then (necessarily) *y*’, must be *a priori*, because it both corresponds to the logical form of a hypothetical judgement and serves to organise intuitions in a specific way, i.e. a *causal* nexus of interrelated substances and events. As Savile nicely phrases it, “if the putatively pure concepts of the understanding were really empirical concepts, and not pure at all, they would be empirical elements of judgement that would need to be combined to fashion an experiential unity”.[[34]](#footnote-34) Because empirical concepts lack a sufficient level of formality, namely providing the unity of experience, no empirical concept can be considered a categorial concept.

Reflecting on the distinction between general and transcendental logic will also hopefully make it clearer why, for Kant, the Categories must be *a priori*:

General logic abstracts, as we have shown, from all content of cognition, i.e. from any relation of it to an object, and considers only the logical form in the relation of cognitions to one another, i.e., the form of thinking in general. But now since there are pure as well as empirical intuitions …, a distinction between pure and empirical thinking of objects could also well be found. In this case there would be a logic in which one did not abstract from all content of cognition; for that logic that contained merely the rules of the pure thinking of an object would exclude all those cognitions that were of empirical content. It would therefore concern the origin of our cognitions of objects … In the expectation, therefore, that there can perhaps be concepts that may be related to objects *a priori*, not as pure or sensible intuitions but rather merely as acts of pure thinking, that are thus concepts but of neither empirical nor aesthetic origin, we provisionally formulate the idea by means of which we think objects completely *a priori*. Such a science, which would determine the origin, the domain, and the objective validity of such cognitions, would have to be called transcendental logic, since it has to do merely with the laws of the understanding and reason, but solely insofar as they are related to objects *a priori* and not, as in the case of general logic, to empirical as well as pure cognitions of reason without distinction. (A55/B79-A57/B82)

Unlike general logic, which is solely concerned with the logical form of *any* type of proposition, transcendental logic is concerned with those logical devices that represent the rules of the most formal cognition of objects. These rules are the categorial concepts, because these concepts subject objects to being cognised in accordance with a specific logical form. Not only that, the Categories provide certain conditions for how certain kinds of experience *must* occur: for example, the category of causality is not just employed to enable the experience of temporal relation, but to also ensure that our experience of temporal relation *must* be causal. I shall return to this idea in due course.

Above all, because Kant claims that the Categories provide the conceptual form of objects and that these concepts are derived from *us*, Kant appears to commit himself to the following thesis: in a way that is analogous to Kant’s understanding of space and time, the crucial point of Kant’s understanding of categorial concepts is that he aims to show that the formal (conceptual) structure of objects and empirical reality is not an intrinsic property of objects and empirical reality.

We have seen that Kant regards the Categories as cognitive rules, cf. A126. However, in the following passage, Kant develops the rule-status of the Categories into a law-like status:

Now we can characterise [the understanding] as the faculty of rules. This designation is more fruitful, and comes closer to its essence. Sensibility gives us forms (of intuition), but the understanding gives us rules. It is always busy poring through the appearances with the aim of finding some sort of rule in them. Rules, so far as they are objective (and thus necessarily pertain to the cognition of objects) are called laws. Although we learn many laws through experience, these are only particular determinations of yet higher laws, the highest of which (under which all others stand) come from the understanding itself *a priori*, and are not borrowed from experience, but rather must provide the appearances with their lawfulness and by that very means make experience possible. The understanding is thus not merely a faculty for making rules through the comparison of the appearances; it is itself the legislation for nature, i.e. without understanding there would not be any nature at all … (A126)

As rules, the Categories govern how representations are organised into a coherent picture that we call ‘experience’. These concepts are what enable us to experience representational content in a determinate and intelligible way, rather than experience the world as a buzzing confusion of sensory items, cf. A104.[[35]](#footnote-35) However, Kant claims that when these rule-mechanisms are objective, the Categories become *laws*. What he means by ‘objective’ here is unclear. However, I would suggest that the sense of objectivity that Kant is using here is the notion of *objective validity*,[[36]](#footnote-36)where by the ‘objective validity’ (*objektiv Gültigkeit*) of a judgement, Kant means several things: Firstly, it has to do with the meaningfulness of a judgement, because that judgement’s composition is principally based on the empirical ‘reference’ (*Beziehung*) of the basic representations of any judgement, namely intuitions and concepts. The empirical reference of intuitions and concepts, in turn, is necessarily constrained by the sensible and discursive features of human experience. In this way, an intuition is objectively valid iff either that immediate representation directly refers to some external sensible object or to a feature of inner sense. A concept is objectively valid iff either it applies to some actual or possible objects of empirical intuition (i.e. the objective validity of *empirical* concepts), or it represents a necessary condition of empirical concepts (i.e. the objective validity of *pure* concepts) (cf. A239-240/B298-299, and A240-242/B299-300). Secondly, by ‘objective validity’, Kant also means something that has strict universality. Taking the two aspects of Kant’s term, one can regard the following judgements in two different ways:

1. The semantical aspect of objective validity: ‘The cat is relaxing on the mat’ is objectively valid, in that the judgement is truth-apt.
2. The normative aspect of objective validity: ‘Every event has a cause’ is objectively valid, in that the judgement holds across experience and is something that all rational agents ought to accept.

What is noticeable about both judgements is the absence of any subjective qualification. In (A), the judgement is objective, in the sense that the propositional form aims to depict something’s being the case, cf. *x* is *f*. The judgement is not subjectively valid, because for it to be subjectively valid, it would have to be ‘It seems to me that the cat is relaxing on the mat’. As Kant would have it, (A) is an empirical judgement that is a ‘judgement of experience’, whereas the qualified judgement is a ‘judgement of perception’.[[37]](#footnote-37) With regard to (B), the objective validity of ‘Every event has a cause’ is seen insofar as the judgement has strict universality, in that it necessarily pertains to *all* rational agents. §19 of the *Prolegomena* seems to best reflect Kant’s position here:

Objective validity and necessary universal validity (for everyone) are therefore interchangeable concepts, and although we do not know the object in itself, nonetheless, if we regard a judgement as universally valid and hence necessary, objective validity is understood to be included. Through this judgement we cognise the object … by means of the universally valid and necessary connection of the given perceptions; and since this is the case for all objects of the sense, judgements of experience will not derive their objective validity from the immediate cognition of the object (for this is impossible), but merely from the condition for the universal validity of empirical judgements, which, as has been said, never rests on empirical, or indeed sensory conditions at all, but on a pure concept of the understanding.

The central idea in this passage is that judgements of experience, i.e. objectively valid propositions, are the kind of the judgement they are, because they involve categorial concepts. However, we have seen that for Kant, these concepts do not just provide conditions for the objectuality of our representations – i.e. these concepts do not just serve to provide our sensory content with the characteristics of an object. What the Categories also do is to provide the conceptual conditions for how objects *must* be experienced. And it is by supplying rules that are meant to have strict universality that the Categories provide *laws* that govern experience. As Kant writes in both A113 and A127-8 respectively:

Now, however, the representation of a universal condition in accordance with which a certain manifold (of whatever kind) can be posited is called a rule, and, if it must, be so posited, a law.

All appearances as possible experiences, therefore, lie *a priori* in the understanding, and receive their formal possibility from it, just as they lie in the sensibility as mere intuitions, and are only possible through the latter as far as their form is concerned. Thus as exaggerated and contradictory as it may sound to say that the understanding is itself the source of the laws of nature, and thus of the formal unity of nature, such an assertion is nevertheless correct and appropriate to the object, namely experience. To be sure, empirical laws, as such, can by no means derive their origin from the pure understanding, just as the immeasurable manifoldness of the appearances cannot be adequately conceived through the pure form of sensible intuition. But all empirical laws are only particular determinations of the pure laws of the understanding, under which and in accordance with whose norms they are first possible, and the appearances assume a lawful form, just as, regardless of the variety of their empirical form, all appearances must nevertheless always be in accord with the pure form of sensibility.

The same remark is made in the *Prolegomena*, albeit less dramatically: “the *a priori* conditions of the possibility of experience are at the same time the sources out of which all universal laws of nature must be derived” (4:297). By the Laws of Nature, Kant means the three Laws of Mechanics. The first Law is the Principle of the Conservation of the Quantity of Matter; the second is a version of the Law of Inertia, and the third the Law of the Equality of Action and Reaction.[[38]](#footnote-38) According to the Principle of the Conservation of the Quantity of Matter, the sum total of matter in the universe itself never changes, despite the changes within individual material compositions. According to the Law of Inertia, every object has an internal principle of inactivity, and that only when sufficient force is exercised on object *x* will object *x* change its location. According to the Law of the Equality of Action and Reaction, the same quantity of force is present in both action and reaction. The textual evidence for claiming that Kant regards the Laws of Nature as the three Laws of Mechanics lies in a comment made by Kant in his B-edition comment to the Table of Categories, and in his B-edition reformulations of the first two Analogies of Experience, so that the First Analogy expresses a Law of Conservation for the total quantity of substance, and that the Second Analogy expresses a version of the Law of Inertia.[[39]](#footnote-39) As he writes:

[This] table contains all elementary concepts of the understanding completely, and even the form of a system of such concepts in the human understanding; and it therefore gives an indication of all the *moments* of a prospective speculative science, and even their *ordering*, as I have also attempted to show elsewhere. (B109-10)

[First Analogy of Experience] In all change of appearances substance persists, and its quantum is neither increased nor diminished in nature. (B224)

Kant’s attempt to show how the Categories help to establish a ‘speculative science’ “elsewhere” is in his *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*. We find that one of the main tasks of this work is connecting the claims in the *Critique* about how the Categories serve as the ground of the Laws of Nature with the three Laws of Mechanics. The manner in which the Categories directly relate to the Laws of Mechanics is in correlations between each category of relation (substance, causality, and community) to each Law of Mechanics:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Substance (First Analogy of Experience) | The Principle of the Conservation of the Quantity of Matter |
| Causality (Second Analogy of Experience) | The Law of Inertia |
| Community (Third Analogy of Experience) | The Law of the Equality of Action and Reaction |

By correlating each category to its respective Law, Kant believes that the pure concepts serve as the ‘metaphysical’ basis for the *proof* for the Laws of Mechanics. For example, in the case of the First Law, the Conservation of Matter is held to rest on the notion of substance (*Metaphysical Foundations*: [542]). However, what I wish to emphasise here is that Kant is not making the absurd claim that a mere analysis of the categories of relations *entails* the Laws of Mechanics.[[40]](#footnote-40) Instead, what I believe Kant is claiming is that each category of relation directly relates to each respective Law of Natural Science, insofar as the Categories provide the form for these principles. It is not the case that the Categories *in and of themselves* provide the specific representational content of each Law of Mechanics, because *in and of themselves*, the Categories are empty forms of thought. Rather, the formal features of the categories of relation, i.e. the rules that they express, contribute to the formulation of the Laws of Natural Science. In claiming that the principles of natural science have their formal structure derived *a priori*, i.e. that natural science is founded on certain transcendental principles, it would seem then that Kant is committed to formal idealism about the Laws of Nature. However, formal idealism is and should not to be conflated with an idealism about nature, viz.,[[41]](#footnote-41)

That nature should direct itself according to our subjective ground of apperception, indeed in regard to its lawfulness even depend on this, may well sound quite contradictory and strange. But if one considers that this nature is nothing in itself but a sum of appearances, hence not a thing in itself but merely a multitude of representations of the mind, then one will not be astonished to see that unity on account of which alone it can be called object of all possible experience, i.e. nature, solely in the radical faculty of all our cognition, namely, transcendental apperception … (A114)

Thus we ourselves bring into the appearances that order and regularity in them that we call nature, and moreover we would not be able to find it there if we, or the nature of our mind, had not originally put it there. (A125)

In these passages, Kant is not claiming that the understanding creates the empirical world or that the empirical world is ontologically dependent on its operations. Rather, Kant is claiming, as I understand him, that the *form* or structure of nature is determined by the mind. In other words, the way nature manifests itself to us, namely as a unified totality composed of physical objects that are causally interrelated, is not something that can be derived from the world, but derived *a priori* and then applied to experience. By this, it is not the case that without (discursive) minds, there is no world, *contra* Berkeley. Rather, Kant’s argument is that without (discursive) minds, there is no *order* and *regularity* in the world. This position is not committed to the idea that the world is ontologically dependent on the cognitive activity of the human mind, but to the idea that the structure of the world is dependent on the activity of the human mind. This is what is central to Kant’s Copernican idea of ‘objects conforming to us’, and is something that Kant made explicit in his response to his critics. As he writes,

My protestation too against all charges of idealism is so valid and clear as even to seem superfluous, were there not incompetent judges, who, while they would have an old name for every deviation from their perverse though common opinion, and never judge of the spirit of philosophic nomenclature, but cling to the letter only, are ready to put their own conceits in the place of well-defined notions, and thereby deform and distort them. I have myself given this my theory the name of transcendental idealism, but that cannot authorize any one to confound it either with the empirical idealism of Descartes, (indeed, his was only an insoluble problem, owing to which he thought every one at liberty to deny the existence of the corporeal world, because it could never be proved satisfactorily), or with the mystical and visionary idealism of Berkeley, against which and other similar phantasms our *Critique* contains the proper antidote. My idealism concerns not the existence of things (the doubting of which, however, constitutes idealism in the ordinary sense), since it never came into my head to doubt it, but it concerns the sensuous representation of things, to which space and time especially belong. (*Prolegomena*: 4:293)

# *§c Understanding Formal Idealism*

It should now be clear what the central doctrines of formal idealism are. However, before moving on to how Hegel understands the theory, I would like to determine which ofthose models of interpreting Kant’s Copernicanism, if any, is best suited to understanding formal idealism, given how Methodological Copernicanism is intimately connected to transcendental idealism. I earlier introduced two models of interpreting the Copernican turn, namely the Imposition Model and the Articulation Model: according to the Imposition Model, the structure of the world is derived from us and then imposed on an unknowable and completely indeterminate content. According to the Articulation Model, the structure of the world is derived from us and then applied to a content that is already determinate in some ways. I argued that that Articulation Model was a better interpretation of the Copernican turn. The question now, however, is whether its advantage over the Imposition Model with regard to the Copernican turn translates into a better understanding of formal idealism. I believe that it does. However, even though the Articulation Model offers a more compelling reading of formal idealism than the Imposition Model, I believe that it fails to make formal idealism ultimately plausible: because of this, I am going to suggest an alternative model to both the Imposition Model and the Articulation Model, namely the Filtration Model.

Turning to the dialectic between the Imposition Model and the Articulation Model first of all, the reason why I believe the Articulation Model’s account of formal idealism is better than that of the Imposition Model is that (a) unlike the Imposition Model, the Articulation Model does not conflate ‘structuring objects in accordance with *a priori* rules’ with ‘imposing an *a priori* conceptual structure on objects’; and (b) unlike the Imposition Model, the Articulation Model does not conceive of the pre-conceptualised world as a lump of Aristotelian prime matter.

With regard to (a), it is clear that my objection to how the Imposition Model conceives of formal idealism relates to my objection to how the Imposition Model conceives of Methodological Copernicanism – namely, that just as having objects conform to our mode of cognition does not imply that we *impose* form on objects, so having the formal structure of reality derived from us and then be applied to objects does not amount to imposing a conceptual structure on objects: what the Imposition Model incorrectly does is conflate ‘derived from us and then *applied* to objects’ with ‘derived from us and then *imposed* on objects’: whilst it is correct to claim that Kant’s position is committed to the idea that we provide the formal unity of nature, his position essentially involves the idea of structuring objects in accordance with the conditions of possible experience, which is not clearly in support of an *imposition* by concepts on objects, given the difference in meaning between ‘structuring’ and ‘imposing’.

To make my point clearer, consider the following comparison between Kantianism and Putnam’s internal realism: Putnam claims that “‘What objects does the world consist of?’ is a question that it only makes sense to ask *within* a theory or description”.[[42]](#footnote-42) He does not really elaborate on what this means. However, despite this, I think Putnam means that our ontological commitments are determined by which theoretic model/conceptual scheme we use; and that which theoretic model/conceptual scheme we use is determined by our interests. As Moran writes, “conceptual schemes relate to viewpoints, which in turn relate to various interests”.[[43]](#footnote-43) On Putnam’s view, “‘objects’ do not exist independently of conceptual schemes. We cut the world up into objects when we introduce one or other scheme of description”.[[44]](#footnote-44) By this, he means “objects are as much made as discovered, as much products of our conceptual invention as of the objective factor in experience”.[[45]](#footnote-45) Such comments, particularly the remark that ‘objects are as much made’, can be interpreted as instances of classical idealism, i.e. the idea that objects exist only because we think/talk about them. In other words, in talking about objects being ‘made’ and being ‘products of our conceptual invention’, Putnam can be interpreted as an irrealist like Goodman.

Though there are reasons to suppose that Putnam is committed to irrealism, it is clear that his remark, ‘Objects are as much made as discovered’, is ambiguous. And because of the ambiguity, I think it would be rash to ascribe to Putnam an irrealist philosophy: when Putnam claims that objects do not exist independently of conceptual schemes, the example (1987: 18-9) he uses to illustrate his assertion does not obviously support the idealist/irrealist interpretation. For, according to Putnam, the proposition ‘There are four objects on the table’ is true *only* under one conceptual scheme. On a different conceptual scheme, that same proposition is false. Rather than wanting to claim that objects are ontologically dependent on us, I think Putnam means to say that the truth-conditions of statements about objects depend on which conceptual scheme we use, as per his example about counting. Furthermore, if we were to ask Putnam how tables and chairs exist, he can say the following, which opposes irrealism: it is not the case that conceptual activity creates/produces/makes/constructs objects; conceptual activity, rather, brings a way of *talking* about objects into existence. For example, before we came up with the concept ‘table’, there had been previously a mereological bundle in the world that had four legs, was made out of wood, etc. After coming up with the concept ‘table’, what has changed with that mereological bundle is not its ontology, but just how it is to be categorised, how it is to be articulated. That mereological unity is now baptised ‘table’. On Putnam’s account, we move from *referring* to a table as ‘mereological bundle …’ to *referring* to that same table as ‘table’. I think this is why Putnam writes that “**‘**objects**’** do not exist independently of conceptual schemes” as opposed to “objects do not exist independently of conceptual scheme”. In emphasising how descriptions about objects are reliant on conceptual activity, Putnam denies that the human mind encounters a “ready-made world”.[[46]](#footnote-46) Crucially, though, Putnam does not say a denial of being confronted by a ready-made world means that the human mind creates worlds. He is explicit in claiming that “human minds did not create the stars or the mountains”.[[47]](#footnote-47) The essential point is that given the similarities between Kant’s account of concept-use and that of Putnam, Kant’s idea of structuring representations in accordance with concepts does not involve *imposition*, but something like articulation.

With regard to (b), I believe that another serious issue with the Imposition Model lies in how it does not seem adequately equipped to do justice to Kant’s claims about the pre-conceptual world: it is true that Kant claims the world would be a buzzing confusion if it was never conceptualised; however, it does not follow from this position that the empirical world pre-conceptualisation is completely indeterminate. In other words, the Imposition Model incorrectly claims that the pre-conceptualised world is a lump of Aristotelian prime matter. Under Kant’s account, by contrast, the world must already have a type of structure for us to possibly experience it *before* concept-application; though this structure may be unknowable to us, it is still partially determinate, and serves as a transcendental condition for the *matter* of experience, by claiming what the world must be like for us to experience it, cf. Westphal (2004).[[48]](#footnote-48)

From what we have said so far, then, it is reasonable to conclude that Kant’s formal idealism as interpreted by the Articulation Model is more nuanced than the Imposition Model would have it. However, this does not mean that the Articulation Model is the best way to understand formal idealism: as I understand it, there are two problems with the Articulation Model: (i) whilst there is certainly some truth to the claim that Kant’s theory of concept-employment does not involve the idea of imposition, the comparison with Putnam’s theory of concept-employment breaks down when we try to apply the internal realist account to the *transcendental* level. We saw that Putnam believes that there are mountains, tables, chairs, etc. before any cognitive activity on our part. Under his internal realism, what we bring into existence are the *concepts* of mountain, table, chair, etc., which are used to articulate our experience of these respective objects. Given the examples he uses, Putnam’s account is solely concerned with the *empirical* level. However, Kant is fundamentally concerned with how concepts work at the *transcendental* level, and it is not clear how an internal realist theory of conceptual articulation can be applied here: Putnam claims that the *object* ‘mountain’ has always existed independently of us; but, it is the manner of ascribing certain properties to the object that is dependent on us. So, on this account, an empirical object, whose nature does not change because of us, is merely articulated in a special way. However, when we apply transcendental concepts to representational contents, it is not clear that the same situation is occurring, because before conceptual activity, the ‘object’ which we are said to articulate in employing concepts does change in an important way: the ‘object’ goes from being a collection of representational contents that are non-unified, non-causal, etc. to something that is properly objectual. To put it simply, unlike at the empirical level, at the transcendental level, there were no mountains, tables and chairs, etc., there was just some arrangement of representational contents which after synthesis and concept-application then turned into mountains, tables and chairs, etc. The formal idealist pre-conceptual world has a structure, but its structure is not something nearly as determinate as the structure of pre-conceptualised reality on the internal realist account. Ultimately, then, whilst the picture of the pre-conceptual world on the Articulation Model provides a slight improvement to the picture of the pre-conceptual world on the Imposition Model, the Articulation Model’s failure to do justice to concept-employment at the transcendental level prevents it from doing justice to formal idealism.

The question now is how one can improve on the Articulation Model’s account of the relationship between categorial concepts and the pre-conceptual world. One account is offered by Hoke Robinson, who writes the following about the subjective conditions of possible experience:

[T]hey first filter out the things lacking representation-enabling features entirely; they then filter out those which, though possessing such features, are not capable of being united into a whole world-picture with others. Only the things that survive this double filtration may serve as the objects of our representations. We know that these in fact all possess representation-enabling features, i.e., spatiotemporal and categorial determination, because they were *selected* by the filtration only insofar as they possessed these features. But their possession of these features is not the *result* of the epistemic conditions; rather they possessed these features from the outset, and would continue to possess them if there were no representations, no epistemic conditions, no conscious subjects at all. The filtration model, then, views the objects of our representations as filtered out of, or selected from, a totality of preexisting, mind-independent things.[[49]](#footnote-49)

Unlike both the Imposition Model and the Articulation Model, Robinson’s interpretation of formal idealism seems to account for the relationship between form and the objects of representation in a less problematic way, for it appears to avoid the difficulties associated with imposition, and does not have an obscure metaphysical picture of representational contents turning into objects by conceptual articulation. I am in broad agreement with Robinson’s understanding of the relationship between categorial concepts and the things to which we apply these concepts at the transcendental level, namely that there is some kind of filtration process occurring between us and a set of mind-independent objects. I also agree with his idea that (i) at the transcendental level, objects have certain features that enable them to be subject to conceptualisation, i.e. objects have properties that are concept-friendly; and that (ii) objects also have certain features that prevent them from being subject to conceptualisation – i.e. objects have properties that are concept-resistant. As such, the properties that are concept-friendly are knowable, whereas the properties that are concept-resistant are unknowable. However, I disagree with aspects of Robinson’s reading. As I see it, Robinson is failing to do justice to the *idealism* of Kant by making him out to be a realist in a Lockean manner.

*Prima facie*, Robinson’s accountseems to share much with Rae Langton’s reading of the distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves as a distinction between extrinsic/relational properties and intrinsic properties of the *same* empirical object, cf. Langton (1998: 20). As with Langton’s account, his interpretation regards us as being confronted with properties and then establishing which kinds of thing we can experience; and Robinson agrees with Langton’s idea that the things beyond our possible experience are unknowable, because there is something about the nature of those things that prevents us from cognising them. So, unlike Strawson (1966) and Van Cleve (1999), who understand the difference between appearances and things-in-themselves as a distinction between Berkeleyean ideas and mind-independent real things, and unlike Allison (1983, 2004) and Bird (1962, 2007), who both regard the distinction to amount to a different way of talking about the same empirical object, Robinson and Langton make a one-world metaphysical distinction.

However, in contrast to all these philosophers, the kind of Filtration Model I would like to defend claims that the distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves is a metaphysical distinction, but that it is a non-Strawsonian two-world view: At the transcendental level, we are confronted at first with a set of objects; *some* of the properties of the objects that confront us are able to be subject to synthesis and the forms of sensibility and thought; the other properties of this set of objects, however, cannot be brought under any conditions of possible experience, because there just is a fundamental incompatibility between these properties and the cognitive constitution of the human mind. The properties of these objects that are incompatible with human discursivity are things-in-themselves, whereas those properties of the objects that we are initially confronted by that are compatible with our cognitive make-up interact with us in such a way as to form appearances. So, under this story, what we experience is neither a certain kind of property of an empirical object nor a Berkeleyean idea, but rather a certain kind of property of an object that interacts with us in such a way as to constitute an empirical object. In stressing that the things we experience pass the filtration test, my Filtration Model can be seen as satisfying what I would like to call Allais’s criterion, namely the idea that any interpretation of formal idealism has to accommodate Kant’s idealist commitments *and* Kant’s realist commitments.[[50]](#footnote-50) Even though appearances are mind-dependent in a non-Berkeleyean way, under my Filtration Model appearances are still held to “constitute the objective, external world”.[[51]](#footnote-51) In other words, though appearances are mind-dependent in a special way, given what *we* contribute to empirical reality, they are still held to be *real* in an important manner, given not just their empirically real status, but more importantly also the fact that a necessary condition of experiencing appearances is that appearances possess certain properties independent of us that are enabling conditions for our cognition.

My Filtration Model, of course, may attract criticism from Allison, Guyer, Allais, Langton, et al. One main critical comment could be that there seems to be little *unambiguous* textual justification for the talk about filtration and object-subjective form compatibility. However, I think this line of criticism is ultimately ineffective, because textual evidence that is usually taken to support the Imposition Model or the Articulation Model can in fact equally support the two Filtration Models. Furthermore, there is much equipollent textual evidence to support the two-world view of Strawson, the one-world metaphysical view of Langton, and the one-world semantic view of Allison. But I think what really seems to be the canon for determining the best interpretation is the philosophical intelligibility of the position ascribed to Kant regardless of the quantity of textual support that is consistent with the central tenets of the Critical Philosophy. With regard to the Imposition Model, the Articulation Model, and my Filtration Model, all three models of formal idealism have textual support and philosophical problems attached to the commitments of their respective understandings of Kant’s thesis. However, to my mind, why my Filtration Model is the best of the interpretations is that it ascribes to Kant the most philosophically intelligible theory within the parameters of the Critical Philosophy. By contrast, the principal weakness of the Imposition Model was that it painted a highly obscure metaphysical picture and also failed to do adequate justice to Kant’s theory of concept-application, while the main problem with the Articulation Model was that it failed to plausibly account for articulation at the transcendental level. My Filtration Model does have philosophical difficulties, particularly with the idea of how exactly the mind interacts with the initial set of objects, but difficulties such as this are not as severe as those attached to the Imposition Model or the Articulation Model: indeed, I think it would incorrect for Kantians to criticise my interpretation by claiming that I have not detailed how interaction is supposed to work, for one should not raise *this* kind of demand *as* a Kantian. Kantians ought to remain silent on the question of what is exactly going on at the transcendental level, because to make any detailed claims about the metaphysical processes would commit dialectical reasoning. As Kant himself wrote:

… I simultaneously deprive speculative reason of its pretension to extravagant insights; because in order to attain such insights, speculative reason would have to help itself to principles that in fact reach only to objects of possible experience, and which, if they were to be applied to what cannot be an object of experience, then they would always actually transform it into an appearance, and thus declare all practical extension of pure reason to be impossible. Thus I had to deny *knowledge* in order to make room for *faith*. (Bxxx, emphasis added.)

Of course, to many, Kant’s failure to provide an adequate story of transcendental affection may be seen as a weakness on the part of the Critical Philosophy. However, I do not think that this is a problem for Kant *on his terms*: that demand expressed by philosophers that Kant owes us a metaphysical explanation is precisely that kind of demand that is rejected by Kant’s metaphilosophical commitments; in one basic sense, Kant himself may admit that it is disappointing that such an explanation is impossible for us, but in a more important sense, he would, I think, say that we ought to move away from one of our natural cognitive aspirations, the search for the ultimate explanation of things, and accept our epistemic limitations and leave such questions unanswered.

If what I have suggested is to be accepted, then formal idealism is at its most compelling under my Filtration Model. It is for this reason that we should regard it as the best interpretation of Kant’s thesis. The task now is to see what exactly Hegel’s critique of Kant’s formal idealism amounts to, for if it follows a poor interpretation, then we can dismiss Hegel’s critique, whereas if it follows the best interpretation or at least a compelling interpretation, then we have to take what he writes very seriously.

# *§d Hegel’s Objection: The Separation of Thought and Being*

Before looking at Hegel’s critique of Kant’s theory of apperception, experience, and position on the possibility of metaphysics, I want to first establish Hegel’s general critique of Kantian idealism. Hegel’s main discussion of Kant’s idealism appears in *Faith and Knowledge*,the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, and the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. In the latter text, the following passage is arguably the clearest general criticism of Kant’s idealism:

But after all, objectivity of thought, in Kant’s sense, is again to a certain extent subjective. Thoughts, according to Kant, although universal and necessary categories, are *only our* thoughts – separated by an impassable gulf from the thing, as it exists apart from our knowledge. But the true objectivity of thinking means that the thoughts, far from being merely ours, must at the same time be the real essences of the things, and of whatever is an object to us. (*Encyclopaedia*, §41z: 67-68)

The basic charge that Hegel levels against Kant here is that formal idealism is subjective. According to Bird, Hegel’s view on formal idealism is continuous with “traditional interpretations of Kant”.[[52]](#footnote-52) By this, I take Bird to mean that Hegel believes Kant is a Berkeleyean or phenomenalist, cf. the Feder-Garve Review[[53]](#footnote-53) and Strawson (1966). The reason for regarding Hegel as reading Kant in this way, on Bird’s account, is that “… Hegel points out that all the material for knowledge, according to Kant, is subjective, namely sense-experiences”[[54]](#footnote-54) and that what is essentially subjective is just “states of consciousness”[[55]](#footnote-55) and what is objective is identified with noumenal reality. Consequently, according to Bird, “Hegel’s objection, as it is stated, rests more on an inability to report Kant’s views accurately than on a serious argument against his views”,[[56]](#footnote-56) as Bird takes any such reading of Kant to be radically misconceived.

However, Hegel is not claiming, *contra* Bird’s view of his critique of Kant, that the subjectivism amounts to some kind of phenomenalism or Berkeleyeanism. Rather, the subjectivism of formal idealism, for Hegel, consists in holding that the structure, order, and unity of empirical reality are all derived from us and that thought and being are fundamentally separate from one another. This reading is supported by Sedgwick, who writes that “[h]ere Hegel challenges not Kant’s insistence that the categories derive from the faculty of spontaneity rather than from sensation, but the restrictions he places on their validity. More precisely, Hegel challenges Kant’s inference from the fact that the categories must be the contribution of the thinking subject to the conclusion that they cannot therefore also be ‘determinations of objects themselves’. Hegel makes this point again when he writes that, ‘according to Kant, thoughts, although they are universal and necessary determinations, are still *only our* thoughts, and are cut off from what the thing is *in itself* by an impassable gulf’”.[[57]](#footnote-57) In other words, Hegel sees Kant as incorrectly separating thought from being, by regarding the world as only having its conceptual structure by virtue of the application of certain forms, namely the Categories, whose origin lies in *us*.[[58]](#footnote-58) For Hegel, what Kant should not have argued was that the necessity and universality provided by conceptual form that constitutes the formal unity and order of empirical reality is not inherent to the world itself. This seems to be supported by the following passage:

Still, though the categories, such as unity, or cause and effect, are strictly the property of thought, it by no means follows that they must be ours merely and not also characteristics of the objects. Kant however confines them to the subject-mind, and his philosophy may be styled subjective idealism … (*Encyclopaedia*, §42z: 70)

What I have suggested therefore allows for the following approach: in wishing to conceive of the Categories as derivable from the world, Hegel is recommending here that we reject transcendental idealism, particularly the idea that there is a distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves insofar as the Categories only have validity for *appearances* and have no validity for things-in-themselves. By consequence, then, the whole Critical project is rejected, which may then appear to return us to a pre-Critical/dogmatically metaphysical position which views all objects of philosophical enquiry as knowable by theoretical reason, and so unfettered categorial reflection.

However, as Sedgwick correctly writes, “in charging Kant with subjective idealism, Hegel is not recommending that we collapse the distinction between appearances and things in themselves – at least not in the sense that requires us to treat our knowledge of appearances as subject to no more restrictions than our speculations about objects of faith and morality”.[[59]](#footnote-59) I agree with Sedgwick for two reasons: Firstly, suggesting that Hegel is advocating a return to a pre-Critical metaphysical position would involve claiming Hegel rejects Kant’s Discursivity Thesis, namely the idea that cognition requires both concepts and intuitions. But this is something that Hegel does not reject, despite his insistence that concepts (*Begriffe*) have priority over intuitions. Secondly, the idea of Hegel believing we can know objects independently of the conditions of sensibility would suggest that we have the faculty of intellectual intuition, namely the ability to *create* objects in the activity of thinking about them. I am happy to concede that in a crucial sense Hegel was sympathetic to the idea of human cognition being intuitive, given his early writings in the *Difference Essay*, where he claimed “intellectual intuition [*intellektuelle Anschauung*] is the absolute principle of philosophy, the one real ground and firm standpoint” (*DFS*: 172), and that “one cannot philosophise without intuition” (*DFS*: 111).That being said, though, these sympathies do not translate into a commitment to the idea that human cognition *really* involves intellectual intuition in Kant’s sense; Hegel did not deny that human cognition was discursive, that it relied on some kind of given content. What he argued was that human discursivity could not be fully appreciated *under Kant’s understanding of discursivity*: whilst Hegel agreed with the essence of the Transcendental Deduction, namely the idea that *no* representational content that we could receive in experience can be unconceptualised, what he aimed to reject was the Kantian idea that *this* fact about our cognition meant that the given content we receive is itself unknowable/unintelligible independently of our minds, and that human cognition is limited given the reliance on sensibility. What, then, Hegel’s fondness of intuitive intellection signifies is just that he believes Kant should not treat our reliance on sensibility as resulting in cognitive impotence or humility. All that Hegel is committed to in wanting human cognition to be more intuitive is that we should not regard our knowledge as being fundamentally limited, because we can identify in the content we receive in experience determinations of thought. These determinations of thought, moreover, when cognised by us, give us insight into not just the intrinsic rational order of the world as a whole, but also provide us with the means to reconcile our own rationality with the rational structure of experience. It is this process, crucially, that constitutes absolute knowledge. As Hegel writes, “this last shape of Spirit – the Spirit which at the same time gives its complete and true content the form of the self and thereby realises its Notion as remaining in its Notion in this realisation – this is absolute knowing; it is Spirit that knows itself in the shape of Spirit, or a comprehensive knowing” (*PS*: 427).

However, in response to what I have argued about Hegel’s position on our cognitive faculties, it can be suggested that claiming that Hegel regarded our thought to be both intuitive in a special way yet also discursive ascribes to Hegel an incoherent position; as Sedgwick writes: “Perhaps all this suggests is that Hegel wishes to award us incompatible cognitive capacities. The intuitive model, he says, is implied by an accurate interpretation of the transcendental deduction and best captures the nature of our form of cognition; yet he also grants that in its cognitions of experience, human spontaneity must be affected by a given sensible content”.[[60]](#footnote-60) To claim, though, that Hegel is simply inconsistent misses the point, as the only way one can justifiably call Hegel’s position ‘incoherent’ here is if we have compelling reason to think he believes that human cognition is both intuitive and discursive *simpliciter*, that human cognition shares the same properties as both the intuitive intellect and the discursive consciousness. But, as I have argued, Hegel does not suggest anything like this, because whilst we do rely on a given content that affects us, the only thing we share with the intuitive intellect, he believes, is spontaneity. Though by ‘spontaneity’ here, Hegel does not mean the same kind of cognitive activity that the intuitive intellect possess - rather, he only means that a discursive consciousness is able to reflect on their environment and change their conceptual structures where appropriate to adequately grasp external content.

Returning to the previous passage from the *Encyclopaedia*, we can now see that what the separation of thought and being signifies for Hegel is that on Kant’s account, the objectivity of representation provided by the pure concepts is not a full-blooded objectivity, i.e. the objectivity is in some sense artificial and contingent: the Categories confer on objects the formal characteristics of objectivity (such as causality, substantiality, etc.), but leave us cut off from things in themselves. In this way, the empirically real character of the world depends on this important aspect of transcendental idealism. By extension, the laws of natural science, because they rely on the Categories, also depend on this important aspect of transcendental idealism. And it is because the formal characteristics of ordinary objects and the formal structure of empirical reality are derived from us that the Kantian account of the objectivity of representation, for Hegel, is not a full-blooded one. Thus, Bird is correct to note that Hegel criticises Kant for failing to secure a strong conception of objectivity; however, *how* Bird understands this claim, as a form of Berkleyean phenomenalism, is I believe mistaken. Having seen that Hegel’s critique of Kant does not involve any kind of charge of phenomenalism, we can also reject Bird’s claims that “... there can be little doubt that Hegel’s discussion was in moulding that tradition [of regarding Kant as a phenomenalist]”,[[61]](#footnote-61) and that Hegel misunderstood Kant.

Another way of understanding Hegel’s argument here is that Kant’s formal idealism fails to adequately respond to the Humean challenge of how experience can be the source of our knowledge of necessity, i.e. how, if possible, we can establish that the world is necessarily ordered. However, two points need to be made for the sake of clarity: (a) Hegel’s conception of experience is very different from Hume’s conception of experience, cf. “the empirical is not only mere observing, hearing, feeling, perceiving particulars, but it also essentially consists in finding species, universals and laws” (*LHP*, XX 79/III: 176). In this sense, it can be suggested that Hegel is talking past Hume. (b) Hegel’s appeal to experience does not amount to the idea that there can be an *impression* of necessity, because to make that claim would conflate thought and sensation. For Hegel, Kant was correct to believe that the Categories could not be derived from sensation, but that Kant’s first error here was acknowledging Hume’s contention that necessity, etc. could not be derived *a posteriori*. Indeed, Kant himself writes the following, which suggests that he accepted Hume’s claim about what experience could provide:

For if this representation of space were a concept acquired *a posteriori*, which was drawn out of general outer experience, the first principles of mathematical determination would be nothing but perceptions. They would therefore have all the contingency of perception, and it would not even be necessary that only one straight line lie between two points, but experience would merely always teach that. What is borrowed from experience always has only comparative universality, namely through induction. One would therefore only be able to say that as far as has been observed to date, no space has been found that has more than three dimensions. (A24/B39)

In this passage, what Kant is claiming, I believe, is that all that experience can provide us with is knowledge (or at least *awareness*) of actuality; experience cannot provide the content of necessity in certain knowledge-claims. However, according to Kant, because the truths of geometrical propositions would be contingent if these truths were derived *a posteriori*, and because geometrical truths are necessary, these truths must be about objects that have their character conforming to our cognitive structure. The price, then, that Kant has to pay to maintain the idea of necessity against Hume’s sceptical empiricism – i.e. the appeal to apriority – is, for Hegel, a non full-blooded concept of objectivity. Under Hegel’s account, it is not just the case that Kant agreed with Hume, but also that Kant’s second error, his response to Hume, was a subjectivist response, which failed to do justice to the concept of objectivity.

In contrast to Kant’s subjective idealism, Hegel aims to develop an *objective* idealism, one which claims that the rational structure of empirical reality is an *intrinsic* property of empirical reality, rather than something contributed to an indeterminate content by human discursivity.[[62]](#footnote-62) In other words, one of Hegel’s fundamental philosophical aims is to bring thought and being together, by rejecting Kant’s thesis that form is *a priori*: the subjective origin of (conceptual) form, the principle of determinacy and order, on the Kantian account, signifies for Hegel that reality in itself is not determined, ordered and unified, i.e. that thought is separate from being. The main task of Hegelian metaphysics is to explain how the world *is* in itself determined, ordered and unified.

The final question I wish to address in this section is whether the separation of thought from being fits at least one of the interpretations of formal idealism that I discussed earlier. It is clear that Hegel takes issue with the idea that without a discursive mind, empirical reality lacks the features of unity, order, regularity, and necessity. *Prima facie*, this may suggest that Hegel was supportive of the Imposition Model’s reading of formal idealism. However, it is not clear at all that Hegel had this oversimplified interpretation of Kant, which would mean that ascribing to Hegel the Imposition Model would be premature. I think that it is fair to say that Hegel did not favour the Articulation Model, simply because there is nothing really in his writing that would suggest some kind of espousal of that interpretation. It is more difficult, though, to see if Hegel adopted the Filtration Model that I developed: this model, as I argued, regards the world as having its structure due to the interaction between our conceptual framework and the properties of a set of objects that exist mind-independently, but whose nature we can never cognise. However, if we remember what Hegel’s critique involves – the charge that Kant derived the principles that govern formal unity of nature from us and not from the world itself – Hegel is opposing any argument that the world is not itself the source of formal unity; because of this, I think it is reasonable to conclude that Hegel’s argument can be directed at *both* the Imposition Model, because this claims that the mind imposes form on an indeterminate world, *and* my Filtration Model, because this claims that the mind and certain properties of objects determine the formal structure of reality.

Thus far, I have shown that Hegel’s critique of Kant’s subjective idealism is not based on an erroneous view of Kant. I now wish to move on to other central and related aspects of that critique, beginning with Hegel’s critique of Kant’s view of transcendental apperception.

# *§e Hegel’s Critique of Kant’s Transcendental Subject*[[63]](#footnote-63)

The importance of transcendental apperception may be seen where Kant suggests that

There can be in us no modes of knowledge, no connection of unity of one mode of knowledge with another, without that unity of consciousness that precedes all data of intuition, and by relation to which representation of objects is alone possible.(A107)

As *my* representations … they must conform to the condition under which alone they *can* stand together in one universal self-consciousness, because otherwise they would not all without exception belong to me. (B131-3)

In both passages, Kant is concerned with transcendental claims about what a subject of experience must be to have *experiences*. In other words, Kant is concerned with establishing the necessary conditions for both subject-hood and experience. In considering the former, we find *identity*, *unity*, and *self-consciousness* are features of transcendental consciousness, in that if a subject of experience is to be a *subject* at all, such a subject must be an *identical* subject through time. For any ‘I’ to have experiences of any kind, the experiences must belong to *that* ‘I’, otherwise the ‘I’ cannot be considered as a subject, nor can the myriad of his representations be considered as *experiences.* Without such identity, “the synthetic reproduction and reidentification that Kant has already argued are necessary for experience could not occur”.[[64]](#footnote-64)

Secondly, for there to be unity of representations in a single subject, that subject must actively unify them, since

the transcendental unity of apperception forms out of all possible appearances, which can stand alongside one another in experience, a connection of these representations according to laws.(A108)

In other words, to bring the manifold of intuitions, which in themselves have no unity, under synthetic unity, the subject must impose the schema of unity onto objects, otherwise “there would be only associative unities, and so no unity of experience and no possible experience [*Erfahrung*] at all”.[[65]](#footnote-65)

Finally, experience – as opposed to simply a collection of representations not belonging to a subject – would be impossible if the subject was not capable of being conscious of himself *as* a subject, as

It must be possible for the ‘I think’ to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me which could not be thought at all, and that is equivalent to saying that the representation would be impossible, or at least would be nothing to me.(B132)

From these passages, we can re-construct the following argument.

1. To have an experience, the subject of experience must bring the myriad of intuitions under synthetic unity to his consciousness, otherwise the myriad of intuitions cannot be considered as an experience.
2. Synthetic unity consists in bringing the myriad of intuitions under an identical, unified and self-conscious subject.
3. Therefore, bringing the myriad of intuitions under an identical, unified and self-conscious subject is a necessary condition of possible experience.

The transcendental unity of apperception – which Kant also considers to be the *synthetic* unity of apperception – importantly does not have any representational content to it. The reason why Kant argues for formalism about the self here is that the self is not a proper object of representation – in that the self is not the kind of thing that has any kind of intuition attached to it, as Hume had also argued.[[66]](#footnote-66) This is not to say that the self can be reduced to a bundle of psychological operations, asHume had also claimed, because Kant does not think we can give any metaphysical description of the ‘I’. All that we are entitled to talk about is the epistemic function of the self, viz. the ‘I think’. This is what lies at the centre of Kant’s critique of rational psychology in the Paralogisms (cf. A402), where he argues that the errors of Descartes et al. consist in taking the formal features of the self, such as simplicity, and then reifying these properties to refer to a soul that corresponds to the formality of the analytic unity of apperception, i.e. the purely formal unity of the transcendental subject. For Kant, the transcendental subject must lie outside the empirical realm, and cannot be accounted for as a genuine object of possible experience. As Kant writes,

We can assign no other basis for this teaching [of rational psychology] than the simple, and in itself completely empty representation ‘I’; and we cannot even say that this is a concept, but only that it is a bare consciousness which accompanies all concepts. Through this I or he or it (the thing) which thinks, nothing further is represented than a transcendental subject of the thoughts = X. (A345-6/B404)

However, this fundamental separation of the ‘I’ from the world of experience, for Hegel, is problematic. As he writes,

On one side there is the Ego, with its productive imagination or rather with its synthetic unity which, taken thus in isolation, is formal unity of the manifold. But next to it there is an infinity of sensations … A formal idealism which in this way sets an absolutely Ego-point and its intellect on one side, and an absolute manifold, or sensation, on the other side, is a dualism. (*F & K*: 76-78)

For Hegel, this ‘dualism’ is the conception of the ‘I’ as purely ‘in-itself’, distinct from the manifold of empirical intuitions. I think we can cash out what this means in two different ways: firstly, Hegel can be seen as claiming that because Kant separates form and matter, he thereby makes it very difficult for the two to relate to one another as well as treating the idea of form and matter being independent of one another as if this were coherent. The second way of understanding Hegel’s claim in the above passage is by situating it within the immediate post-Kantian critique of transcendental idealism. We can regard Hegel as claiming that there seems to be no way that the ‘I think’ can actually engage with its objects, because of the heterogeneity of the ‘I’ and the manifold. To put the point differently, Hegel’s worry here is with the metaphysics of the transcendental subject, specifically the idea that the self, being in its own domain, can somehow interact with the objects residing in the empirical world. Let us call this argument against Kant ‘The Problem of Heterogeneity’. If this is an accurate way of understanding the passage from *Faith and Knowledge*, then it seems that Hegel is (a) reading Kant as having a position that is more or less identical to the one later developed by Fichte, and (b) critiquing Kant (and Fichte) on precisely the same grounds as those who criticised Cartesian dualism for the separation of mind and body to the extent that interaction between the two was impossible. Let me explore these points a little further.

With regard to (a), I believe there is much to support the idea that Kant and Fichte were read by Hegel as more or less claiming the same thing:[[67]](#footnote-67) like Kant before him, Fichte holds that the transcendental self, by virtue of its discursive cognitive make-up, aims to bring given representational contents under the ‘I think’; he also shares with Kant the view that the absolute ego is purely formal, as can be seen in the conclusion of both the 1794 *Wissenschaftslehre* (cf. I, 310-12) and of the *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*. Though Fichte regards the cognitive activity of applying concepts to content as a form of ‘striving’, and while he differs from Kant in how he conceives of concept-employment, he still shares the same commitment as Kant: in aiming to bring nature under its rational authority, the transcendental subject is seen as having to compel phenomenal reality to conform to noumenal spontaneity. However, because of the heterogeneity of the ‘I’ and nature, we can see why Hegel and Schelling rejected the dualism of both Kant and Fichte, on the grounds that just as Descartes could not explain how an immaterial mind could interact with a physical body, Kant (and Fichte) could not explain how a transcendental subject could interact with representational content.

Turning our attention to one of Hegel’s later works, the *Encyclopaedia*, we find the following criticism made of Kant’s transcendental ego:

The word ‘I’ expresses the abstract relation-to-self; and whatever is placed in this unit or focus is affected by it and transformed into it … and to this end the positive reality of the world must be as it were crushed and pounded, in other words, idealised. (*EPSO*, §23: 69)

In contrast to the previous objection to Kant’s transcendental self, namely the Problem of Heterogeneity, which was dealing with metaphysical issues, I take this passage to offer a different line of critique: for Hegel, the Kantian understanding of the ‘I’ is highly problematic here, since in contributing the formal structure of empirical reality, the objectivity we encounter, what Hegel calls the ‘positive reality of the world’, is not genuinely *objective*. By consequence, the type of knowledge we have of the empirical realm is not genuine knowledge of things independent of us, but rather a special kind of self-knowledge: we only have knowledge of what we have put in by our own cognitive forms. The basic steps of Hegel’s argument here can be put as follows: All representational content and formal principles are reliant on our *a priori* mechanisms. In contributing unity and order, etc., the epistemological cost of subjecting the world to our filtering is that what we took to be ‘world-knowledge’ thus turns out to be ‘self-knowledge’. The transcendental subject, therefore, in being the provider of formal unity, takes us towards some kind of solipsism. However, in calling this ‘solipsism’, I do not mean that Hegel is charging Kant with either claiming that there are no minds apart from my own (metaphysical solipsism), or that we can only know the contents of our mental states (epistemological solipsism), or that philosophic investigation into the extra-mental realm is posterior to and independent of investigation into our cognitive faculties (methodological solipsism). Rather, Hegel’s charge of solipsism consists in the claim that Kantianism leads to the conclusion that what we ordinarily take to be knowledge of an independent world turns out to be a specific kind of self-knowledge.

In an obvious way, Hegel’s worry about solipsism relates to his concern for the separation of thought and being. However, what I think this objection also reveals is a deep worry about Kant’s theory of transcendental synthesis. Such a worry is made explicit in the *Phenomenology*, where Hegel discusses Kant in the section on ‘Perception’. In this section of Hegel’s first major work, he draws a distinction between two ways of characterising the object of perceptive consciousness, as ‘Also’ and as ‘One’. The former refers to considering an object as a bundle of properties. For example, one could conceive an apple as being composed of redness, tartness, roundness, etc. The ascription of ‘One’, in contrast to ‘Also’, conceivesan object as also possessing an underlying substratum, that holds these properties together and underlies them. As Hegel writes,

Now, in perceiving in this way, consciousness is at the same time aware that it is *also* reflected into itself, and that, in perceiving, the opposite moment to the Also turns up. But this moment is the *unity* of the Thing with itself, a unity which excludes difference from itself. Accordingly, it is this unity which consciousness has to take upon itself; for the Thing itself is the *subsistence of the many diverse and independent properties*. Thus we say of the Thing: *it is* white, *also* cubical, and *also* tart, and so on. Positing these properties as a oneness is the work of consciousness alone which, therefore, has to prevent them from collapsing into oneness in the Thing. To this end it brings in the ‘in so far’, in this way preserving the properties as mutually external, and the Thing as the Also. Quite rightly, consciousness makes itself responsible for the oneness, at first in such a way that what was called a property is represented as ‘free matter’. The Thing is in this way raised to the level of a genuine Also, since it becomes a collection of ‘matters’ and, instead of being a One, becomes merely an enclosing surface. (*PS*: 73-4)

Hegel sees Kant’s explanation for the unity of perceptual objects as claiming that a transcendental self encounters a plurality of representational contents and then combines these contents together, to form a unified object. This interpretation of Kant is repeated in the *Encyclopaedia*, where Hegel writes:

The ‘I’ is as it were the crucible and fire through which the loose plurality of sense is consumed and reduced to unity. This is the process which Kant calls pure apperception in distinction from common apperception, which takes up the manifold as such in itself, whereas pure apperception is to be viewed as the act which makes the manifold ‘mine’. (*EPSO*, §23: 69)

However, Hegel rejects Kant’s position on the grounds that there is no synthesising on our part that gives objects their unity. As Stern writes, “… Hegel suggests reality has an intrinsic unity that is free of any activity of synthesis on the part of a Kantian transcendental subject”.[[68]](#footnote-68) In contrast to Kant, Hegel claims that objects in themselves are unities, and that we only think of them as being unified by us when we misconstrue our own cognitive activity. Our cognitive activity, according to Hegel, does not consist in being the sources of the unity in individual objects and does not consist in us being the sources of the unity of the world as a whole. Rather, what this activity consists of is our ability to detect and reflect upon the intrinsic unity of individual objects themselves and the intrinsic unity of the world as a whole, cf. *EPSO*, §381: 11-12.

A further objection to the formalism of the transcendental ego is made in the section on ‘Sense-Certainty’, where Hegel writes:

“I” is only universal in the way that *now*, *here*, or *this* is universal. To be sure, I mean an individual *I*, but I can no more say what I mean by “now,” “here,” than I can say what I mean by “I.” Since I say: *This here, this now,* or an *individual*, I say: *All this’s, all here’s, now’s,* *individuals*. Likewise in that I say, “*I, this* individual *I*,” what I say is “***all*** *I’s*.” Each is what I say it is: *I, this* individual I. If this demand is to be laid before science as its touchstone (a demand which would surely do it in), namely, that it deduce, construct, find a priori, or however one wishes to express it, a so-called “*this thing*” or “*this person*,” then it is reasonable that the demand should *state* which of the many things “*this thing*” or which of the “I’s” “*this I*” means. But it is impossible to state this. (*PS*: 91-2)

In this passage, Hegel can be understood in two different ways – though, these two accounts are not in competition with each other at all. One can read Hegel as either providing a critique of reference through indexical devices, or as highlighting a fundamental problem with the metaphysics of the Kantian I, the transcendental ego. With regard to the first interpretation, Hegel’s central claim is that like the other indexical devices, which cannot refer (by virtue of their meaning) to anything particular – i.e. establish particular identity-conditions – the expression ‘I’ fails to determine anything specific or individuating concerning individual minds. Such a reading of this passage is consistent with what I believe to be the general thrust of ‘Sense Certainty’, namely the refutation of the idea that consciousness can achieve knowledge independently of any conceptual framework. As Pippin writes, “... the goal [of Hegel’s argument] is obviously to demonstrate that even the simplest form of demonstrative reference would not be possible without some describing capacity, a capacity that requires descriptive terms or predicates ... not merely deictic expressions and atomic objects”.[[69]](#footnote-69) Given the focus it has on reference-conditions and the criterion for knowledge (specifically, knowledge of appearances), this reading of the passage is non-metaphysical. To some extent, I agree with the idea that Hegel’s concern here is with problems about reference and the structure and conditions of empirical knowledge. However, I take Hegel to *ultimately* be worried about the coherence of treating the self as an ‘I’, a transcendental subject: because the ‘I’ is formal, as a result of this formalism, we cannot then determine the identity of mind *x*, mind *y*, mind *z*, etc. Using formalism as the ground of identity will not enable me to differentiate my mind from someone else’s and differentiate other minds from one another, nor will ‘I’ even enable one to work out what makes them the person that they are. For Kant, then, to avoid the problem here, he must provide a criterion of determining the identity of different minds, by claiming that something like our individual mental content or spatio-temporal location (e.g. the position in a room we take up to perceive a public object) can provide an intelligible criterion for differentiating between minds. But, if Kant provides such an account, whereby he specifies the importance of *content* and sensibility, then he will have violated his conception of the self as formal and as outside experience. Therefore, Kant seems to be faced with a dilemma: If he keeps the formalism of the self, he will be committed to an implausible position which cannot provide a meaningful criterion for identifying and differentiating minds from one another; and if he does provide a meaningful criterion, he will have violated his conception of the self. We can call Hegel’s concerns about the self here as ‘The Problem of Indeterminacy’.

Thus far, I have suggested that Hegel has four specific objections to Kant’s idea of a transcendental subject: the Problem of Heterogeneity, the charge of solipsism, the rejection of transcendental synthesis, and the Problem of Indeterminacy. I now wish to draw attention to what I believe is Hegel’s fundamental critique of the Kantian ‘I’, which underlines all these concerns. We have seen that the transcendental consciousness is apparently defined as an epistemic operator or logical device. The ‘I’ has no substantial content, but is merely abstract and formal. Understood in the Kantian sense, Hegel holds that the self – or consciousness in the general sense – is consciousness-in-itself, because it is considered separately from other things, given its position prior to and independent of experience, and (in the case of a form [*gestalt*] of consciousness) when it is unreflective. That is why, for Hegel, the ‘in-itself’ (*an-sich*) is mere potentiality: actuality, understood as the ‘for-itself’ (*für-sich*), requires determination, negation, and relations with other things.

Taking into account Hegel’s distinction between consciousness-in-itself and consciousness-for-itself, we can establish that, for Hegel, the Kantian account of human subjectivity restricts itself to the point of view of consciousness-in-itself, alone, and so does not understand subjectivity as it should be, as ‘spirit’ (*Geist*), which grasps consciousness as consciousness-for-itself. As Pippin has argued, to see how, if at all, this is possible, we can notice how “[Hegel] proposes to alter the aspect of Kant’s *idealism* that he found so otherwise attractive: Kant on the apperceptive nature of experience”.[[70]](#footnote-70) As Hegel wrote concerning Kant’s theory:

Since the ‘I’ is construed not as the Notion, but as formal identity, the dialectical movement of consciousness is not construed as its own activity, but as in itself; that is, for the ‘I’, this movement is construed as a change in the object of consciousness. (*BP*: 11)

Although Hegel’s language is rather obscure and seemingly impenetrable, what he means to say is that the Kantian ‘I’ does not do justice to the dialectical activity of consciousness. For Hegel, because the Kantian ‘I’ is unreflective and in-itself, such a ‘passive’ state of consciousness renders experience impossible, where this is “taken in its literal meaning: a journey or adventure (*fahren*), which arrives at a result (*er-fahren*), so that ‘*Erfahrung*’ is quite literally ‘*das Ergebnis des Fahrts*’”’[[71]](#footnote-71). Consciousness can only have experience in this sense, if it is dialectical, and it can only be dialectical if it is not separate from the world. In this way, the possibility of absolute knowledge is contingent on the metaphysical structure of mind and world: only if mind and world are bound up together can experience be systematic. This is why Hegel writes,

The experience of itself which consciousness goes through, can in accordance with its Notion, comprehend nothing less than the entire system of consciousness.(*PS*: 56)

The “entire system of consciousness” is synonymous with the “dialectical movement of consciousness”, which understands the relation of the ‘I’ to other concepts necessary for its own application not as “concepts that might originally have appeared ‘other’, or the contrary of the original”,[[72]](#footnote-72) but rather as one of interdependence. If consciousness is purely formal, unreflective, and fundamentally distinct from its objects, then such an epistemological journey could not occur, because its formal nature prevents it from being part of the world as a whole.

However, for all this critique of Kant, it may seem that Hegel’s argument for viewing self-consciousness as dialectical (i.e. ‘for-itself’) is firstly obscure, and secondly, marks a return to the pre-paralogism position of rational psychology, wherein “a feature of self-consciousness (the essentially subjectival, unitary and identical nature of the ‘I’ of apperception) gets transmuted into a metaphysics of a Cartesian mental substance or mental state that is ostensibly known through reason alone to be substantial, simple, identical, etc.”.[[73]](#footnote-73) However, to be in a pre-paralogism position, Hegel would have to accept the Cartesian view of consciousness as “private, inner, or a spectator of itself and world”.[[74]](#footnote-74) However, his notions of dialectic, ‘for-itself’ and *Geist* are in opposition to the rational psychologist’s claims, since Hegel asserts consciousness is communal, public and even socially interactive. As such, if anything, Hegel is directly *opposed* to the pre-paralogism position.

For Hegel, the ‘I’ must be conceived as *Geist* or ‘for-itself’ if it is to engage with its objects. Taking into account the various Hegelian passages that we have discussed, we can construct his argument as follows:

1. To engage with its objects, the ‘I’ must be related to its objects.
2. To be related to its objects, the ‘I’ must not be ‘in-itself’.
3. Therefore, to be related to its objects, the ‘I’ must be ‘for-itself’.
4. Being ‘for-itself’, the ‘I’ reflects on both itself and its objects, and as such is conceived as a Notion.
5. Conceiving of itself as a Notion, and conceiving of itself as ‘for-itself’, is to conceive of itself as *Geist*.
6. Therefore, to engage with its objects, the ‘I’ must be *Geist*.

The formalism of the Kantian ‘I’ means that the self cannot reflect on the entire history of its experience, because such a form of reflection requires the self to not be empty and abstract. Accounting for consciousness as ‘for-itself’ and as *Geist* involves viewing the ‘I’ not as immediate formal consciousness, but as a developing and self-examining consciousness. For that matter, ascribing a dialectical *Begriff* to the ‘I’ sees the ‘I’ not as simply accompanying its representations in order to establish metaphysical unity amongst the manifold; rather such a dialectical presence establishes that the ‘I’, while accompanying its representations, is critically reflecting on all its experience – i.e., engaging in absolute knowledge. As Hegel writes,

This last shape of Spirit – the Spirit which at the same time gives its complete and true content the form of the self and thereby realises its Notion as remaining in its Notion in this realisation – this is absolute knowing; it is Spirit that knows itself in the shape of Spirit, or a comprehensive knowing. (*PS*: 427)

We can now re-phrase Hegel’s argument against Kant.

1. Absolute knowledge is the reflection on the history of the experience of the ‘I’ (the subject of experience.)
2. To have absolute knowledge requires the ‘I’ (the subject of experience) to be *Geist.*
3. The Kantian ‘I’ is not *Geist*.
4. Therefore, under the Kantian ‘I’, absolute knowledge is impossible.

Having set it out, we may not consider the cogency of Hegel’s position, where in fact it is unclear to me if Hegel’s fundamental critique of Kant’s theory of apperception is ultimately effective against Kant. Whilst Kant may accept the charge of formalism, in that he has not provided any more detail to subjectivity other than merely a transcendental mechanism, he would not consider formalism to be problematic on his own terms. After all, Kant would consider the formal nature of the ‘I’ to be consistent with his formal idealism. As such, it would require more from Hegel to find Kantian apperception flawed than to just regard it as being empty. The way, though, Hegel aims to find the transcendental unity of apperception, the ‘I think’, problematic is by conceiving of Kant’s transcendental subject as having failed to escape from the Cartesian tradition of treating self-consciousness in purely psychological and private terms: this is what, I believe, is the central claim behind Hegel’s charge of dualism in the passage we discussed from *Faith and Knowledge*. However, if such an interpretation of Hegel is compelling, then it would seem that his understanding of transcendental psychology is to be rejected, given how Kant’s conception of self-consciousness – cf. the Refutation of Idealism[[75]](#footnote-75) – is, following Abela (2002), decidedly opposed to the Cartesian tradition of treating self-consciousness as private or prior to and independent of consciousness of external objects.

I admit that some defenders of Hegel may find this critique of Hegel’s position uncharitable or too cursory. In response to such potential rebuttals, though, I believe it is reasonable to suggest that when Hegel chastises Kant for not conceiving of the ‘I’ as *Geist*, he is expressing a concern that the transcendental subject is not understood as a socially reflective/normative consciousness. For Hegel, *Geist* principally consists in sociality, namely awareness of others as *equals* and the necessity of such awareness to *realise* self-consciousness. However, the sociality of *Geist*, which is for Brandom (2000: 34) the reason why Spirit is normative, is contrasted with the apparent limited sociality of the transcendental unity of apperception, which manifests itself as separate from the content of its cognition. But, because Hegel holds that a significant element of sociality is necessary for the genuine attainment of absolute knowledge, and he thinks the Kantian ‘I’ is less social than Spirit, he concludes that the Kantian ‘I’ cannot attain absolute knowledge. Even under this interpretation of Hegel’s critique of Kant, it is still unclear if basing the rejection of the Kantian ‘I’ on the idea that (a) it has limited sociality and (b) it cannot attain absolute knowledge, is ultimately going to be persuasive to Kant and his defenders. Nevertheless, whilst some Hegelians may have to concede that the more general criticism of Kant’s transcendental subject is not particularly successful, I think they have much better grounds to claim that the four specific objections we also set out do far more damage.

# *§f Hegel’s Critique of Kant’s Theory of Experience*

Beiser has recently written that Hegel aims to extend the concept of experience “beyond its narrow Kantian limits, where it applies exclusively to sense perception”.[[76]](#footnote-76) I take the idea of Hegel treating Kant’s conception of experience as ‘limited’ to mean that Hegel can be read as charging Kant with having a ‘thin’ conception of experience. Such a charge is best expressed in the following passage, where Hegel writes:

The empirical is not only mere observing, hearing, feeling, perceiving particulars, but it also essentially consists in finding species, universals and laws. (*LHP*, XX 79/III: 176)

For Hegel, the realm of experience does not just include particulars, but crucially universals and nomological properties as well. The motivation for widening the scope of the empirical, to a large extent, lies in Hegel’s underlying dissatisfaction with certain aspects of Enlightenment philosophy and natural science which he sees expressed in Kant’s transcendental philosophy. Hegel’s main criticism is that particular features of Enlightenment philosophy and natural science have resulted in a disenchantment with nature. This disenchantment is caused by an impoverished understanding of how our minds work, and an impoverished understanding of the content of experience.

*Early modern philosophy of nature and Hegelian discontents*

The early modern natural philosophy of Newton, Boyle, Descartes and others had regarded extension to be the essence of matter, and had understood nature in purely mechanical terms.[[77]](#footnote-77) However, Hegel – along with Schelling, Herder, and Schiller – was fundamentally opposed to these tenets of Enlightenment natural philosophy: he was committed to a Romantic conception of nature,[[78]](#footnote-78) which regarded force to be the essence of matter, and understood the empirical world dynamically.[[79]](#footnote-79) The salient point here is that Hegel and Schelling regarded mechanism to be tantamount to banality, whereas dynamism represented something rich or substantial. *Pace* the traditional interpretation of Hegel’s natural philosophy as *a priori* speculative science, the justification for rejecting Enlightenment mechanism was Hegel’s synthesis of Aristotle’s conception of ‘phusis’ (nature) with the developments in dynamics, electricity, and the central principles of magnetism.[[80]](#footnote-80)

To understand this issue more deeply, I think it would be best to first briefly detail Newton’s Laws of Mechanics, which are the targets of the Romantic critique. The first law, the Law of Inertia, asserts that matter does not alter its state of motion or rest unless it is acted upon by an outside body. So, if something is at rest, it can only move if put into motion by something already in motion. The second law states that the rate at which matter accelerates supervenes on the quantity of force it receives. As with the Law of Inertia, the implication here is that matter is passive and inert. The third law, the idea that action equals reaction, states that if A impacts B with force Q1, then B impacts A with force Q1 in the opposite direction. This principle, whilst not immediately demonstrating the passive and inert nature of matter, is another commitment to the idea of matter requiring something external to it, to interact with other objects. Indeed, the three Laws of Classical Mechanics are, in a particular sense, Aristotelian principles about the physical world, because they share the idea that matter is pure potential (see *Physics* 1.9.192a27-32) and ultimately use the inertness principle to argue for the existence of God as the prime mover.

However, in contrast to the Enlightenment’s Aristotelian mechanism, Hegel and Schelling used Aristotle’s definition of ‘nature’ in conjunction with dynamics and magnetism, to conceive of matter as active. These Romantic philosophers saw magnetic force and attraction as a way of applying the Aristotelian idea of nature as being something with an internal principle of change or rest to *matter*. This Romantic idea (what one can call ‘Aristotelian dynamism’), was meant to reject the Enlightenment’s view of matter as mere extended, inert substance. However, this did not mean that objects could not be subject to external phenomena, such as gravitational force or other movers, because the vitalist conception of matter held that objects possessed both external and internal capacities for change and rest. Interestingly, for Hegel and Schelling, this anti-Enlightenment theory may well have been an unintentional critique of Aristotle, because Aristotelian dynamism blurred the distinction between nature and matter originally proposed by Aristotle to the point where matter and nature differed not in kind, but in *degrees* of development: what separated the natural from the material (and the mental from the physical) was nothing ontological – it was the level of an internal capacity for change. By this, *all* objects were in a special sense ‘natural’, insofar as they possessed internal force, but some objects (given their chemical and physical makeup) were able to possess greater and more sophisticated dynamical capacities. This is why, for Hegel, entities with rational autonomy (i.e. human beings) were the most ‘natural’ things, since the faculty of reason was the greatest expression of internal force. By contrast, those objects which exhibited either a weak internal dynamic principle or none at all would fall at the lower end of the spectrum, the locus of the ‘material’. What Aristotelian dynamism aimed to accomplish was an appreciation for the richness of the natural world, precisely by conceiving it as active and developing. The dull and monochrome world of mechanism had been replaced with a vibrant and polychromatic realm of dynamics.[[81]](#footnote-81)

Whilst Hegel was correct to regard the Enlightenment as advocating mechanism, Hegel’s Romantic critique faces some difficulties: for, coupled with this radical natural philosophy is Hegel’s commitment to there being strict laws and universals, which he regards as necessary for the richness our experience, as we saw in the quotation at the start of this section. However, if Hegel is suggesting that Enlightenment philosophy of science and metaphysics fail to include laws and universals, and so is a commitment to banal experience on this score, then he has made a serious error: Firstly, one of the central tenets of mechanism, as exemplified by Descartes and Newton, is that the empirical world is governed by strict lawsof nature. Secondly, not every Enlightenment metaphysician was a nominalist. Hegel’s mistake here then is conflating the Enlightenment with Humean empiricism, which does not share a commitment to laws of nature. His belief in laws of nature and his realism are correctly opposed to Hume and the nominalism of Locke (and, by extension, to a contemporary nominalist like Quine), but Hegel should not have used his anti-Humean and anti-nominalism arguments against the Enlightenment as a whole.

Whilst part of Hegel’s Romantic critique appears to misrepresent its target, however, I think some of its epistemic dimension can be salvaged and improved. To some extent, Hegel is justified in regarding the Enlightenment as having a thin conception of experience. However, the reason for this does not come from the tradition’s putative ‘failure’ to recognise universals and laws, but rather the tradition’s underlying germ of Cartesianism in how it seeks to understand the natural world as a whole. The picture of empirical reality as presented by mechanics is of a realm of separate and inert objects, which requires us to first understand each object *individually* and then determine its connectedness with other objects. Such a methodological framework is opposed to a holistic and systematic form of enquiry, which does not see the world of our experience as a bricolage of fragmented objects, but rather as a world of inherently connected objects which cannot be fundamentally separated from one another. For Hegel, if we constrict our conception of experience to very narrow and analytical standards, then our knowledge claims are restricted to the following kinds of propositions, as Hegel writes, “here is my lighter and there is my tobacco tin” (*LHP*, XX 352/III: 444-5): the banality of the proposition is not so much the content, namely the lighter and the tobacco tin, but rather the way in which we represent the content, as bringing in not attempted explanation or understanding of their relation to one another. The framework for understanding objects of experience is restricted to the level of *ordinary* consciousness, which means that the only kinds of judgement we can make about the world of experience are judgements which express atomistic separation and only some artificial kind of unity – viz., ‘here’, ‘there’, and the conjunct ‘and’. The thinness, then, consists in failing to account for the interconnectedness yet basic difference between objects.[[82]](#footnote-82) Hegel sees his absolute idealism as an expression of *philosophical* consciousness, precisely because it aims to capture both the inherent unity of all finite things whilst respecting the basic difference between all finite things. As he writes in the *Difference* essay:

To cancel established oppositions is the sole interest of reason. But this interest does not mean that it is opposed to opposition and limitation in general; for necessary opposition is *one* factor of life, which forms itself by eternally opposing itself, and in the highest liveliness totality is possible only through restoration from the deepest fission. (II 21-2/91)

In operating under an epistemic framework which accounts for both unity and difference (e.g. subject-object-identity *and* subject-object-non-identity), Hegel thinks we can do justice to the richness of our world and therefore how we can have a rich conception of experience. On a more ‘metaphysical’ reading of the comment from the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, the thinness would consist in only accounting for concrete particulars, and failing to posit universals. For Hegel, the Quinean affection for desert landscapes, which only has commitments to concrete particulars, does far more harm than good to our ontology: under nominalism, the world of experience is dead and static, not alive and dynamic. However, as before, this anti-nominalist critique only works against empiricist positivism, not the Enlightenment in general.[[83]](#footnote-83)

Turning our attention to where Kant figures in this complex debate, a parallel story can be drawn between Hegel’s critique of the Enlightenment and his critique of Kant: I have suggested that Hegel thinks the Enlightenment has a banal conception of experience due to its underlying Cartesianism. Furthermore, the reason why Hegel regards Kant as exemplifying the Enlightenment (and its thinness) is because Hegel thinks Kant’s transcendental philosophy shares essential properties of Enlightenment thought, namely the idea of focusing on the processes involved in sense-perception, being committed to various dualisms, and dividing the world up into isolated mechanistic contents which one then tries to bring together. What this means, then, is that the charge of thinness is tantamount to claiming that Kant’s idealism could not escape from the Cartesian-Humean epistemic framework, to use an expression from Paul Abela (2002).

*Kant and Perceptual Experience*

Having explained how Hegel criticised Kant’s view of the *content* of experience, I wish to move on to Hegel’s critique of how Kant’s view of how that experience relates us to the world. The significance of such an interpretation, I think, is to open up a much larger philosophical difference between Hegel and Kant than we have discussed so far: for Hegel can now be seen as part of a group that would also include Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, Wittgenstein and Rorty, who oppose the Cartesian account that we act as a ‘mirror of nature’, and who instead regard the mind-world relation as one of cognitive intimacy not voyeurism, whereas Kant is regarded as either a halfway house between the two or just as a member of the Cartesian school of thought – i.e. that Kant either could not truly escape from the Cartesian tradition or just that he was squarely committed to that tradition. We first need to determine whether or not it is appropriate to treat Kant as being part of the early modern epistemic framework.

*Prima facie*, there isgood reason to think of Kant as being focused on issues concerning sense-experience and the phenomenology of perception, given his frequent talk of intuitions being the inputs of cognition, his doctrine of synthesis in the A-Deduction (cf. A100-2), and the argument of the Anticipations of Perception. This is why Kant can often be interpreted in Humean ways, as a philosopher principally concerned with the psychological processes that govern how we receive and process perceptual content. However, it would be premature to regard one of Kant’s interests – the (transcendental) mechanisms behind perceptual experience and apprehension of sense-qualities – to be how Kant fundamentally conceives of the nature of experience as such.

To draw support for this defence of Kant against Hegel, Bird and Abela can appeal, justifiably, to (I) the central thesis of the Refutation of Idealism, and (II) how Kant understands phenomenology at the empirical level, at the level of empirical realism. With regard to (I), Kant thinks that in order for self-consciousness to be possible, one must first be aware of objects existing independently of one’s mind – i.e. that outer sense is a necessary condition for inner sense. Such a position rejects the idea that external objects are just bundles of representational content, and that awareness of private mental content is prior to an independent awareness of external objects – indeed, the very point of the argument of the Refutation of Idealism is to undermine the Cartesian-Humean epistemic framework, under which mind and world are separate from one another, by showing how inner and outer sense are closely bound up together.

With regard to (II), whilst at the transcendental level Kantians will have to be committed to the idea that the content received in experience is rhapsodic and then synthesised, when attention turns to how we experience things ordinarily – what Abela regards as counting as an experience of *objects*, rather than just sensation– Kantians will point to the following ideas: (a) Kant is understood as espousing a form of direct realism which rejects the representational realism of Descartes and Locke; (b) the metaphysics of experience accounted for in the Analogies of Experience, in which the things we experience are conceived as a collective causal nexus of interrelated substances, stands in opposition to the Humean understanding of empirical reality; and (c) at the empirical level, Kant does not separate intuition from thought, experience and judgement. To neglect (a), (b) and (c), and to focus solely on the transcendental level, is to incorrectly place Kant within the pre-Critical tradition, which maintains “a purely causal role to experience, depriving it of the conceptual content needed to overcome the apparent gap between mind and world”.[[84]](#footnote-84) Let us first address the direct realist reading of Kant.

Direct realists, such as Searle (1983) and McDowell (1994), hold that we perceive material[[85]](#footnote-85) objects directly, i.e. we perceive material objects without either inferring from beliefs about sense-data or being aware of these subjective entities. Barring the rare cases of illusion and hallucination, direct realists believe material objects are the *only* objects of perception. Under direct realism, we have no reason to believe (in cases of veridical perception) that there is anything else in the world or in our mental states other than the objects we perceive that are objects of perception. The reason for this claim is an appeal to a brute fact about our perceptual phenomenology: when we open our eyes (in veridical perceptual scenarios), we find ourselves suddenly confronted by objects. The way in which our perceptual experience manifests itself is one which suggests that we are presented with objects and that objects appear to be given in some way. As Michael Ayers elegantly phrases it, “that compelling immediacy, the way things are sensorily *given* to us as we grapple with the world, the way we are *acquainted* with things as in *our* environment, should be held on to, but it leads away from the emphasis on logic and language towards phenomenology, towards consideration of just what is in fact presented to us”.[[86]](#footnote-86)

In order to get a clearer sense of what exactly the direct realist is claiming, it will be useful to list the central tenets of direct realism. I shall return to these tenets when attempting to determine whether it is correct to interpret Kant’s position on perceptual experience as a direct realist account.

As I understand it, direct realism is committed to three claims.

1. The epistemic relationship between mind and world is one which permits immediate access to the empirical world. (Call this thesis **The Principle of Immediacy**.)[[87]](#footnote-87)
2. The objects of perceptual experience manifest themselves in an open phenomenological scene. (Call this thesis **The Principle of Transparency**.)
3. The objects of perceptual experience are *both* material and public. (Call this thesis **The Principle of Material Publicity**.)

(i) is a claim about what it is like for us to perceive perceptual objects. (ii) is a claim about the phenomenological picture of (perceptual) experience. (iii) is a claim about the nature of the objects of perceptual experience. All three theses are interrelated. In order to be a direct realist, one must be committed to (i), (ii) and (iii).

To avoid any lack of clarity, in claiming that perceptual objects are ‘public’, I mean that perceptual objects are perceived in almost the same way from person to person, and that each person’s experience of perceptual objects is for the most part shareable. This idea is able to accommodate the fact that because each person is physiologically different, “[each person] see[s] things from slightly different points of view”.[[88]](#footnote-88) The reason why one can consistently claim that material objects are public and also hold that different people may see the same object slightly differently is that when we make judgements about the colour, texture, etc. of an object, we are making judgements about an object, whose nature seems to stand over and above our idiosyncratic perceptual content. For example, imagine a group of normal perceivers discussing a giant redwood tree. Each member of the group, by virtue of their unique physiological make-up, has their own impressions of particular sensory features of the redwood tree. One may claim that the bark is dark brown; another may claim that the bark is ochre. However, whatever the differences over the specific colour or texture of the redwood tree may be, all the people in the room are talking about one object that underlies all variations. Thus the idea of perceptual relativity is consistent with the idea of a public object. The question now is whether Kant’s account of perceptual experience is compatible with the three tenets of direct realism.

Kant writes in A371 and in A375 respectively that,

[The] empirical realist grants to matter, as appearances, a reality which need not be inferred, but is immediately perceived.

Every outer perception … immediately proves something real in space, or rather is itself the real; to that extent, empirical realism is beyond doubt, i.e. to our intuitions there corresponds something real in space.

In these passages, Kant seems to be saying that he grants a reality that is *immediately* perceived. By an immediate perception of reality, he seems to mean direct access to the objects of perceptual experience. This appears to be an endorsement of The Principle of Immediacy.[[89]](#footnote-89) However, by itself, this endorsement does not establish Kant as a direct realist. It is reasonable to claim that Kant regards the phenomenological picture of experience as conveying a transparent world.[[90]](#footnote-90) The reason for this is that the metaphysics of experience worked out in both the Analogies of Experience and the Refutation of Idealism, namely a view of the world as consisting of substances that are causally interrelated, conveys the idea of a world that is open to our judgements. Time sequences and empirically real objects manifest themselves as being there for us to judge. This appears to satisfy the Principle of Transparency. Finally, we have good reason to claim that Kant would accept the Principle of Material Publicity, as he seems to hold that appearances are both material and public. He regards empirical objects as substances, i.e. *material* objects that persist through change and are the subjects of predication (cf. B277-8). Furthermore, his metaphysical commitments in both the Second Analogy and the Third Analogy, particularly the notion of ‘community’, convey the idea that the world of perceptual experience is a public realm of causally interrelated substances. As Kant writes, “... all change and simultaneity are nothing but so many ways (*modi* of time) in which that which persists exists” (A182/B225–26). Given that Kant appears to endorse all three tenets of direct realism, it seems that we can conclude that Kant’s position is a direct realist one.

However, before we can settle whether it is really apt to call Kant a direct realist, it is important to consider the indirect realist (sense-data theorem) interpretation of Kant’s theory of perceptual experience. Indirect realism is the view that in veridical perception there are two kinds of perceptual object: sense-data (i.e. private mental representational content) and material objects. Advocates of indirect realism, such as Descartes and Locke, claim that whilst we do perceive public, material objects, we only perceive these objects via (an inference from, etc.) mental intermediaries. Sense-data are the primary objects of perception, as they are the immediate objects of perception from which we then access material objects.

However, the indirect realist reading of Kant appears to be doomed from the outset, given Kant’s opposition to Descartes in the Refutation of Idealism (B275) and his opposition to the idea of perceptual mediation in A368-71. For example, Kant writes that “in order to arrive at the reality of outer objects I have [no] need to resort to inference … For … the objects are nothing but representations, the immediate perception (consciousness) of which is at the same time a sufficient proof of their reality” (A371). What Kant has written seems to prevent the indirect realist interpretation from being substantiated, but at the same time, the expression ‘objects are nothing but representations’ raises concerns about whether formal idealism collapses into Berkeleyean idealism and phenomenalism. Whilst I think the phenomenalism worries can be overturned (but without appeal to a two-aspect reading of appearances/things-in-themselves), the main concern for the direct realist reading is that the off-stage transcendental work is lurking in the background, given how the phenomenology of empirical reality relies on the transcendental level.

*Hegel’s Critique of Kant*

Thus far, then, I have interpreted Kant as a direct realist, a view which would be supported by McDowell and others. Kant is committed to the idea that we experience objects and that we experience objects directly. However, whilst such a position lends weight to the Bird-Abela tradition of emphasising the robust realism of Kantian thought, it appears to place Kant squarely in opposition to Hegel: following Sellars, it is commonly thought that Hegel is the “great foe of immediacy”,[[91]](#footnote-91) which would mean that Kant’s fondness for directness in phenomenology is something that is clearly anti-Hegelian.

However, this particular way of rebutting Kant commits the fallacy of equivocation: Hegel’s opposition to immediacy is not a commitment to indirect realism; rather, by rejecting the idea that experience is immediate, he just means that the Cartesian and classical empiricist tradition of conceiving experience as non-conceptual is fundamentally inadequate. The only qualm Hegel has with Kant on the subject of perception – though it is a major one! – is *what* kind of object is given to us in sense-experience: for Kant, it is a mechanistic one, whose form is extrinsic; for Hegel, it is a dynamical one, whose form is intrinsic.

In opposing immediacy, though, it would not be correct to interpret Hegel as developing an anti-empiricist philosophical position. This is because Hegel is only critical of how the empiricist tradition focused on sensation and neglected a conceptualised Given; in an important sense, Hegel is deeply committed to some form of empiricism, given how he holds the Scholastic axiom, ‘There is nothing in the intellect that has not been in sense experience’, in high esteem, cf. *EL*: §8, 32. Furthermore, the following passages from the *Encyclopaedia Logic* and the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* respectively indicate Hegel’s support for the central tenet of empiricism, and his opposition to the idea of a non-conceptual Given:

What is true must be in actuality and must be there for our perception. (*EL*: §38, 77.)

We must add a remark about the explanation of the origin and formation of concepts that is usually given in the logic of the understanding. It is not *we* who ‘form’ concepts, and in general the Concept should not be considered as something that has come to be at all. Certainly the Concept is not just Being or what is immediate; because, of course, it involves mediation too. But mediation lies in the Concept itself, and the Concept is what is mediated by and with itself. It is a mistake to assume that, first of all, there are objects which form the content of our representations, and then our subjective activity comes in afterwards to form concepts of them, through the operation of abstracting that we spoke of earlier, and by summarising what the objects have in common. Instead, the Concept is what truly comes first, and things are what they are through the activity of the Concept that dwells in them and reveals itself in them. This comes up in our religious consciousness when we say that God created the world out of nothing or, in other words, that all finite things have emerged from the fullness of God’s thoughts and from his divine decrees. This involves the recognition that thought, and, more precisely, the Concept, is the infinite form, or the free, creative activity that does not need a material at hand in order to realise itself. (*EL*: §163, 241.)

As to the question in point we must in the first place say that it is true that man commences with experience if he desires to arrive at thought. Everything is experienced, not merely what is sensuous, but also what excites and stimulates my mind. Consciousness thus undoubtedly obtains all conceptions and Notions from experience and in experience; the only question is what we understand by experience. In a usual way when this is spoken of the idea of nothing particular is conveyed; we speak of it as of something quite well known. But experience is nothing more than the form of objectivity; to say that it is something which is in consciousness means that it has objective form for consciousness or that consciousness experiences it, it sees it as an objective. Experience thus signifies immediate knowledge, perception, *i.e.* I myself must have and be something, and the consciousness of what I have and am is experience. Now there is no question as to this, that whatever we know, of whatever kind it may be, must be experienced, that rests in the conception of the thing. It is absurd to say that one knows anything which is not in experience. (*LHP*: III, 303.)

The second passage conveys the general Hegelian critique of Kant, that of rejecting the form/matter distinction as well as charging Kant with subjectivism. The third passage, whilst detailing Hegel’s version of empiricism, principally serves as a strong critique of the Myth of the Given in its development of objective conceptual content. Furthermore, what Hegel finds troubling about Kant’s direct realism is *what* Kant thinks givenness reveals to us: for Kant, the given content is mechanistic objects in space and times whose formal properties are not intrinsic properties.

However, I am not so convinced by the Bird-Abela appeal to empirical realism as an interpretation of Kant. The Hegelian critique of Kant’s theory of experience, made explicitly by McDowell, acknowledges the realism of the empirical level, but, as Stern writes, a basic appeal to empirical realism does not allay concerns about how Kant conceives of phenomenology: “McDowell’s misgivings go deeper than this, and that if he fears any lack of realism in Kant, it is not just because he believes (rightly or wrongly) that for Kant ‘mind-independence’ comes in two forms (empirical and transcendental). Rather, as McDowell makes clear in other passages, Kant’s realism is compromised not by the appearances/things-in-themselves distinction as such (*however* this is to be understood), but by the way in which at *some* level, Kant is prepared to see receptivity and spontaneity, intuitions and concepts, as separable, and thus to see the latter as operating on the former, in a way that gives content to the idea that conceptual structure is imposed on an intrinsically unstructured Given. It is this dualism of form and content, rather than dualism of appearance and things-in-themselves, that McDowell thinks Kant failed to escape completely”.[[92]](#footnote-92)

I agree with this as far as it goes, but I would maintain that a more basic issue is troublesome for Kantians: Abela is correct to argue that Kant’s Refutation of Idealism and arguments in the Analogies of Experience undermine the Cartesian view of the relationship between mind and world: it is true that (a) Kant rejects a mediated connection between subjective mental content and external objects, and that (b) Kant believes that the possibility of experiencing an objective order of objects and events is itself a necessary condition for the possibility of any subjective order in our own perceptions. As Kant writes,

[One must] derive the subjective sequence of apprehension from the objective sequence of appearances. (A193/B238)

However, unlike Abela, who appears to say hardly anything on this issue, I believe that empirical realism depends on a key feature of transcendental idealism, Kant’s theory of *a priori* form, as we have discussed previously. Because of this relation, it seems then that empirical realism is *ultimately* not very realist: on Kant’s account, empirical reality is dependent on the subject of experience as far as its *form* is concerned. For example, a necessary condition for there being an objective order of objects and events is the application of concepts, such as ‘substance’ and ‘cause’, whose *origin* lies in our cognitive constitution. Empirical realism is a *bona fide* realism, insofar as the existence of empirical objects is independent of our minds. However, the formal structure of empirical reality is something that we ourselves provide. The crucial dependence of empirical realism on transcendental idealism, something which all Kantians must accept, thus mitigates against any appeal to the ‘robust’ realism and phenomenology of Kant’s thought in response to Hegelian critique. This is probably why Hegelians regard Kant’s appeal to laws and causes as not being strong enough to undermine Hume’s sceptical empiricism – indeed, as we have seen, Hegel holds that Kant’s refutation of Humean scepticism only secures a weak notion of objectivity, because Hegel chastises Kant for (i) agreeing with Hume that experience can only provide awareness of actuality, not necessity, and (ii) for appealing to subjective idealism to refute Hume.

Nonetheless, Kantians may still think that Hegel has a lot of work to do to make his objections stick, and I am inclined to agree with them. Furthermore, it seems unreasonable to think that Kant does not have a rich account of experience just because it does not have the same kind of richness of Hegel’s notion of experience: the Kantian empirical world is a causal nexus of interrelated substances, not a Humean collection of constant conjunctions and representational contents. However, despite the challenges facing Hegel, I think Kantians must acknowledge a legitimate aspect of his critique of Kant here: certainly, Kant was a realist of sorts, but his realism comes at a high price, formal idealism, the consequence of which dilutes the strength of the Bird-Abela response to McDowell. This is why pointing to how Kant conceives of phenomenology at the empirical level is ultimately lacking in bite: it fails to acknowledge that the realist phenomenology evoked in the Analogies, etc. is contingent on the idealist transcendental mechanisms, such as the application of *a priori* concepts, and synthesis in the imagination. Indeed, Kant himself frequently stressed (i) how the manifold in experience is fragmented in nature and that it must be unified independently of experience, cf. B129-30, and (ii) how one could not be an empirical realist if one was not also a transcendental idealist, which would suggest that talking about empirical realism independently of transcendental idealism is not acceptable for him.

*Kant, Hegel, and conceptualism in philosophy of mind*

Turning now to Hegel’s charge against the ‘thinness’ in Kant’s conception of the content of experience, this can be related to the debate between conceptualists and non-conceptualists in the philosophy of mind. If we have good reason to think Kant was committed to there being non-conceptual content in experience, then it seems that Hegel’s charge of thinness has some justification. However, if we have a better reason to think Kant was a conceptualist, then it could be the case that Hegel’s critique does not go through. According to the conceptualist reading of Kant (cf. McDowell (1994), Abela (2002), and Anthony Griffith (2010)), Kant’s argument in the Transcendental Deduction and his commitment to the Priority of Judgement (PoJ), the idea that judgement is the central component of experience, give us reason to regard him as espousing conceptualism: he believes that the activity of the understanding is necessary for empirical perception, and he thinks that *all* representational content must be conceptualised and that experiential states must be put into propositional form.

Conceptualist readers of Kant will naturally argue that Kant’s theory of synthesis, under which account empirical intuitions are unified into determinate objects, requires that the synthesis of representational contents must always be directed by rules, and that these rules are concepts. The concepts that play this role are provided by the understanding, meaning that the understanding plays a role in empirical perception, as it is responsible for a necessary condition of empirical perception, the synthesis of empirical intuitions. With regard to the Priority of Judgement, Kant can be read as claiming that any knowledge attributions place epistemic states in, what Sellars calls, the logical space of reasons. This space is identified with the locus of “justifying and being able to justify what one says”.[[93]](#footnote-93) For that matter, Sellars, in opposing the Myth of the Given, regards Kant as the forbearer of inferentialism, because Kant’s claim that intuitions without concepts are blind underpins Kant’s idea that nothing can count as a legitimate component of experience (or phenomenological state) if it is not subject to concepts, whose function is to structure content in such a manner as to make contents inferentially relevant. In other words, something is epistemically valuable iff it is inferentially relevant. Inferential relevance is determined by how the contents are structured so that they can figure as elements of propositions, as being involved in either premise or conclusion; to put this obscure point more clearly, concepts are used in the formation of propositional cognition (judgement), and propositional form (form of judgement) articulates experiential states. In articulating experiential states *qua* propositional form, experiential states become inferentially significant, because these states now figure in the space of reasons. Therefore, concepts play a crucial role in the inferential articulation of experiential states, given the relationship between concepts and judgement.[[94]](#footnote-94) An example of inferentialism here is how Kant believes that impressions, which “lie outside the sphere of belief, inference, justification, and evidence”,[[95]](#footnote-95) become epistemically valuable once they are subject to conceptualisation, cf. A111, A112, and A120.

Further reasons for thinking of Kant as a conceptualist come from McDowell’s understanding of perceptual judgement: in his discussion of colour-judgements, McDowell develops a Kantian line of thought, namely that “[propositional] responses reflect a sensitivity to a kind of state of affairs in the world …”[[96]](#footnote-96) In other words, in perceptual experience, we are not just producing responses to perceptual stimuli by means of verbal mechanisms, whether these are just atomic or complex propositions, but that in responding to stimuli in such a way, we are articulating the content of perception in such a way as to enable us to reflect on it. Because we reflect on the content of our experience, we see ourselves as ‘having the world in view’, and as such being in some sense answerable to the world. And for us to be in this phenomenological position, the content of our experience must be brought under concepts, because reflection is impossible without concepts. Furthermore, the type of conceptual framework we possess is one where each concept figures as part of a network of concepts, a network which is subject to revision by means of active thinking. This is why McDowell regards his theory of perceptual judgement as a Kantian/Sellarsian account:

The conceptual capacities that are passively drawn into play in experience belong to a network of capacities for active thought, a network that rationally governs comprehension-seeking responses to the impacts of the world on sensibility. And part of the point of the idea that the understanding is a faculty of spontaneity … is that the network, as an individual thinker finds it governing her thinking, is not sacrosanct. Active empirical thinking takes place under a standing obligation to reflect about the credentials of the putatively rational linkages that govern it … (*M & W*: 12)

McDowell is claiming that because our cognitive response to the inputs received in sensibility is one of judgement, what it is to actively think about representational content will require us to understand the relations between concepts and the various commitments and entitlements attached to whatever judgement we make. This idea of reflection, which emphasises how the space of reasons can only really be accessed by a rational self-consciousness, is akin to Kant’s idea of subsuming the categorial concepts (our basic concept-network) under a self-consciousness.

In contrast to the conceptualist reading of Kant, Robert Hanna (2005) has suggested that Kant ought to be read as a non-conceptualist, because Kant appears to claim in A90/B122-3 that the representational content of appearances does not have to be related to the functions of thought – i.e. that intuitions without conceptual content are possible. Similarly, Lucy Allais (2009) argues that only space is required to present objects in perceptual experience to us, and that concepts are not involved in this cognitive process.

Though I do not wish to go into the debate in great detail here, the relevant point to be made here in relation to Hegel’s charge of thinness is the following: if Kant is a non-conceptualist – on either Hanna’s or Allais’s reading – then Hegel’s critique appears to have some justification, given how there being no conceptual content or there being no concept-employment would suggest a thin notion of experience. Furthermore, even if Kant is a conceptualist, because he holds that conceptual form is derived from us, the original Hegelian criticism – that transcendental idealism is a high price to pay to refute Hume – will still hold. It is correct to note, of course, that both Kant and Hegel agree that non-conceptual content and non-conceptual awareness (at the level of conscious experience) is impossible for experience, given how both reject the Myth of the Given. However, this amount of amity between the two is dwarfed by a fundamental disagreement: Kant believes that the conceptual content which is partly given to our experience through the use of categories may not be a proper reflection of the world in itself; this is a position which Hegel rejects, given his endorsement of Aristotelian/conceptual realism, according to which such conceptual structures are also to be found in the world. To put it in Sellarsian terms, Hegel’s commitment to conceptual realism consists in identifying the realm of freedom (normativity and the space of reasons) with the realm of nature, which is something opposed to Kantianism.

From this perspective, one can understand why McDowell sees himself as developing a Hegelian critique of modern philosophy, because he sees that tradition (from which Kant apparently could not ultimately escape) as incorrectly separating value and fact, and meaning and normativity. However, it is unclear whether McDowell regards Kant’s position as eventually collapsing into the Cartesian epistemic framework, or just as remaining a coherent but problematic halfway house position between the early modern tradition and the Hegel-Heidegger school; nevertheless, it is more reasonable to suggest that Kant is in the uncomfortable middle-ground between the voyeuristic understanding of the mind-world relation and the being-present-in-the-world (*être-au-monde*/*geworfener Entwurf*) understanding of the mind-world relation, rather than see his idealism as collapsing into Cartesianism, given how his views on the transcendental subject and the Refutation of Idealism seem to be in conflict with one another. Such a view is supported by Taylor, who writes “from this point of view, then, Kant has not entirely broken with the epistemological tradition that he overturned … what separates contemporary rejections of empiricism’s doctrine of experience from Kant’s refutation of it is the fundamental notion … that our experience of things is bound up with our interaction with them”.[[97]](#footnote-97) Perhaps, then, what Hegel’s critique of Kant’s theory of experience really concerns is not so much the thinness or thickness of our phenomenology, but whether or not the mind-world relationship is understood in the Heidegger-Rorty manner, in terms of ‘being in the world’. If this is right, what initially started out as a particular dispute between Kant and Hegel about the meaning and nature of experience turns out to be a much larger and more significant debate about the nature of thought and its relationship to the world.

# *§g Hegel on the Possibility of Metaphysics*

Thus far, I have discussed Hegel’s critique of formal idealism, his critique of Kant’s transcendental subject, and his critique of Kant’s theory of experience. I now wish to discuss Hegel’s critique of Kant’s conception of metaphysics, a topic which appears to attract the most vitriol from Hegel towards Kant. This subject represents the great *crescendo* of Hegel’s critique of Kant’s theoretical philosophy, unifying his specific objections to various aspects of transcendental idealism into one powerful and dramatic criticism – so in typical Hegelian fashion, the criticisms of the transcendental subject, etc. have both an intrinsic value to them and a systematic value to them. The latter in particular is determined by how a common theme underlies all the specific objections, namely that of the separation of thought from being and Kant’s various dualisms which appear to Hegel to be deeply problematic. The critique of Kant’s views on the possibility of metaphysics, therefore, is in essence the culmination (or for Hegelians, the logical consequence) of Hegel’s various charges of dualism (viz. the form/content distinction) and various charges of thinness/unjustified restriction (viz. Kant’s theory of experience and conception of the transcendental subject). Because of the systematic nature of Hegel’s philosophy in general, I hope to show that the previous objections that we have discussed have both a specific function but that they also are propaedeutic to Hegel’s critique of Kant’s views on the possibility of metaphysics.

In my view, the critique is composed of two objections: (i) Hegel thinks that Kant mistakenly holds that metaphysics can only be possible if it abandons its aspirations to know the infinite and becomes the handmaiden of the empirical sciences, because Kant moves from the idea that human knowledge is discursive and hence conditioned by experience, to the idea that human cognition is limited and that therefore metaphysics itself must be limited; (ii) Hegel thinks that the transcendental idealist doctrine of humility is fundamentally incorrect and that it will leave humanity cognitively deprived and so unable to fulfil its true potential. Let us explore these points a little further.

As is well-known, one of Kant’s principal aims in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is to establish the limits of human cognition, and thereby provide a new foundation for metaphysical enquiry: he sees metaphysics as being dependent on certain epistemological principles being established about what human beings can know and what human beings cannot know – i.e. our conception of metaphysics is going to rely on what epistemological principles we can establish about how our cognition works and how, if at all, it can (and invariably) does goes wrong. Though Kant defines metaphysics as the cognitive enterprise that aims to grasp the unconditioned (infinite) through pure reason (cf. B7, 378-88, 395), one should not take such utterances to be how Kant understands the discipline, for he draws a distinction between ‘general metaphysics’ (*metaphysica generalis*) and ‘special metaphysics’ (*metaphysica specialis*).

General metaphysics (ontology) is concerned with the nature of objects in general and our cognition of objects in general, whereas special metaphysics is concerned with our cognition of a particular class of objects, objects such as God, the world, and the self of rational psychology as presented by Descartes, Leibniz, Wolff, etc. Given that general metaphysics and special metaphysics have different objects of enquiry, each discipline makes a specific error which is exposed in a unique way. With regard to general metaphysics, Kant argues that philosophers such as Leibniz and Wolff hold that one can acquire knowledge of objects in general merely through either the laws of general logic, such as the Principle of Non-Contradiction, or through the exercise of the pure concepts of the understanding, the concepts of transcendental logic. The error of general metaphysics, then, following one of the principles of Kant’s Discursivity Thesis, namely that concepts without intuitions are empty, consists in holding that the unschematised use of categorial concepts, i.e. the application of concepts independently of the conditions of sensibility, establishes knowledge (or even determinate cognition at least) of objects. A consequence of acknowledging this error, as Kant famously states, is that  “… the proud name of ontology, which presumes to offer synthetic *a priori* cognitions of things in general … must give way to the more modest title of a transcendental analytic” (A247/B304).  What this means is that given the failure of general metaphysics to both explain synthetic *a priori* knowledge and justify synthetic *a priori* knowledge, due to its dogmatism, the only viable means of adequately explaining and justifying this kind of knowledge is to be provided by a transcendental analysis of our cognitive capacities.

With regard to special metaphysics, the error of this area of metaphysics, whilst not fundamentally different from the error of general metaphysics, consists in judgements concerning God, the world, and the immortal and immaterial self being infected with transcendental illusion – the conflation of our cognitive interests and the conceptual features of certain phenomena with the determination of things in themselves: for example, our judgements about the self being a simple, immaterial substance are based on the illegitimate conflation of conceptual properties of the notion of the self – that of simplicity, unity, and subjectivity – with a metaphysic of the self as something simple and substantial. In other words, we commit the fallacy of hypostatisation when we think about the self from the perspective of rational psychology. Indeed, rational psychology, according to Kant, is just one of the branches of special metaphysics that is infected with various fallacies, such as paralogisms, amphibolies, subreption and hypostatisation, because these formal errors permeate our cognitive practices when we also engage with the philosophical questions and methodologies of rational cosmology and rational theology. Metaphysics, then, at least in this sense, is impossible and philosophically pernicious – and if metaphysics is to be possible and philosophically virtuous, it must abandon its cognitive aspirations in theoretical philosophy and be far more limited and modest: it must be the handmaiden of the empirical science; in other words, the *critique* of metaphysics entails the possibility of only a restricted and limited metaphysics. Whether or not this is an accurate understanding of what the critique of the pre-Critical metaphysical tradition entails is something that I shall return to shortly.

Hegel, though supportive of Kant’s rejection of rational psychology and pre-Critical metaphysical commitments and methodology (cf. §389, §389Zu, §379Zu, and §34Zu of the *Encyclopaedia*) rejects Kant’s idea that metaphysics can only be possible if it abandons its cognitive aspirations. However, *how* exactly this is supposed to be understood can be ambiguous: Hegel can be read as either claiming that we can go beyond the bounds of sense and have knowledge of transcendent entities, or as claiming that we can eliminate the idea that access to the intrinsic structure of reality is restricted to creatures with intellectual intuition – i.e. that our discursive cognition can access the intrinsic structure. The former option would have Hegel simply re-asserting the pre-Critical metaphysical position that Kant argues against, and so as committed to the following ideas: Hegel is a pre-Critical metaphysician, in that he follows the Leibniz-Wolff tradition; Hegel thinks that we can go beyond human discursivity; Hegel believes that there are no fallacies in applying concepts without sensible intuitions; and Hegel believes in transcendent entities. The support for this view principally comes from Hegel’s early writings, as we have seen in the discussion of Hegel’s critique of Kant’s idealism, where he seemed to be committed to intellectual intuition and a more Romanticised conception of the cognitive relationship between thought and the Absolute. However, all these ideas are not ones which the mature Hegel would accept, not in the least because of his hostility to intellectual intuition and supernaturalism in his Jena period, and his *endorsement* of Kant’s critique of Leibniz et al in his Berlin period: speculation beyond the bounds of experience, for Hegel, is not just fallacious, but also philosophically pernicious.[[98]](#footnote-98)

However, whilst Kant and Hegel agree that transcendent metaphysics is impossible, Hegel breaks from Kant’s move to the conclusion that only a modest metaphysics can be possible: he sees Kant as failing to recognise that human discursivity, whilst conditioned, can have access to the unconditioned, because Kant, like his metaphysical targets, incorrectly conceives of the unconditioned as beyond experience and thus requiring intellectual intuition to be cognised by us. For Hegel, we can have knowledge of the unconditioned, the infinite substance, not by intellectual intuition, but through human discursivity, which is able to understand the *immanent* determinations of thought, i.e. the rational relations that constitute the empirical world – the unconditioned, then, is neither beyond nature, since it just is the totality of nature as a whole, nor is it beyond discursivity, since nature as a whole is determined by conceptual relations that we, as discursive thinkers, are naturally able to detect and reflect upon. The question as to whether metaphysics is possible for Hegel is thus quite clear: because human discursivity is capable of understanding the Absolute, conceived of as the natural world as a whole, metaphysics does not need to be reduced to being the handmaiden of the empirical and natural sciences; rather, metaphysics can maintain its pre-Critical cognitive aspirations but without any commitment to its pre-Critical, transcendent ontology of rational psychology, immaterial God, and metaphysical powers of free will. Kant’s critical challenge – to put metaphysics on the secure path to science – can be, by consequence, answered by Hegel’s revision of metaphysics, which seeks to provide a new, critical foundation for the discipline on the one hand, whilst avoiding Kantian humility on the other, by following Kant critique of the Leibniz-Wolff tradition. As Hegel writes in the *Encyclopaedia*:[[99]](#footnote-99)

Newton gave physics an express warning to beware of metaphysics …; but, to his honour be it said, he did not by any means obey his own warning. The only mere physicists are the animals: they alone do not think: while man is a thinking being and a born metaphysician. The real question is not whether we shall apply metaphysics, but whether our metaphysics [is] of the right kind: in other words, whether we are not … adopting one-sided forms of thought, rigidly fixed by understanding, and making these the basis of our theoretical as well as our practical work. (*Encyclopaedia* I, §98Z: 144)

Hegel, of course, sets himself a highly ambitious philosophical task – and whilst this may be something that Kantians might regard as unachievable for various reasons, what Kantians are not entitled to claim is that Hegel’s faith in the genuine possibility of absolute idealism marks a basic return to the pre-Critical metaphysical tradition. Perhaps, though, some Kantians may wish to change strategy and suggest that Hegelian metaphysics will inevitably enter into conflict with ‘common sense’. However, as Adrian Moore writes, “[i]n his own sacrifice of the commonplaces of understanding, to make way for the extravagances of reason, [Hegel] may appear to be a paradigmatically ‘revisionary’ metaphysician, with a corresponding commitment to the possibility of radically new forms of sense-making. In a way he is. But his commitment is not to radically new forms of sense-making *as opposed to* standard forms …”[[100]](#footnote-100) Undoubtedly, there are errors in Hegel’s metaphysical system – however, these errors are neither the errors present in general metaphysics nor are they the errors that infect special metaphysics, for Hegel adheres to Kant’s Discursivity Thesis and explicitly rejects special metaphysics. Hegel’s re-enchantment of metaphysical science does not commit him to abandoning Kant’s critique in its entirety nor does it commit him to embracing pre-Critical metaphysics with open arms. Rather, Hegel’s position is more nuanced. As he writes himself:

Philosophic thought … possesses, in addition to the common forms, some forms of its own … [but] speculative logic [i.e. the logic of these philosophic forms of thought] contains all previous logic and metaphysics: it preserves the same forms of thought, the same laws and objects – while at the same time remodelling and expanding them with wider categories. (*Encyclopaedia* I, §9: 13)

What is crucial to our understanding of Hegelian metaphysics is what Hegel means by ‘remodelling and expanding’ certain concepts. This will be the focus of Part II.

I have therefore argued that Hegel takes a fairly dim view of Kant’s critical programme, for he regards the idea that human discursivity cannot access the intrinsic structure of reality in itself as incorrect, and he interprets Kant as suggesting that the only possible alternative to pre-Critical and error-strewn metaphysics is a proto-positivistic science of metaphysics. As I understand it, though, there are two ways of replying to Hegel that are available to Kant and his defenders.

The first objection to Hegel’s charge that Kant’s critical programme is a commitment to a form of positivism is that Hegel simply commits a non-sequitur in moving from Kant as criticising metaphysics to Kant thinking that the only way the discipline can be redeemed is by making it the handmaiden of the empirical and natural sciences: Kant’s project is one which aims to *reform* metaphysics, by revealing its errors, so that it can be taken seriously by the sciences. This is partly what Kant means by putting it on the secure path to science, for he sees the speculation concerning concepts like substance, the world, etc. as *non*-scientific, and thus by virtue of metaphysical speculation being *non*-scientific, the discipline is in need of immediate and thorough critique – but what the *critique* of metaphysics does is not throw the baby out with the bath-water, but rather show how certain pre-Critical formulations of metaphysical questions are re-articulated in such a way that the post-Critical formulations of metaphysical questions are scientific in spirit, given their critical status, and that because of their reformation, metaphysical questions converge with the enquiries of empirical and natural science. The best example to support Kant’s reformative project as a non-positivistic one can be found in Kant’s treatment of judgements such as ‘God exists’, ‘God is the First Cause of the finite and contingent universe’, ‘I am (transcendentally) free’, etc. He regards these judgements as ‘empty’ (*leer*), but what this means is *not* that these propositions are nonsensical and unintelligible, but rather they are truth-valueless, insofar as whilst the concepts that compose the judgement are logically consistent and thinkable, the judgements lack sensible intuitions as referents, and so fail to either represent something (which would be a mark of truth) or misrepresent something (which would be a mark of falsity). Of course, for Kant, empty judgements such as these are not just logically and syntactically intelligible and meaningful, they are also indispensable as norms governing cognitive and practical normative enquiries, viz. the Ideas of Reason and the relationship between theoretical reason and the postulates of pure practical reason. Given Kant’s treatment of empty judgements, Kant cannot be called a positivist.[[101]](#footnote-101)

The defence of Kant against the charge that his critical programme is a commitment to a form of positivism should be strong enough to force Hegelians to concede that Kant did not envisage future metaphysics as the mere handmaiden of empirical and natural science. However, this does not entail that Hegel’s critique is without merit or even truth. Certainly, Hegel cannot maintain that Kant’s critique of metaphysics involves a science of metaphysics that in no way resembles anything that can be broadly construed as metaphysics, i.e. that first philosophy is no longer concerned with fundamental principles or concepts, etc., but merely extrapolates in a very restricted way what the empirical and natural sciences reveal. However, where Hegel is right to think Kant made an error is in claiming that Kant fails to recognise that there is a genuine alternative to either pre-Critical metaphysics or his own more *modest* immanent metaphysics. Kant’s error is, if you will, a second neglected alternative, where on this occasion the neglected alternative is the genuine and intelligible possibility of a *robust* immanent metaphysics (i.e. absolute idealism).

Kantians, however, can respond to my Hegelian critique with the following: Kant is modest, only insofar as he does not wish to make the kinds of claim that Leibniz and others make about the concepts of transcendental logic being able in and of themselves to provide us with knowledge. As to whether or not this modesty translates into Kant’s own metaphysical commitments, the fact that empirical realism is squarely opposed to Hume’s sceptical empiricism surely illustrates the robustness of Kant’s own metaphysics: empirical realism claims that the world of experience is composed of causally interrelated substances that are governed by strict laws of nature with genuine nomological properties. Such a conception of the realm of nature crucially differs from Hume’s portrayal of a world of contingently interrelated bundles of sensible properties governed by empirical regularities.

If this is, though, the best means available to Kantians to reply to the worry that Kantian metaphysics is not sufficiently robust, then Kantians have a familiar problem to deal with: Kant’s empirical realism, typified by the account of experience as presented in the Analogies of Experience, is wholly dependent on his transcendental theory of experience, specifically the tenet of formal idealism that the structural features of empirical reality are derived from us – where this means that empirical realism cannot be separated from Kant’s subjectivism, and as we have seen, Kant’s subjectivism is something which Hegel was staunchly critical of, not in the least because he judged subjective idealism to be a poor way of countering Hume’s sceptical empiricism.

Thus far, I have discussed Hegel’s first objection to Kant’s views on the possibility of metaphysics – that Kant seems to be positivistic and fails to see the genuine alternative between pre-Critical metaphysics and modest immanent metaphysics. Hegel’s second objection is centred on what he regards as the disastrous cultural consequences of Kant’s doctrine of Humility: the doctrine of Humility is the thesis that (i) we can only know things from the human perspective and (ii) the human perspective cannot have any insight into the intrinsic structure of reality itself. Hegel’s opposition to this tenet of transcendental idealism is nicely captured in the following passage, where he writes:

The fact is that there no longer exists any interest either in the form or the content of metaphysics or in both together. If it is remarkable when a nation has become indifferent to its constitutional theory, to its national sentiments, its ethical customs and virtues, it is certainly no less remarkable when a nation loses its metaphysics, when the spirit which contemplates its own pure essence is no longer a present reality in the life of the nation. The esoteric teaching of the Kantian philosophy – that the understanding ought not to go beyond experience, else the cognitive faculty will become a theoretical reason which by itself generates nothing but fancies of the brain – this was a justification from a philosophical quarter for the renunciation of speculative thought. In support of this popular teaching came the cry of modern educationists that the needs of the time demanded attention to immediate requirements, that just as experience was the primary factor for knowledge, so for skill in public and private life, practice and practical training generally were essential and alone necessary, theoretical insight being harmful even. Philosophy and ordinary common sense thus co-operating to bring about the downfall of metaphysics, there was seen the strange spectacle of a cultured nation without a metaphysics – like a temple richly ornamented in other respects but without a holy of holies. (*SL*: 25-6)

It is unsurprising, as customary with Hegel, that this passage will be a source of consternation for Kantians, who may well be incredulous at Hegel’s cultural critique of transcendental idealism. Opponents of Hegel would take this passage to indicate how far Hegel misinterpreted the Kantian doctrine of Humility, and how the critics of the traditional reading of Hegel – from non-metaphysical readings to revisionary readings – can never really dispel the image of an out-of-touch aspirational Hellenic Teuton harking back to pre-Critical philosophic traditions. Hegel, in all fairness, does not do himself many favours here – and even the most serious defenders of Hegel should accept this claim. However, that being said, in defence of Hegel it is not entirely obvious that the target of his critique is *directly* Kant, for the vitriol seems to be directed at a ‘philosophical quarter’ in conjunction with ‘modern educationists who value immediate requirements’: who Hegel has in mind is still left mysterious, but it seems reasonable to suggest that it is more likely a small group of neo-empiricists/proto-positivists and governmental officials who appropriated Kant’s critique of speculative reasoning to herald the end of speculative reasoning, rather than Kant himself. If, though, it is more appropriate (or even correct) to identify Hegel’s target as this group, then Hegel seems to be *indirectly* criticising Kant, at least. But if this is true, it could be said, Hegel’s criticism is a rather poor one, for it seems absurd to criticise Kant for being misappropriated, much like it is absurd to criticise Nietzsche for being misappropriated by the Nazi movement. To put the point crudely, it is no reason at all to reject a philosopher’s arguments on the grounds that they have been misappropriated. Moreover, though I disagree with traditional interpretations of Hegel’s idealism, I think it is not unreasonable to suggest that Hegel can be read as wanting to resurrect the Leibniz-Wolff dogmatic metaphysical tradition, given what he writes in passages of this sort.

However, despite this basic problem, it is again not fair to say that there is nothing of value or substance to his critique of Kant here: the ultimate worry that Hegel has concerning Kant’s doctrine of Humility, expressed by Hegel’s opposition to the limitation on human knowledge, is that the subjectivism and relativism of formal idealism prevents us from developing our speculative faculties, faculties which Hegel is seriously committed to as the key to being in touch with the rationality embedded in the structure of reality itself. Why Hegel is so concerned about developing a system which is unrestrictive and focused entirely on development of rationality is not because he believes human knowledge can be extended to transcendent things-in-themselves, but because he think that the basic idea of restriction, the idea of setting limits, serves as a check on human intellectual endeavour and creativity, things which he regards as essential for human flourishing.[[102]](#footnote-102) Under Kant’s account, Hegel thinks humanity is left impoverished, and that we are left cognitively impotent in a spiritual wilderness: because Kant separates form and matter, and because he imposes strong constraints on experience and human knowledge, philosophy can no longer deliver what it was designed for - the salvation of man through speculative reasoning about reality in itself.

# Part II: Hegel’s Development of Kant

# *§a Moving from Transcendental Logic to Dialectical Logic*

Whilst the approach of Part I has been one which has largely focused on negative aspects of the Kant-Hegel relationship, the approach adopted in Part II is to try to understand how Hegel sees his idealism as a *development* of Kant’s Critical Philosophy, and will thus view this relation in a more positive light. However, it is possible to view this positive relationship in different ways. One such way is exemplified in the work of Robert Pippin (1989). This school of thought, which finds notable support also from Terry Pinkard (1994) and Beatrice Longuenesse (2007), interprets Hegel as working entirely within Kant’s transcendental constraints. Hegel, according to Pippin et al., should be understood as offering his own idiosyncratic version of transcendental idealism, for he is only interested in uncovering the necessary *a priori* structures for possible experience and is not committed to any kind of metaphysical enquiry as such. I have already suggested strong reasons to reject the idea of conceiving of Hegel in a non-metaphysical manner; as a result, my aim now will be to question whether it is coherent to regard Hegel as a transcendentalist. A second way of viewing Hegel’s debt to Kant, unlike the Pippinian reading, aims to interpret Hegel as developing Kant’s transcendental insights into domains that Kant either held himself back from entering or those domains which Kant did not address. This school of thought finds notable support in the work of William Bristow (2007), and Sally Sedgwick (2012). Those who share Bristow’s and Sedgwick’s general attitude to the Kant-Hegel relationship wish to maintain that Hegel was both critical of Kant yet at the same time regarded Kant as having made important and accurate discoveries concerning the nature of cognition and philosophical methodology. *Pace* Pippin et al., on this view Hegel’s position is not more or less identical to Kant’s, because Hegel’s position directly rejects transcendental idealism. However, what is crucial here is that Hegel’s rejection of transcendental *idealism* does not obviouslyrule out the possibility of Hegel being bound to transcendental *philosophy* itself. The question now then is how can Hegel be understood as a transcendentalist when he clearly rejects Kant’s idealism and transcendental logic. Before I address this issue, I would like to detail Pippin’s controversial reading of Hegel’s idealism, and then provide some reasons for why I think this school of thought fails to accurately interpret the positive relationship between Kant and Hegel.

*A critique of Pippin’s transcendental reading of Hegel*

As I have mentioned before, Pippin argues that Hegel’s idealism should be seen as squarely following Kant’s shift from pre-Critical metaphysics to critical metaphysics. This idea involves two fundamental claims, one positive, and one negative. The latter effectively amounts to viewing Hegel as sharing Kant’s proto-Strawsonian attitude to the fruitlessness of traditional metaphysical speculation concerning substance, God, etc. As Pippin writes, “thereafter, instead of an *a priori* science of substance, a science of ‘how the world must be’ … a putative philosophical science was directed to the topic of how any subject must ‘for itself’ take or construe or *judge the world to be*” (Pippin, 1990: 839). What he means by this is that Kant wished to initiate a change in the direction of cognitive enquiry, by asking us to focus on the necessary conditions required for the possibility of experience of the world as a self-conscious discursive subject, rather than determine the necessary structure of the world itself. Such a position is meant to clearly anticipate Strawson’s move from revisionary metaphysics to descriptive metaphysics. The problem, however, facing Pippin’s interpretation of Kant here is that one may well regard it as odd to suggest that Kant’s Copernican turn (or for that matter Strawson’s move) blocks off the possibility of metaphysics *simpliciter*. For, both Kantians and Strawsonians will insist that their respective programmes are still doing metaphysics albeit in a much more nuanced and non-traditional manner. Pippin, though, can respond by claiming that what Kant ultimately establishes in the transformation of philosophical enquiry results in the abandonment of any really identifiable form of metaphysics. For, one could always say that Kant wishes to reform metaphysics by making it answerable to transcendental logic, but if the focus is on the conceptual structures we use in order to experience the world in the way that we do, then it is very difficult to see how such an enterprise resembles traditional enquiries into the nature of the world. Kant may not be abandoning the idea of ‘first philosophy’ entirely, but his anti-realist turn should at least make one hesitate before calling him a metaphysician, for reflecting on the structure of human thought is not the same as reflecting on the structure of the world. This anti-realist outlook is the taken further by Hegel, according to Pippin, since Hegel is squarely opposed to realism, which here refers to the view that there is a fundamental gap between mind and world and that human thought must find a way to hook itself onto the content of experience: Hegel’s famous rejection of the medium/instrument model of cognition in the Introduction to the *Phenomenology*, his dialectical refutation of Sense-Certainty, and the general focus of the *Phenomenology* itself – namely us rather than the world – all suggest that Hegel accepted Kant’s critique of realism. However, Pippin goes further than this by claiming that Hegel’s anti-realism is a more thorough-going one, for whilst Kant retained a residual element of metaphysical realism in transcendental idealism and its conception of a world of things-in-themselves, Hegel’s idealism aims to prevent the possibility of there being some external perspective independent of our conceptual structures, by arguing for the incoherence of such an external perspective. As Pippin writes, “what Hegel is after is a way of demonstrating the ‘ultimate’ or absolute objectivity of the Notion not by some demonstration that being as it is in itself can be known to be as we conceive it to be, but that a Notionally conditional actuality is all that ‘being’ could intelligibly be, even for the most committed realist sceptic” (Pippin, 1989: 98).

Having argued that we should read Hegel as an anti-realist like Kant, Pippin then uses this claim to motivate his fundamental positive suggestion: as before with Kant, Hegel is attempting to derive the Categories from the conditions of self-consciousness. Such a programme commits Hegel to the following principles. (I) Hegel adopts transcendental argumentation; (II) Hegel believes that only the I can serve as a ground for necessity, because the only genuine necessary propositions are propositions about our cognition; (III) Hegel believes that the Categories do not have any status above being necessary conditions for the possibility of experience.

The basis for (I) consists in seeing Hegel as principally concerned with the necessary conditions for the possibility of knowledge, and that like Kant, Hegel thinks the ultimate condition for this is the transcendental unity of apperception. We have already noticed in the discussion of Hegel’s critique of Kant’s transcendental subject that Hegel heaps praise on the ‘I think’; for Pippin, such praise effectively amounts to following Kant’s mode of argumentation, which is transcendental in form. This means that Hegel regards his project as aiming to undermine a sceptical target of some variety. More specifically, Hegel’s project involves establishing that it is not just the case that what the sceptic doubts is true, but also that the sceptic’s position is incoherent given how what she doubts is in fact necessary for cognition/language/knowledge. For example, the sceptical target of Kant’s transcendental argument in the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories is one which claims that all that there is to experience is a rhapsody of sensible data. Kant then proceeds to show that if such an account of experience was accurate, then experience would not be possible at all. To put his transcendental argument very bluntly, the reason why there *must* be (as opposed to just there being in fact) more to experience than constant conjunctions and indeterminate unities is that the *kind* of experience we have of the world, our representation of an empirically real world, can only be determined by structuring the data of experience *qua* our *a priori* cognitive structures and that these structures provide the conditions for experiencing the world in exactly that way. Those conditions are the Categories, because only the Categories are capable of structuring our experience with sufficiently rule-like properties. However, since the Categories, for Kant, are only the logical functions of thought, they need to be grounded in something that performs the activity of thought/judgement. What satisfies this is the transcendental unity of apperception, since it uses the Categories in the activity of thought/judgement.

Hegel, according to Pippin, can thus be seen as following in Kant’s footsteps of using transcendental arguments to dismantle sceptical positions. With support from Taylor (1972),[[103]](#footnote-103) Pippin reads Hegel’s discussion of Sense-Certainty as amounting to a transcendental refutation of a position which seeks to establish the conditions for demonstrable reference to concrete particulars without taking into account conceptual mediation and determinate negation.[[104]](#footnote-104) Like Kant, Hegel thinks that if his opponent’s position was true, we would not be able to experience the world in the way that we do, and nor would we be able to have any significantly meaningful experience at all given how we could not use language to articulate it.

There are certainly good reasons to regard this reading of Hegel’s rejection of Sense-Certainty as compelling, for Hegel clearly intends to demonstrate the indispensability of concepts and a holistic linguistic structure for even the most simple and ordinary kinds of experience. However, the problem with regarding Hegel’s argument against Sense-Certainty as a transcendental argument is that such a type of argumentation appears to violate the basic principle of Hegel’s dialectical method, the notion of internal critique and presuppositionlessness. Both Houlgate[[105]](#footnote-105) and Stern[[106]](#footnote-106) share this concern, with Houlgate in particular suggesting that reading Hegel as developing a transcendental argument in ‘Sense-Certainty’ cannot serve as a viable interpretation of Hegel, for the sense-certainty theorist is refuted not because the conceptualist criterion trumps the criterion of immediacy, but rather because the criterion of immediacy conflicts with the experience of sense-certainty itself. The reason for this is that if the refutation of the criterion of immediacy consisted in using a different criterion for experience/knowledge to undermine it, then such a strategy on Hegel’s own terms would be question-begging. For Hegel, the only legitimate form of critique is one which proceeds to demonstrate how a criterion for experience/knowledge is *internally* incorrect or how that form of consciousness is incoherent *on its own terms*. Therefore, if we wish to remain faithful Hegelians, Houlgate proposes that we should reject the transcendental reading of Hegel’s argument in ‘Sense-Certainty’. I shall return to Houlgate’s argument in due course.

With regard to (II), the commitment to the transcendental unity of apperception, Pippin appears to suggest that Hegel shared Kant’s view that determining the necessary conditions of self-consciousness was more straightforward than determining necessary features of reality. What this effectively means is that both Hegel and Kant regard the domain of the I as having some sort of priority over the external world. However, as Stern (2008) argues, such a reading of both Kant and Hegel would suggest a return to the Cartesian idea that the self has primacy and that inner sense has priority over outer sense. And if there is one issue that both Kant and Hegel agree on, it is that Cartesianism cannot be true. What is arguably even more problematic for Pippin’s reading is his claim that Hegel endorsed Kant’s strategy when discussing the apperceptive nature of experience, where Pippin cites the following passage from the Berlin Phenomenology, to illustrate that Hegel accepted Kant’s idea that there must be a unity of apperception in any conscious subject-object relation:

There can be no consciousness without self-consciousness. I know something, and that about which I know something I have in the certainty of myself otherwise I would know nothing of it; the object is my object, it is other and at the same time mine, and in this latter respect I am self-relating. (*BP*: 55)

Pippin is right to suggest that Hegel accepted the basic idea of apperception, for not only is this passage a clear indication of such a claim, the passage is also consistent with those parts of Hegel’s texts which praise Kant’s transcendental discovery.[[107]](#footnote-107) However, where Pippin goes wrong is in taking this passage to mean that Hegel accepted Kant’s strategy, particularly Kant’s hope of showing the specific *a priori* constraints that must be taken to be involved in all experience, cf. Pippin (1989: 35). Hegel only accepts the general and basic tenet of apperception, the fundamental transcendental claim that there can be ‘no consciousness without self-consciousness’, rather than Kant’s apriorism more generally. There is nothing in the above passage to suggest that Hegel agrees with Kant’s strategy of connecting the transcendental unity of apperception to subjective idealism, nor is there anything to legitimise the move from Hegel being influenced by Kant to Hegel being in agreement with Kant.

With regard to (III), the concern about how Hegel conceives of the Categories, the problem with Pippin’s suggestion that Hegel hopes to derive the Categories from the transcendental unity of apperception is that Hegel, as we have seen in the discussion of his general critique of Kant’s idealism, regards the Categories as having an ontological status as states of being as opposed to a merely psychological status as modes of thinking. One could even go further than this and state that the discussion of the Categories in the *Logic* is one which clearly presents them in ontological terms. In response to this objection, Pippin argues that Hegel’s apparent ontological talk is just metaphorical language, cf. Pippin (1989: 193). I think that such a response is ultimately weak, because it relies on Pippin’s idea that Hegel could not be interested in metaphysics at all after Kant’s critique of the dogmatic tradition. And that idea presumes what we have seen to be a false dichotomy between an implausible transcendent metaphysics and a modest and critical post-Kantian metaphysical enquiry. Contrary to Pippin’s crucial assumption, there is no significant danger in ascribing to Hegel a genuine interest in metaphysics, because Hegelian metaphysics does not make the same errors as pre-Critical metaphysics, as I shall shortly explain further.

Having proposed some objections to the transcendental reading of Hegel, it should be clear that I think the Pippinian school of thought is ultimately incorrect in how the Kant-Hegel relationship is to be understood.[[108]](#footnote-108) However, it is not obvious from this that Hegel cannot be seen as a transcendental philosopher of some sort. To understand what this means, I want to return to Houlgate’s critique of Taylor and Pippin. Whilst Houlgate is correct to claim that a commitment to transcendental argumentation would violate Hegel’s dialectical method,[[109]](#footnote-109) I think something can be said in support of reading Hegel as doing transcendental philosophy in ‘Sense-Certainty’. If one looks at Hegel’s argument in ‘Sense-Certainty’, one will immediately notice that Hegel is making transcendental *claims* about our cognition.[[110]](#footnote-110) However, these claims about the necessary conditions for the possibility of demonstrative reference and determinate cognition of concrete particulars are not presuppositions made by Hegel. Rather, these transcendental insights are propositions that the phenomenological subject discovers during its dialectical journey through sense-certainty. They are cognitive achievements, as opposed to dogmatic assumptions. The advantage of holding that Hegel is making transcendental claims is not only that it avoids the mistake of attributing transcendental arguments to Hegel, insofar as the former is possible without the other; my suggestion also avoids another worry raised by Houlgate: for, Houlgate can accept that Hegel makes transcendental claims rather than transcendental arguments, but he will go on to suggest that if Hegel is making transcendental claims, then Hegel would violate another tenet of his philosophical methodology, namely that such philosophical insights are only accessible to philosophical consciousness, and by virtue of this beg the question against ordinary consciousness until ordinary consciousness itself adopts those claims.[[111]](#footnote-111) I accept Houlgate’s idea that a transcendental claim is a philosophical claim, but I do not accept his idea that philosophical claims are not available to consciousness in sense-certainty. There are two reasons for this: firstly, Houlgate appears to unfairly downplay the cognitive strengths of sense-certainty. He seems to think that this form of consciousness is rather unphilosophical. I certainly agree with him that sense-certainty is cognitively limited, but that does not establish his idea that sense-certainty is unphilosophical. What it does show is only the idea that sense-certainty has a poor philosophical grasp of what constitutes a valid criterion for knowledge. This is not the same as claiming that sense-certainty is purely a natural/non-philosophical consciousness – indeed, sense-certainty seems to be motivated by and committed to some pretty significant philosophical theses, albeit implicitly, concerning the priority of apprehension over comprehension, the individual over the universal, and so on. Secondly, the transcendental discoveries are not made by a philosophical consciousness that is much further along the dialectic than consciousness is in sense-certainty, rather they are made by the phenomenological subject herself in her rational enquiries. The transcendental claims are naturally discovered by consciousness just by engaging in the activity of thought itself. And this is consistent with Hegel’s dialectical method. To put my point bluntly, Hegel is a transcendental philosopher to the extent that he is committed to identifying transcendental claims – this does not commit him to either transcendental argumentation or working within Kant’s constraints.

If this is a more compelling interpretation of the Kant-Hegel relationship than the Pippinian school of thought, then it seems we can cash out the positive relationship between Kant and Hegel in a more nuanced manner.[[112]](#footnote-112) One can be someone’s successor without necessarily following one’s predecessor: Hegel, in many important ways, differs from Kant, but at the same time, he is greatly indebted to the great philosopher – so what I hope to have shown is that, *contra* Pippin and others, one can intelligibly conceive of the positive relationship between Kant and Hegel in such a way that both maintains important areas of disagreement between the two while also illustrating how Hegel regarded dialectical logic as improving upon transcendental logic. Such an account neither reduces Hegelianism to Kantianism nor does it suggest that Kant and Hegel are worlds apart from one another as has been traditionally thought. What I now hope to explain in more detail now is how exactly my account is supposed to work – how exactly I understand the relationship between transcendental logic and dialectical logic.

*From transcendental logic to dialectical logic*

The reason for the suggestion that Hegel’s dialectical logic is both working within the basic parameters of transcendental logic, i.e. by identifying certain interdependencies between various concepts, but is also developing transcendental logic into a new, more ‘metaphysical’ form, is based on the idea that transcendental logic[[113]](#footnote-113) is limited to analysing interdependency between psychological phenomena such as self-consciousness and consciousness, whereas dialectical logic, as part of Hegel’s objective idealism, is concerned with revealing in addition to this an interdependency between substances, such as infinity and the finite, and an interdependency between rational subjects. To understand this claim, it will help to consider Hegel’s argument for an immanent conception of infinity; his use of the Spinozist principle ‘all determination is negation’; and then Hegel’s argument for mutual recognition in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. My general suggestion here will be that Hegel takes some of the transcendental insights that were available to Kant, but rather than articulating them within the (to Hegel) restricted compass of transcendental idealism, he deploys them within the more metaphysically rich outlook of his objective idealism, in a way that both builds on Kant’s approach, but also fundamentally transforms it.

Beginning with Hegel’s conception of the infinite, the following passage is highly significant:

[It is said that] the infinite, one the one side, exits by itself, and that the finite which has gone forth from it into a separate existence …; but it should rather be said that this separation is incomprehensible ... But equally it must be said that they are comprehensible, to grasp them even as they are in ordinary conception, to see that in the one there lies the determination of the other … is to see the simple insight into their inseparability … This *unity* of the finite and infinite and the distinction between them are just as inseparable as are finitude and infinity. (*SL*: 153-154)

From the above passage, we can construct the following argument:

1. If the finite is separate from the infinite, then there is something outside of the infinite.
2. There is nothing outside of the infinite.
3. Therefore, the finite is not separate from the infinite.

For Hegel, as we have seen, the necessary *ontological* condition for the infinite’s being infinite is that it is not separate from the finite. This is not a traditional transcendental argument, in the sense that Hegel is not focusing on the necessary conditions for the possibility of knowledge/experience/language/thought. But because Hegel aims to highlight the interdependency of conceptual contraries, something which transcendental arguments hope to achieve as well, it seems to follow that for Hegel to adopt such argumentation connects him to transcendental philosophy in some respect. However, the fact that Hegel uses *this* kind of argument with regard to the metaphysics of infinity does not entail that Hegel’s understanding of infinity *is* Kantian, for Hegel and Kant are *not* in agreement about the nature of the infinite. Furthermore, Hegel’s argument is not a transcendental argument, but merely one which makes transcendental claims: he is interested in what the infinite must be like.

The point that I wish to make is that the Hegelian programme of determining genuine statements about infinity and finitude is (i) *formally* similar to Kant’s negative (transcendental) programme of demarcating between ‘dogmatic’ and ‘critical’ propositions. For, Hegel is concerned to dismiss the claims of pre-Kantian rationalists as metaphysical conjecture, since if the infinite were understood in opposition to the finite, then the infinite would be finite itself, because it would be limited by the finite. “There would then be *per impossibile* a greater reality than the infinite. Hence, the true infinite must therefore include the finite.”[[114]](#footnote-114) (ii) He can be judged as Kant’s successor, not because Hegel merely takes up Kant’s mantle by focusing on the necessary conditions for the possibility of experience/cognition, *pace* Pippin, but because Hegel seeks to build on the discoveries Kant made about interdependency by underlining how infinity and finitude are necessarily bound up together for their existence – but where Kant saw such dependencies in merely conceptual terms, Hegel treats them ontologically. This is why Hegel regarded his absolute/objective idealism as improving upon Kant’s psychological/subjective idealism: for Kant’s most serious error was falling into the pitfalls of various dualisms, despite possessing correct transcendental insights into the nature of interdependency, whereas Hegel’s absolute idealism – which is famous in part for its systematic rejection of those dualisms – aims to preserve Kant’s great discoveries whilst at the same time taking them further, by treating them as metaphysical claims in a way that Kant himself has refused to do.

The conception of infinity on Hegel’s account is a crucial part of his dialectical logic. Another crucial part of that logic is Hegel’s use of the principle ‘all determination is negation’. For Hegel, the negation that accompanies determination is a necessary condition for the possibility of being in a meaningful sense. In other words, Hegel claims that if something is to count as being, then it *must* have determination and so negation.[[115]](#footnote-115) His argument can be understood as follows: for something to be more than just a completely formal and abstract pure being, which for Hegel is more or less the same as nothingness, there must be some kind of determination. Such determination must involve some negation. As Stern writes, “the principle thus plays an important role within Hegel’s ontological position, where it is crucial to his case against Parmenidean monism, which treats reality as a ‘one’, lacking in any element of difference; rather, Hegel argues, reality must incorporate some element of differentiation, of distinctions within being, where without these ‘negations’ it would not comprise determinate being, but would be no more than the nothingness of pure being”.[[116]](#footnote-116) Now, there seems to be good reason to interpret Hegel’s use of the ‘all determination is negation’ principle to be a transcendental claim: in the previous case of infinity, Hegel’s concern was to show the necessary ontological conditions for the infinite being the infinite; here, Hegel is interested in establishing the necessary conditions for being as being proper.

The final way of illustrating my reading of the Kant-Hegel relationship in itspositive dimension comes from looking at Hegel’s argument for mutual recognition in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. What I am going to suggest now is that Hegel’s argument should be interpreted as a transformation of Kant’s transcendental argument in the ‘Refutation of Idealism’. By this, I mean two things: firstly, that Kant’s argument in the Refutation of Idealism can be seen as a proto-form of immanent critique, and secondly that Hegel aims to develop Kant’s transcendental insights into the necessary interdependency between self-consciousness and awareness of something permanent in sensation by suggesting that the only way one can achieve self-consciousness as a rational, autonomous subject is by recognising another as a rational, autonomous subject, and have them in turn recognise you in exactly that same manner. To put my point differently, the argument for mutual recognition is the social articulation of Kant’s Refutation of Idealism, for Hegel’s notion of the sociality of self-consciousness is meant to refute the Cartesian conception of the mind-world relationship much in the same way that Kant’s transcendental argument aims to do. In order to see this, I will begin by setting Hegel’s argument in context.

At the end of ‘Consciousness’, the phenomenological subject shifts their focus from objects to themselves. The reason for this dialectical change principally lies in how consciousness now conceives of objects as being in some way subordinate to its authority, given the conclusion of Force and Understanding. However, what exactly this subordination means is not clear: some philosophers, such as Pippin, Tom Rockmore, and Jon Stewart have taken this to mean that the phenomenological subject sees the world as dependent on its cognitive capacities, insofar as objects turn out to be constructed by consciousness. I am inclined to regard such an interpretation as not entirely accurate, because I think Hegel’s aim is more modest than this: why we make the transition from consciousness to self-consciousness is not because we regard our cognitive activity to be the grounds for the existence of objects, but rather simply because we have come to understand that being a discursive consciousness has endowed us with authority. Such authority prevents us from merely conforming to objects and conceiving of the mind-world relation as one where the mind is the mirror of nature. What we now wish to understand is what this authority means for us, and how we exercise this active power as a subject in the world.

The first way in which the self conceives of itself as a being endowed with authority is by seeing its environment as the domain for biological satisfaction. The world is viewed in some way as being there for consciousness, in the sense that the objects that constitute nature can be completely available for oneself. Objects are now understood to represent those entities that consciousness must ‘dominate’ for the purposes of satisfying its basic biological desires, such as hunger and thirst. For Hegel, the very act of digestion, whereby objects are broken down for the purposes of nourishment, is an obvious means of expressing the authority consciousness feels it has over its environment: the constitution of plants, etc. can be altered by consciousness, thereby demonstrating how it can determine its environment for its benefit. This is what Hegel means by seeking to master the natural world in the *Philosophy of Nature* (I, §245Z: 195-6). Whilst such activity by consciousness enables it to exert some power over objects, Hegel makes it clear that such a criterion for achieving autonomy in the world is ultimately incoherent: the problem with satisfying desire is that it necessarily involves the obliteration of the object; once the object has been destroyed, though, the subject has nothing to dominate. The subject must therefore seek another object which will be obliterated and so on *ad infinitum*. Furthermore, in seeing itself as a being that requires satisfaction of ordinary desires, consciousness realises that it must be dependent on the objects in the world. For, its very survival is bound to there being objects that serve as the vehicles for the satisfaction of self-consciousness. Therefore, consciousness cannot maintain its putative mastery over nature. As Hegel writes in the *Phenomenology*: “Desire and the self-certainty obtained in its gratification, are conditioned by the object, for self-certainty comes from superseding this other: in order that this supersession can take place, there must be this other. Thus self-consciousness, by its negative relation to the object, is unable to supersede it; it is really because of that relation that it produces the object again, and the desire as well” (PS: 109).

Having understood that the destruction of objects cannot serve as a viable means of expressing its authority, consciousness now seeks to establish its authority in the following manner: it wishes to exert power over objects by having objects in some way acknowledge its authority. The only kinds of entities that can offer such a form of satisfaction, though, are not things like plants and birds, but rather other self-consciousnesses. As such, consciousness must strive to achieve recognition (*Anerkennung*) from another self-consciousness. For Hegel, at this stage, the only way one can hope to be recognised is through a life-or-death struggle: the phenomenological subject is still at this point conceiving of itself in animalistic ways, given that consciousness has yet to fully develop any strong conception of reason. Because of its bestial *Weltanschauung*, the subject is restricted to adopting a violent (but non-lethal) criterion of recognition. Whilst each self-consciousness must be prepared to risk their own life, as such action is the most explicit and dramatic means of expressing just how far one is willing to go in order to achieve recognition, the struggle cannot end with one of the self-consciousnesses dead. For, as the lesson of desire taught consciousness, the destruction of the other cannot yield satisfaction. More specifically, as Beiser has said, a corpse cannot salute.[[117]](#footnote-117) The struggle for recognition, therefore, must end with one self-consciousness enslaving the other. Authority is expressed in having the other acknowledge the self as ‘master’ and acknowledging the other as ‘slave’.

However, such a criterion for achieving recognition is ultimately incoherent: Firstly, while the self-consciousness that forced the other to submit had arguably achieved superiority, given that they triumphed in the struggle, the kind of recognition the master receives is rather poor. The master is recognised by a slave, not by a consciousness of equal standing. Self-consciousness, as a result, cannot genuinely be said to have been satisfied. Secondly, as with desire before, the master cannot claim to achieve autonomy, as the master depends on the slave for nourishment, etc. The slave, in some important sense, possesses some kind of authority over the master, in that without the slave the master cannot really function.

If self-consciousness is to be properly satisfied, then it is clear that this asymmetrical relationship of social statuses, to use Brandom’s terminology,[[118]](#footnote-118) must be altered in a significant manner. Each self-consciousness must recognise the other as an equal, if they are to achieve rational satisfaction. How Hegel conceives of this being possible is through a dialectical understanding of how the notion of the ‘other’ is to be understood, where this is not as something to be feared or as fundamentally separate from the ‘self’ - rather, ‘self’ and ‘other’ should be understood as being interdependent. This is why Hegel famously claims that a self-consciousness can only be satisfied by another self-consciousness.[[119]](#footnote-119) Whilst mutual recognition is partly designed to follow Kantian respect, since we should not treat others as means to an end, mutual recognition goes further, for not only should we treat others as ends in themselves, but we have realised that recognition of others as equals is a necessary condition for the possibility of us achieving self-consciousness in a significantly normative manner.

Not only do I wish to claim that Hegel’s argument for mutual recognition makes transcendental claims, I think by virtue of its concerns the argument can be plausibly interpreted as the social articulation of Kant’s Refutation of Idealism. Hegel sees himself as developing the rejection of the Cartesian notion that self-consciousness is prior to and independent of consciousness of external phenomena, by situating self-consciousness in the domain of the social, where the argument of the Refutation had suggested that self-consciousness was public, in the sense that it was necessarily bound up with the objects outside of it. Furthermore, the manner in which Kant shows that the Cartesian picture is implausible appears to be through a proto-form of immanent critique: the Cartesian is given their starting-point, namely the idea that self-consciousness is prior to and independent of consciousness of external objects. But the way in which the criterion is shown to be inadequate is not determined by Kant postulating a rival or external criterion, but rather by seeing whether the Cartesian model is coherent on its own terms.[[120]](#footnote-120) Now, it seems reasonable to hold that argumentation of this type has some influence on Hegel’s approach in the *Phenomenology*, particularly in Hegel’s discussion of sense-certainty as we have seen: just as the Cartesian must presuppose what they deny, the sense-certainty theorist must do the same. However, whilst Hegelians can judge Kant as having established some kind of cognitive embeddedness in the world, they will still maintain that Kant had restricted himself to an exclusively individualistic conception of self-consciousness. What Hegel seems to want to accomplish is to further develop Kant’s transcendental insight into the necessary interdependency between inner sense and outer sense by illustrating the necessary interdependency between self and other. He thus hopes to show that the mind is not just public (and so not private) but that it is also socially interactive. This represents an example of Hegel aiming to develop Kantian transcendentalism by articulating it in areas that Kant did not consider.

One potential objection to the idea that Hegel’s argument for mutual recognition is the social articulation of Kant’s Refutation of Idealism is that it would suggest that Hegel’s concern is to refute solipsism. This objection is raised by Stern (2012a), who argues that the argument for mutual recognition should not be read as an attempt to refute the sceptical position that there are no other minds apart from my own and that all putatively external reality is merely a representation of consciousness. Targeting Beiser’s (2005) account, Stern claims that whilst one would be justified in claiming that Hegel was concerned with philosophical positions such as nihilism, and that Hegel’s notion of recognition is influenced by Fichte’s theory of recognition, one is not entitled to conclude from this that Hegel’s concern in the master/slave dialectic section of the *Phenomenology* is to refute solipsism as presented. Stern gives a number of reasons for this, ranging from claims about its historical context to concerns about the interpretation of the relevant sections of the *Phenomenology*. I do not wish to go through all the details of his argument, but the essential claim is that it is difficult to see what anti-solipsistic work the master/slave dialectic is doing, given how the dialectic of desire can be very plausibly understood as undercutting the problem of other minds with apparent ease. I agree with this, but would maintain that Hegel’s target in the argument for mutual recognition is a solipsist but not a *metaphysical* solipsist, as I shall now explain.

Kant’s concern in the Refutation of Idealism is partly aimed at rejecting the methodological principle that self-consciousness can be established prior to and independently of consciousness of an external world. Call that methodological principle ‘Methodological Solipsism’. Now, what I think Hegel is principally concerned with in the argument for mutual recognition is undermining the position that one can achieve recognition as a normative consciousness[[121]](#footnote-121) independently of recognising others in that manner. Call that position ‘Status Solipsism’. The status solipsist does not merely believe that other rational beings are in some way inferior to them, they also believe that they have no need or obligation to treat others as autonomous subjects. This is why adopting this criterion immediately results in conflict; for, if the criterion for interacting with others had been one which is more cultured and less violent, consciousness would not feel obliged to immediately try to subvert the other. Rather, consciousness would have felt obliged to recognise the other as autonomous and so be recognised in such a manner as well. What the dialectical achievement of consciousness is in the collapse of the master/slave relationship and the development of mutual recognition is an understanding of the incoherence of Status Solipsism. The internal contradictions within this position force consciousness to revise its criterion in favour of reciprocal egalitarianism, so that it can achieve satisfaction in another self-consciousness. If we think about Hegel in the way I have suggested, then one is entitled to regard his argument as directed against solipsism of this kind, but not metaphysical solipsism.

What I hope to have achieved in this chapter is a convincing critique of Pippin’s transcendental reading of Hegel, and to have developed a novel and persuasive understanding of how to interpret Hegel as developing the project of making transcendental claims. I would now like to shift focus on Hegel’s development of Kant’s theory of conceptual form.

# *§b From Kantian conceptual form to Hegelian Weltanschauungen*

When discussing Hegel’s general critique of Kant’s idealism, I noted that Hegel was committed to the Discursivity Thesis. What I now want to discuss is how Hegel transformed Kant’s idea that conceptual form is an indispensable element of experience into his notion that conceptual form essentially involves a *Weltanschauung* or ‘world picture’. In other words, what I hope to illustrate is how Hegel moves from Kant’s conception of categorial form to his own more existential conception of a form of consciousness. What this means is that Hegel can be seen as hoping to ‘free up’ the Categories from their Kantian restrictions. To begin with, though, a return to Kant’s theory of form and the Transcendental Deduction is in order.

*Kant’s Transcendental Deduction*

We have already seen that Kant divides the notion of form into form of intuition and form of thought. The former kind is concerned with the structuring principle that governs how we are to perceive objects – how we are to identify objects in the most basic perceptual manner. Space and time, for Kant, constitute the form of intuition. The form of thought is concerned with the structuring principle that is responsible for making objects possibly thinkable and establishing rational connections between objects. For Kant, the Categories are the forms of thought, because they are the logical functions of judgement; they are responsible for making the content of experience thinkable as well as providing the conditions required for the representation of an empirically real world. The role of the Transcendental Deduction is to justify the idea that the form of thought (conceptual form) is indispensable to experience – and this crucially involves eliminating the possibility that we can experience the world in exactly the way we do and have a representation of an empirically real world without the presence and functioning of conceptual form. Therefore, if we wish to properly understand Kant’s notion of conceptual form, we need to understand the fundamental claims of the Transcendental Deduction. As I understand it, there are several conclusions that Kant wants to establish in his argument for the objective validity of the Categories: (i) the Categories are the only viable source of synthetic *a priori* knowledge about metaphysics; (ii) the Categories are what provide formal unity for synthetically combined representations; (iii) the Categories must be involved in any act of judgement; (iv) the Categories provide the formal conditions for experiencing the world as an empirically real and phenomenologically robust world; (v) the Categories are the functions of the synthetic unity of apperception; (vi) the Categories are restricted to the realm of appearances. However, I only wish to discuss (ii), (iii), and (iv).

Kant makes it clear that it is not possible for something to count as an object if it is merely something with representational content or if it is something with representational content and synthetically combined. In the former case, the representation would not count as an object, because the representation would be nothing more than a rhapsody of sensation. In the latter case, the representation would not count as an object, because even though the representation contains some level of determinacy in its being synthetically combined, it is only a bare unity, in that there is effectively nothing really available for us to make judgements about. The synthetically unified bundle forms an object only when the bare unity of the representational contents which is made by the imagination is supplemented with the formal unity of the Categories. What the Categories provide is the means for identifying, differentiating and judging various bundles of content in such a way as to make it possible for each bundle to constitute a specific object with objectual properties, such as size, shape. Without conceptual form, it would not be possible for the given content to become possible objects of experience. All that the given content would be in such a circumstance is something non-objectual. And, as such, the content would be of no significant metaphysical or epistemological value to us.

With regard to the Categories and their relation to the activity of judgement, Kant makes it clear that in all acts of judgement, the relevant categorial concept(s) plays a role in that judgement. For example, when we make modal judgements, i.e. judgements either about necessity, actuality, or possibility, if the judgement is apodeictic, then we employ the concept of necessity, and if the judgement is assertoric, then we employ the concept of actuality. The reason for this is very simple: why the Categories must be employed in any act of judgement is because the Categories are the basic functions of judgement; this is how Kant connects the Table of Judgements with the Table of Categories. This is not to say that the Categories in and of themselves are the constituents of judgements, for judgements necessarily require a subject-term as well as a predicable elements and a unifying subject to be judgements.

Regarding the connection between conceptual form and the representation of a robust empirically real world, Kant frequently stresses that the formal condition for experiencing the world as composed of causally interrelated substances is that the Categories are used to determine content in that manner. The content is determined by being subjected to the formal rules that each categorial concept possess: for example, in the case of experiencing objects as substances, we use the concept of substance to transform the bundle of representational content into something that we regard to have strict identity conditions, independence, and a specific set of properties that we can judge. However, we should not think of the Categories as simply enabling conditions required to experience the world in a certain way – these concepts play a fundamental role in judgement, and that these concepts are rules for not just determining content in a specific manner, but are also rules for determining how content must be structured in order to make it part of human experience, brings out their normative dimension.

*The relationship between theoretical reason and practical life*

What Hegel finds unattractive about Kant’s understanding of the normativity of categorial concepts (and conceptual form) is the familiar worry about subjectivism. Now, I have already noted in Part I that Hegel judged Kant to be a ‘psychological’ idealist. Crucially, this did not mean that Hegel judged Kant to be a Berkeleyean, but rather that Kant separated form and matter and hence separated thought and being. However, I think there is an additional meaning to the expression ‘psychological idealist’: there is good reason to suppose that Hegel chastised Kant for accounting for human discursivity independently of its historical and social contexts. As we have seen in our discussion of Hegel’s critique of the transcendental subject, Hegel bases one of his criticisms on the idea that the transcendental subject is ultimately removed from the world of experience. And his worry there is tantamount to regarding the Kantian subject as a *res cogitans*, which is to overlook the nature of the human subject as a *res ambulans* and a *res dormiens*, which goes alongside its rational nature. To put the worry another way, Hegel criticises Kant for having failed to properly surpass Cartesianism. For that matter, such a critique of transcendentalism appears to be something that inspired the pragmatist critique of Kant, cf. Margolis (2010).[[122]](#footnote-122) ‘Psychological’, for Hegel, seems to refer to a way of understanding the structure of thought and the structure of our knowledge in a manner which fails to account for their socio-historical embeddedness. If we think about the expression in this way, then this is ultimately Hegel’s fundamental worry about Kantianism, that transcendental idealism is too narrow and too restricted. Transcendental idealism is held to be ‘narrow’ and ‘restricted’ not in the sense that the Categories can be applied to transcendent things-in-themselves, nor in the sense that transcendental idealism is solely concerned with solving technical problems in philosophy. Rather the putative narrowness of transcendental idealism consists in how Kant locks consciousness within the logical category of the purely in-itself, which regards things in terms of strict distinctness and separation. For Hegel, the properly dialectical understanding of thought and being necessarily involves the gradual progression from the in-itself to the in-and-for-itself, the gradual progression from separation from sociality and history to the concrete embeddedness of humanity in the world. Given that transcendental idealism does not have the logical categories of absolute idealism, the goal of transforming the subject from a state of fragmentation to a state of wholeness can never be properly realised, cf. Pinkard (2012). This may shed light on why Hegel insists that philosophy has an important role to play in the *Bildung* of man as opposed to being an esoteric practice with little or no relevance to our ultimate well-being.

However, despite Hegel’s misgivings about transcendental idealism, there is something about Kant’s metaphilosophical commitments that Hegel finds not just to be important but also largely correct. Hegel seems to think that Kant conceives of philosophy as having an edifying or normative/existential function: for Kant famously stressed that the critique of theoretical reason would involve a transformation of not just our cognitive practices but also how we understand the role of thought in our lives.[[123]](#footnote-123) By understanding ourselves in a new way, as laid out bythe Copernican turn in the discipline, we realise that our cognitive constitution does not merely serve as mechanical conditions to experience things in certain ways – we also realise that the kind of cognitive constitution we have determines the type of phenomenological relation we have to our cognitive environment. For example, our categorial structure is based on concepts such as causality, necessity, unity, and substance. These concepts do not just enable us to experience a world, but they also serve to enable us to experience the world as a phenomenologically robust environment: we are acquainted with a world that has nomological properties and objects that persist through change. So, what the Categories do here is provide the conditions for us to regard ourselves as being in touch with a public and intelligible world. And this idea seems to be a deeper idea than solving the problem of synthetic *a priori* knowledge, for whilst the problem of synthetic *a priori* knowledge is a technical concern, determining the way in which concepts can shape our understanding of both ourselves and the mind-world relation appears to be a wider and more powerful project. Hegel can be seen as finding Kant’s insight into how thought has this normative/existential function to be fundamentally important.

This view is supported by Hegel’s discussion of Kant’s Antinomies of Pure Reason, where he claims that Kant’s insights are some of “most important and deepest advances in philosophy in the modern period” (*EL*: §48). Of course, Hegel is also very critical of Kant’s treatment of the Antinomies. However, *why* Hegel thinks Kant’s treatment of the Antinomies is dissatisfying is *not* because Kant simply got things wrong; rather, Hegel’s critique is based on his view that Kant failed to draw more Antinomies from the structure of thought. This is what Hegel means by claiming that Kant is restricted by “finite categories”. For Hegel, what Kant ought to have done is notice how “antinomy finds itself … in all objects of all kinds, in all representations, concepts and ideas” (*EL*: §48). In other words, Kant appears to have failed to develop his important insights. As such, Hegel’s aim to ‘free up’ the Categories means his hope to focus principally on the normative and edifying function of conceptual structures. In the *Logic*, Hegel takes the ubiquity of dialectic as edificatory, because understanding that ubiquity enables us to illuminate the structure of being, whereas the programme of historicising our conceptual structures is the task of the *Phenomenology*. However, whilst the historicising of thought is something that can showcase the existential dimension of human reason, Hegel’s means of ‘completing’ this Kantian programme is his notion of the forms of consciousness. The reason why the forms of consciousness serve this particular function is that they properly bring out the existential significance of the antinomial conflict. This goes beyond the purely theoretical goal of highlighting the ubiquity of contradiction in discursive thought, because such a goal is still *abstract* despite being systematic. Rather what Hegel wants to achieve is illustrating how antinomial conflict manifests itself in concrete experience and how antinomial conflict actually impacts on our ways of representing objects, ourselves, and the world as a whole. Such a project is the only one that has justified claims to being a philosophical science.[[124]](#footnote-124)

The idea of illustrating how exactly antinomial conflict manifests itself in concrete experience and how such conflict plays a significant role in both theoretical practices and practical life is an important part of Hegel’s epistemology. Like McDowell, though differing in important ways, Brandom (1994, 2000, 2002, 2009) has taken great interest in the normative features of Hegel’s epistemology. However, whilst his concerns are focused on how normative and social roles are intimately connected with each other, I would like to draw attention to a different aspect to the normativity of concepts and beliefs. Put very crudely, Hegel seems to hold that normativity arises from having a set of concepts that is networked to a complex set of beliefs about ourselves and our cognitive environment. Such a holistic cognitive structure is what Hegel calls a ‘form of consciousness’; and a form of consciousness is a *Weltanschauung*. What I now want to illustrate is how Hegel sees his notion of a form of consciousness as the development of Kant’s theory of conceptual form. However, before this can be done, I want to detail the mechanics of the notion of a form of consciousness. Unfortunately, there has not been much scholarly attention devoted to clarifying this idea. Nevertheless, understanding the mechanics of this obscure Hegelian concept is a *sine qua non* condition to properly understand not just the Kant-Hegel relationship itself, but also the very function of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* in Hegel’s idealism and in Hegel’s social philosophy.

*Hegel on the shapes of consciousness*

Hegel introduces the concept of a form / shape of consciousness in the Introduction to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Having sketched the dialectical method in some detail in §s 85 and 86, Hegel makes the following claim:

In each and every case of a non-truthful knowledge, all the results which come about may not simply converge into some kind of empty nothingness; rather, each result must necessarily be apprehended as the nullity of *that of which it is the result*, a result which contains whatever truth the preceding knowledge has in itself. Here it presents itself as follows. Since what at first appeared as the object for consciousness descends into a knowledge of the object, and the *in-itself* becomes a *being-for-consciousness of the in itself*, this latter isthe new object. As a result, a new shape ofconsciousness also emerges for which theessence is something different from whatwas the essence for the preceding shape. (*PS*: §87)

In this passage, Hegel explains how the idea of sublation is supposed to work with regard to the examination of failed pretences to knowledge. However, what is disappointing in Hegel’s writing here is a lack of any significant clarification or explanation of the term ‘shape of consciousness’. All we appear to be able to conclude from Hegel here is that a shape of consciousness is obviously some kind of understanding of the content of experience. Not only that, shapes of consciousness appear to be revisable. Thus far, we can say that a shape of consciousness is something epistemic and revisable in the face of experience. Of course, this is hardly satisfactory as a working definition of the term. We then have to wait until §369 for the term to be re-introduced. Fortunately, however, it seems that matters are slightly clearer in this passage, where Hegel is discussing ethical concerns about how self-consciousness understands the good life:

An actuality confronts this heart, for within the heart, the law exists initially merely *on its own*, not yet actualized, and thus at the same time it is something *other* than the concept. As a result, this other is determined as an actuality which is the opposite of what is to be actualized, and it is thus the *contradiction* between the *law* and *individuality*. On the one hand, actuality is thus a law by which singular individuality is oppressed, a violent order of the world which contradicts the law of the heart – and on the other hand, it is humanity suffering under that order, a humanity that does not follow the law of the heart, but which is instead subjected to an alien necessity. This actuality, which appears in the present shape of consciousness as *confronting it*, is, as it has become clear, nothing but the preceding estrangement between individuality and its truth, that is, a relationship of dreadful necessity by which individuality is crushed. (*PS*: §369)

Although Hegel provides no ostensible definition of the term in this passage, there is good reason to regard this passage as illuminating what he means by a form / shape of consciousness. The language of confrontation, contradiction, estrangement, and suffering seems to suggest that a form of consciousness is not simply a belief about certain things in the world, but more of a complex set of beliefs about the world that constitute a normative attitude towards one’s cognitive environment. A form of consciousness that treats something as confronting it or being in conflict with does so on the grounds that it treats the relevant phenomenon as opposed to its *understanding* of the world itself. But the conflict is not a mere acknowledgement of a difference between the form of consciousness and the ‘problematic’ phenomenon. Such a conflict can potentially cause the form of consciousness to abandon its pretences to knowledge. I think the only reasonable explanation for why a form of consciousness would regard something in such a manner is due to that form of consciousness having a set of *attitudes* to the world of experience.[[125]](#footnote-125) And these attitudes are normatively significant. For, the reason why a form of consciousness will feel in conflict with the world or will enter into a state of alienation or estrangement is that consciousness recognises that the world is forcing it to question its understanding of the world. However, more needs to be done to properly define the term.

Perhaps the final clue to grasping what a form of consciousness is can be found in ‘Absolute Knowledge’, where Hegel discusses the historical and cognitive development of Spirit. The irony here is that we have to look at the end of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in order to understand the beginning of the text as well as the meaning of ‘form of consciousness’ – and this may well have been Hegel’s intention. At the end of §789, Hegel writes:

Rather, it [absolute knowledge] is in part a shape of consciousness per se and in part a number of such shapes that *we* gather together, within which the totality of the moments of the object and of the conduct of consciousness can be pointed out merely as having been dissolved in the totality’s moments. (*PS*: §789)

The crucial term in this passage is ‘conduct’, for this adds an extra dimension to what we have already seen when reflecting on what a form of consciousness is. One should readily accept that ‘the conduct of consciousness’ refers to the entire development of thought through human history. However, how this is related to the forms of consciousness is by understanding each form of consciousness as having a conduct of their own. What I mean here is that every form of consciousness, in addition to having certain beliefs about the world and certain normative attitudes towards the cognitive environment, provides the phenomenological subject with a set of behavioural dispositions.[[126]](#footnote-126) These dispositions, moreover, are based on the theoretical commitments of the relevant form of consciousness. In order to see what this means, I want to consider the forms of consciousness that the slave moves through, and I want to consider the form of consciousness, ‘Absolute Knowledge’. The reason why I have chosen these particular forms of consciousness is that they seem to best express the relationship between theoretical commitments and practical commitments.

‘Stoicism’ represents the first attitude to coping with the dialectic of mastery and servitude: having been subjugated at the hands of another self-consciousness, the slave is compelled to seek an alternative means of achieving at homeness in the world.[[127]](#footnote-127) Aware of their position as a slave, and so aware of their status as not free, Hegel argues that the slave must aim to achieve a notion of freedom to cope with their current state of non-freedom: the first notion is a sense of mastery of the surrounding environment, for the slave can manipulate and change the objects around him to suit his various purposes. However, this notion of freedom is obviously unsatisfying. The slave then moves on to the following position: even though they are not free to *do* certain things, what the master and what the world cannot do is force the slave to *think* in certain ways or to even have beliefs. And this notion of freedom is used by the slave to make themselves indifferent to their state of servitude – they achieve ‘freedom’ by regarding themselves as cognitively autonomous, and such cognitive autonomy is designed to not just enable the slave to look past their status but to also provide conditions for them to realise their rational self-consciousness. So, under the Stoical form of consciousness, we have a set of theoretical commitments about the world: (a) the world manifests a form of rationality, insofar as we are able to *work* well in our environment, cf. Taylor (1975: 157) and Stern (2002: 88); (b) given the successful nature of our labour in general, we can start to see ourselves as being at home in our environment. Crucially, though, these commitments possess immense normative and existential significance, for *thinking* about the mind-world relation in this way serves as a structuring principle for how we interact with our environment. Since Stoicism focuses on seeing the rationality of nature,[[128]](#footnote-128) the slave is led to ignore their status, and being indifferent to their status is meant to enable the slave to cope in the world. Nevertheless, despite the Stoics’ insight into the rationality of the world as a whole, Hegel is explicitly critical of the content of Stoic rationalism: firstly, conceiving of freedom as cognitive autonomy appears to amount to a slave *Weltanschauung*; and secondly, the Stoic idea of living in accordance with reason lacks any specific content, and as such is mere platitude, cf. *PS*: 122. Ultimately, Stoicism fails to make us at home with the world, given the dogmatic nature of their rationalism and their insistence on indifference as a path to achieving *eudaimonia*. Thus, what is relevant here is how the Stoics’ theoretical commitments determine their attitude towards themselves, the world, and the community.

This intimate relation between conceptual thought and normative attitudes is expressed in the next form of consciousness that the slave adopts, after realising that Stoicism is inadequate. Like the Stoic, the Sceptic regards the statuses of master and slave to be ultimately without value. But whilst the Stoic bases their conclusion on a rationalistic view of reality that should make us indifferent to these statuses, the Sceptic bases their conclusion on an anti-rationalistic view of reality. As with the fox who regards the grapes to be not worth having, the slave copes with their circumstance by dismissing the world as potentially satisfactory; rather than try to reconcile themselves with the rationality of nature, the slave now believes that a better path to *eudaimonia* lies in negating the being of the world and contenting themselves with their cognitive autonomy. The question now is why is Hegel so hostile to anti-rationalism. I think the answer to this question lies in the concept of regarding each form of consciousness as comprising a *Weltanschauung*. This necessarily involves connecting theoretical commitments with practical commitments. Such a connection is found in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, for we have seenthat Hegel’s notion of a form of consciousness involves having behavioural dispositions towards one’s environment that are determined by our understanding of the world around us. With regard to Scepticism, consciousness begins to realise that its dismissal of rationality eventually leads to despair, and that the *Weltanschauung* of scepticism cannot be maintained.

The final form of consciousness that Hegel introduces at this stage of the dialectic is the Unhappy Consciousness. Caught between the abstract rationalism of Stoicism and the troubling anti-rationalism of Scepticism, consciousness no longer tries to cope with their status as not free, rather consciousness becomes acutely aware of the problematic nature of thought here: consciousness must maintain that it has the possibility to flourish, yet finds no reason in the world to think that they can flourish. For, both theoretical and practical commitments are now fully infected with antinomies, and these contradictions permeate not just the cognitive attitudes of consciousness but they also permeate what consciousness does in the world. The thorough-going nature of the contradiction here is why Hegel regards this form of consciousness as unhappy: Pinkard rightly makes reference to Kierkegaard here,[[129]](#footnote-129) as consciousness must believe in God, yet his search for God appears fruitless. What is crucial to Hegel’s explanation for why consciousness is in this unhappy state is that conceptual thought, when it involves problematic theoretical commitments, has in this case negative existential consequences. To put the idea crudely, having a conception of oneself and the mind-world relation that involves incoherence will ultimately lead to having a negative attitude to oneself and one’s environment. However, when a form of consciousness has a network of beliefs that suggest communion with the world and a kind of intimate embeddedness in one’s cognitive environment, then *thinking* as being at home in the world translates into genuinely feeling at home in the world. This is the ultimate accomplishment of consciousness in ‘Absolute Knowledge’, where the Stoics’ abstract rationalism and their inchoate notion of being in the world is perfected by the concrete universal. Absolute Knowledge thus represents the ‘correct’ form of consciousness, for thought is no longer wrapped up in either Schellingian monism or in the various dualisms of ‘self’ and ‘other’.

What the discussion of these forms of consciousness should enable us to see is that Hegel’s conception of thought is an expanded version of Kant’s notion of thought. For Hegel, Kant’s understanding of categorial structures involved a crucial insight into the fundamentally normative and existential nature of conceptual thinking. However, such an insight could never be made properly explicit, as Kant had failed to free up the Categories, viewing them in only a narrowly epistemic way. Hegel, though, hoped to fully articulate Kant’s insight by proposing that any discursive structure will ultimately amount to a *Weltanschauung*.

Crucially, though, the Kantian/Hegelian conception of discursivity as fundamentally normative and existential in character is made even more explicit in how they respectively regard philosophical enquiry to be therapeutic. Arguably, this is what makes Kant and Hegel post-critical Hellenists: their concern is to provide a *therapeutic* conception of how to achieve *eudaimonia* in the modern world. It is to this issue of therapy that I now turn.

*Kant, Hegel and Wittgenstein on therapy and quietism*

Regarding Kant and Hegel as conceiving of philosophical enquiry as therapeutic places them within the quietist tradition. More specifically, this places them in relation to the later Wittgenstein, who is usually credited with having pioneered philosophical quietism. Broadly speaking, quietism is the view that philosophers should aim to eliminate philosophical problems and return us to a state of intellectual peace. To see what this means, we need to understand various sections of Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*. In §125, Wittgenstein writes:

It is the business of philosophy, not to resolve a contradiction by means of a mathematical or logico-mathematical discovery, but to make it possible for us to get a clear view of the state of mathematics that troubles us: the state of affairs *before* the contradiction is resolved.

According to Wittgenstein, philosophical problems (which he defines in §111 as “deep disquietudes”) are not meant to be solved in the sense that philosophers aim to find a satisfactory answer to the question that causes us aporias. Rather, these problems are meant to be eliminated or undermined by understanding the framework that gives rise to the disquietude in the first place. In other words, unlike the problem-solving model of the philosophical enterprise, which grants legitimacy to various philosophical questions, quietism denies that various philosophical questions are legitimate, and as such rejects the idea that they should be answered, and that one should even raise these issues in the first place. As Wittgenstein writes, “[eventually] the philosophical problems should *completely disappear*. The real discovery is the one … that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring itself in question” (*PI*: §133). So, for example, a quietist solution to the Problem of Interaction in philosophy of mind and the Placement Problem in metaphilosophy would look something like this: the question ‘How is it possible for the mind and the body to interact with one another?’ should not be asked, because it assumes that mental phenomena and physical phenomena are fundamentally distinct to begin with, where it is precisely this dualist framework gives rise to disquietude here. Once we understand that this dualist framework is the cause of the aporia, we must provide a more cogent framework which will give us intellectual peace. The Placement Problem,[[130]](#footnote-130) however, is more complicated to deal with: the question ‘How is it possible to place normativity in nature, given that normative phenomena appear to be outside the scope of the natural?’ should not be asked, because the question is in and of itself flawed, and the question lends itself open to two fundamentally dissatisfying answers. In the first case, the question is based on a reified notion of normativity; in the latter case, our framework for answering the question is restricted to either bald naturalism or rampant Platonism.[[131]](#footnote-131) Once we understand that a reified notion of normativity and a poor conceptual framework is the cause of the aporia, we can then be in a position to improve our framework by adopting liberal naturalism in the hope that this position will give us intellectual peace.

Of course, these quietist solutions are meant to be very sketchy, for they are aimed at revealing the methodology of quietism, rather than being directed at addressing those two philosophical issues. As Wittgenstein wrote in the *Philosophical Investigations*, “[t]he philosopher’s treatment of a question is like the treatment of an illness” (§255). In other words, the methodology of quietism roughly follows the approach of curing some kind of ailment or disease. Just as a physician will first diagnose the condition and then administer some cure, the quietist philosopher must first diagnose the relevant intellectual problem and then work out a cogent means of curing the aporia. Now, as we shall see, whilst Kant, Hegel, and Wittgenstein share the quietist commitment to a diagnosis and then treatment of philosophical puzzles, there are very important differences between their respective views of the origin of these problems and how we ought to cure them. I want to start, though, with Wittgenstein’s quietism.

For Wittgenstein, the diagnosis of our *maladies philosophiques* is that we enter into conceptual difficulties by misusing ordinary language. The ‘metaphysical’ use of ordinary linguistic terms is the cause of our philosophical anxieties. What this signifies is that philosophers are the source of problematics, not because philosophers aim at deliberately muddying conceptual waters, but rather because philosophical speculation appears to inevitably conflict with our everyday linguistic practices. As mentioned previously, Wittgenstein claims that conceptual problems emerge from running up against the limits of language. Now, whilst the Tractarian Wittgenstein would have been inclined to remedy the problem by trying to improve or cleanse ordinary language, the later Wittgenstein seems to think that such a view is ultimately too *philosophical*. Rather, the cure for our cognitive maladies consists in *understanding* how ordinary language works and how we must stick with ordinary language. And what that linguistic enterprise involves is returning us to a form of life where we reflect non-philosophically. This, in other words, means that the *true* philosopher is the one who realises the futility and nonsense of philosophical enquiry. Only by becoming quietists can we achieve the Tractarian goal of kicking away the ladder and saying only what can be said.[[132]](#footnote-132) Consider now the Kantian understanding of quietism.

Kant’s quietism is a central part of his critique of metaphysics. However, as I have argued in the last chapter of Part I, the attainment of intellectual quietude is not gained by regarding the propositions of (pre-Critical) metaphysics to be nonsensical. Rather, we achieve intellectual quietude by understanding *why* metaphysics has gone wrong and how we must *reform* the discipline. What I want to do now is to detail Kant’s quietism, by focusing on specific areas of the Transcendental Dialectic.

To understand the claims of the Transcendental Dialectic properly, one needs to recall the following passage from the Preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason*:

[Human reason] is burdened by questions which, as prescribed by the very nature of reason itself, it is not able to ignore, but which as transcending all its powers, it is also not able to answer. (Avii)

This should be understood to refer to Kant’s meta-diagnosis of our *maladies philosophiques*. The underlying source of the problems of metaphysics lies in how our faculty of reason is responsible for our intellectual aporias: we are compelled to ask certain kinds of questions, but we cannot answer those questions without ultimately making errors. Therefore, for Kant, the only way to remedy this problem is to understand how our faculty of reason works, and in doing so reject transcendental realism. As Michelle Grier writes, “[a] major component of this critique involves illuminating the basis in reason for our efforts to draw erroneous metaphysical conclusions (to employ concepts ‘transcendentally’), despite the fact that such use has already been shown (in the Transcendental Analytic) to be illicit”.[[133]](#footnote-133) What Kant had hoped to show in that section of the Transcendental Logic was what happens when pure concepts of the understanding are employed independently of the conditions of sensibility. However, what the task of the Dialectic is concerned with is in part explaining why the pure concepts of the understanding often get employed independently of the conditions of sensibility. And the explanation for this largely resides in the relationship between the faculty of reason and the understanding.

The faculty of reason is defined as the capacity for syllogistic reasoning. Given this, the faculty of reason must be understood as distinct from sensibility and the understanding. Each faculty is distinct from the other by virtue of performing different cognitive operations. As a faculty that connects propositions syllogistically, reason consists in bringing judgements under more general and systematic principles – specifically, reason aims to establish systematic unity of the judgements arrived at by the proper use of the understanding (cf. A306/B363-A308/B365). Establishing systematic unity in our knowledge claims necessarily involves bringing our judgements under completion. This in turn involves finding the conditions for every conditioned object or event. Reason, therefore, searches for the unconditioned. As Grier writes, “[t]he demand for the unconditioned, in turn, is essentially a demand for ultimate explanation, and links up with the rational prescription to secure systematic unity and completeness of knowledge. Reason, in short, is in the business of ultimately accounting for all things”.[[134]](#footnote-134) This idea is expressed by Kant in the form of a maxim: “*Find for the conditioned knowledge given through the understanding the unconditioned whereby its unity is brought to completion*”(A308/B364).

However, whilst the demands of reason are indispensable for our scientific and philosophical theories, the quest for systematic and complete knowledge gives rise to transcendental illusion: just as the Platonic soul strives to wrench itself from its corporeal shackles, our faculty of reason drives us to escape the confines of the proper scope and domain of the Categories. This is why we make judgements independently of the conditions of sensibility, and this is why metaphysics is littered with error. Crucially, though, this diagnostic claim cannot merely serve to explain why certain ideas are flawed. Rather, for Kant, the task of the Dialectic additionally involves re-framing the ideas of the metaphysical tradition, for the purpose of avoiding pernicious problematics and securing a positive role for reason in our cognitive enterprises. To understand this, I want to focus on Kant’s treatment of the Ideas of Reason and the Antinomies.

In the effort to achieve completeness and systematicity, reason posits three ideas, the Immortal Soul, the World, and God. Each serves as an unconditioned object that grounds the objects we experience as conditioned. However, the problem with seeking these objects is that (a) there is no representational content that corresponds to each object, and (b) these ‘objects’ are in fact not the kind of phenomenon that can legitimately be reified. (a) is concerned with re-framing how we ought to understand these concepts, whereas (b) is the argumentative project of the Dialectic to reveal the fallacies embedded in the arguments of Rational Psychology, Rational Cosmology, and Rational Theology. However, I wish to focus only on (a), as this is particularly relevant to Kant’s quietism.

For Kant, reason naturally guides us into supposing that the Ideas are constitutive principles. This is why the transcendental realist is judged by Kant to (incorrectly) believe that we are able to transcend the limits of possible experience in our use of pure reason, because when we think about the Soul, the World, and God, we use these Ideas to try to cognise there specific objects, cf. (A306/B363, A648/B676). However, because there is nothing in experience that can possibly correspond to these Ideas, transcendental realism cannot be maintained. Therefore, what we must do is alter our cognitive disposition towards the Ideas of Reason. Rather than think of the Ideas of Reason as constitutive principles, we ought to understand them as having only regulative use. The shift from transcendental realism, wherein the Ideas are understood to be constitutive principles which give us knowledge transcending possible experience, to transcendental idealism, wherein the Ideas are understood to be regulative principles and not constitutive principles which govern our scientific theories, is meant to be therapeutic - firstly because we are no longer gripped by transcendental illusion, and secondly because we are no longer burdened by questions prescribed by the very nature of reason.

However, whilst it is clear that Kant’s reflections on the regulative use of pure reason plays an important role in the therapeutic nature of transcendental idealism, I think Kant’s discussion of the four antinomies makes his quietist project even more explicit. The First Antinomy concerns the finitude or infinitude of the spatio-temporal world. The thesis argument seeks to show that the world in space and time is finite, i.e., it has a beginning in time and a limit in space. The antithesis denies both claims made by the thesis. The Second Antinomy addresses the issue of what is the fundamental constitution of the objects in nature. Here, the thesis posits simple substances, such as atoms. The antithesis does not posit simple substances, and regards objects as infinitely divisible. One should note that the thesis position is solely concerned with trying to complete and systematise the relevant judgements by appealing to some form of first principles. In order to claim that there is a First Cause or in order to claim that there ultimately simple substances requires us to abstract from the spatio-temporal world. However, according to the arguments of the relevant antithesis, we cannot go beyond what is available to us in the spatio-temporal world. According to the respective antithesis arguments, the world is infinite with regard to both space and time, and objects are also infinitely divisible.

Now, what is crucial to note here is that the equal plausibility of *both* propositions is what leads the rational agent into an apparent contradiction. Their equipollence is what forces us into an antinomial conflict, and hence find ourselves in a state of intellectual disquietude. On the one hand, our rational prescription to go beyond the series of conditioned objects and conditioned events seems to offer us some kind of cognitive satisfaction. However, on the other hand, we recognise the problems with such a rational prescription and remind ourselves to remain within the bounds of experience. In each of these cases, the conflicts are resolved by demonstrating that the conclusions drawn on both sides are false.

Kant’s basis for claiming that the mathematical antinomies leads to two false conclusions lies in his understanding of the Law of Excluded Middle. The argument Kant gives, which I do not wish to assess further, criticises the assumption that the theses and the antitheses are the only viable options. What is relevant here for the purposes of quietism is that Kant rejects the antinomial conflict on the grounds that the logical framework itself is the source of the maladie here.

The dynamical antinomies, however, are not resolved in the same way that Kant solves the mathematical antinomies. Antinomial conflict is not dissolved by establishing that the thesis arguments and the antithesis arguments are false. In the Third Antinomy, the thesis position claims that there is some causal power, namely transcendental freedom, as well as there being efficient causality. The antithesis position denies the existence of transcendental freedom and is only committed to efficient causality. In the Fourth Antinomy, the thesis position claims that there must be a necessary being; whereas the antithesis denies the existence of such a being.

In both cases, the thesis opts for a position that is abstracted from the spatio-temporal framework, “and thus adopts the broadly Platonic view”.[[135]](#footnote-135) Transcendental freedom is posited as a cause that is outside the spatio-temporal world, cf. (A451/B479). The same formal principle is also operative in positing a necessary being, a being which must be understood to be outside the spatio-temporal world. Positing transcendental freedom and a necessary being are respective satisfactions for the rational demand for ultimate explanation.

Kant’s resolution of *these* antinomies consists in granting that each position is true, but regarding the truth of the thesis positions as holding only in one domain, and regarding the truth of the antithesis positions as holding only in a different domain. The thesis arguments’ respective commitments to transcendental freedom and a necessary are deemed valid, but crucially not as part of the taxonomy of empirical reality nor as an explanatory principle of the phenomena in nature. Furthermore, the antithesis arguments’ respective commitments to only what can be given in experience are deemed valid, but crucially only in relation to the realm of nature. The conflict between the thesis arguments and the antithesis arguments only exists if we regard appearances to be things-in-themselves. In other words, the problem remains only if we are transcendental realists. The source of the aporia, therefore, lies in our philosophical perspective. The remedy for this problematic is, according to Kant, provided by transcendental idealism: because transcendental idealism draws a distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves, we can find a way to retain a commitment to efficient causality *and* transcendental freedom, and commitments to a contingent set of events *and* a necessary being. The way in which transcendental idealism serves as a cure here is in sorting out the appropriate domains of the relevant thesis claims and the relevant antithesis claims. What Kant recommends is that the argument of the thesis is only valid for the noumenal realm, whereas the argument of the antithesis is only valid for the phenomenal realm. Furthermore, we must treat the argument of the thesis as indispensable, despite the realisation that the noumenal realm is unknowable for us.[[136]](#footnote-136)

Clearly, Kant and Wittgenstein disagree on the diagnostic propositions and the therapeutic programme for philosophers: For Wittgenstein, the source of intellectual disquietude lies in our misuses of ordinary language, and the remedy for this is to understand the proper uses of ordinary language. For Kant, the source of intellectual disquietude lies in our faculty of reason tempting the understanding to go beyond the bounds of sense, and the remedy for this is transcendental idealism. The question now is whether Hegel’s quietism is closer to the Kantian or Wittgensteinian variety. Hegel, of course, as we have seen, does not share Kant’s specific diagnosis and therapeutic claims. For, Hegel does not believe that the source of philosophical disquietude lies in a conflict between our faculties nor does he recommend that we become transcendental idealists to resolve these difficulties. However, what Hegel fundamentally shares with Kant is the idea that the way to go about dissolving philosophical problems consists in improving our philosophical ideas, rather than admonish philosophical reflection in favour of a retreat to ordinary consciousness as Wittgenstein recommends. The *dialectical* movement of thought through the various forms of consciousness can be seen as the gradual improvement of our philosophical ideas. So, for Hegel, the diagnosis points towards a problem with our philosophical understanding, and the cure is to reflect dialectically.

The following passage from the *Phenomenology* probably best illustrates Hegel’s diagnostic approach:

The more that conventional opinion holds that the opposition between the true and the false is itself fixed and set, the more that it customarily expects to find itself in either agreement or in contradiction with any given philosophical system, and, if so, then in any explanation of such a system, the more it will merely see the one or the other. It does not comprehend the diversity of philosophical systems as the progressive development of truth as much as it sees merely contradiction within that diversity. The bud disappears when the blossom breaks through, and one might say that the former is refuted by the latter. Likewise, by virtue of the fruit, the blossom itself may be declared to be a false existence of the plant, since the fruit emerges as the blossom’s truth as it comes to replace the blossom itself. These forms are not merely distinguished from each other, but, as incompatible with each other, they also supplant each other. However, at the same time their fluid nature makes them into moments of an organic unity within which they are not only not in conflict with each other. Rather, one is equally as necessary as the other, and it is this equal necessity which alone constitutes the life of the whole. However, in part, contradiction with regard to a philosophical system does not usually comprehend itself in this way, and, in part, the consciousness which apprehends the contradiction generally neither knows how to free the contradiction from its one-sidedness, nor how to sustain it as free-standing by taking cognizance of its reciprocally necessary moments, which themselves take shape as conflicts and as apparent incompatibilities. (*PS*: 2-3)

For Hegel, an important symptom of philosophical disquietude is how we tend to regard certain ideas to be fundamentally irreconcilable with one another. And we think in that way due to having a non-dialectical understanding of negation. Our *ordinary* (or natural) understanding of negation is one which sees the negation of a position as the complete obliteration of that position. This, in turn, serves as the grounds for the strength of the Law of Non-Contradiction. However, whilst our ordinary understanding of negation has both plausibility and practical value, the problem with this framework is not that the framework is false or incoherent, but rather that the framework cannot adequately make sense of the notion of development and growth. Hegel’s concern, then, with negation is with the philosophical aporias we run into when we reflect on the history of philosophical enquiry and how we try to understand the movements from one philosophical tradition to the next. We remain paralysed by these kinds of aporias, if we reflect only from the ordinary perspective of negation. Therefore, the remedy for this is to improve our philosophical understanding. Given this, Hegel can and should be seen as positively connected to Kant, as he shares Kant’s broad commitment to *his* quietist notion that the cure for intellectual disquietude comes from doing *philosophy better*. For Hegel, specifically, one way of successfully accomplishing such a task is by distinguishing between reason (*Vernunft*) and understanding (*Verstand*). Unlike Kant, Hegel does not claim that “these terms … designate completely independent functions or faculties. Reason is simply the necessary result of the immanent movement of the understanding”.[[137]](#footnote-137) In other words, reason is in some sense *part* of understanding, insofar as reason is a form of mechanistic explanation, but in another sense, reason is distinct from understanding, insofar as reason is also a “form of holistic explanation, which shows how all finite things are parts of a wider whole”.[[138]](#footnote-138) For Hegel, the principal advantage of drawing this distinction between reason and understanding is that we can be in a position to not be wrapped up in the various dualisms which are the inevitable consequence of reflecting *only* from the perspective of understanding, i.e. purely *analytical* forms of reflection. What reason provides consciousness with is the means to avoid the pitfalls of dualisms and the problems of analysis by thinking dialectically, i.e. by drawing distinctions yet establishing interconnectedness to a whole.

# *§c From Radical Self-Critique to Self-Transformation*

In our enquiries into the positive relationship between Kant and Hegel, we have focused on the connections between transcendental logic and dialectical logic, the normative and existential dimension of conceptual thought, and an anti-Wittgensteinian version of philosophical quietism. What I have been arguing is that Hegel can be interpreted as being Kantian, despite rejecting certain features of transcendentalism. Such a manner of understanding Hegel’s complex relation with Kant stands opposed to the non-metaphysical school of thought concerning Hegel’s theoretical philosophy, and my view of the Kant-Hegel relationship also opposes certain ways of establishing positive connections between the two philosophers that are expressed in some of the revised metaphysical readings of Hegel’s theoretical philosophy. Whilst I have claimed in the Introduction that I place myself within the revised metaphysical school of thought, I noted that I have some reservations about how philosophers who espouse the idea that Hegel was post-Kantian but also pre-Kantian in an important manner have understood Hegel’s post-Kantianism. My concern is that philosophers, such as Beiser (1993, 2005), have ultimately conceived of Hegel’s post-Kantianism to just amount to avoiding the perils of dogmatic metaphysical speculation. And the problem with such an account is that it is very limited: what makes Hegel a genuine post-Kantian theorist goes much further than such a limited presentation. What I have argued for in Part II reveals just how far Hegel’s Kantianism extends.

*Self-criticism and self-transformation*

However, the arguments put forward up to this point, I would say, are propaedeutic to what Hegel’s post-Kantianism ultimately rests upon. We can begin to see this by starting with Houlgate’s comment that “for Hegel the imperative for all post-Kantian philosophy is not, as Pippin maintains, to avoid direct claims about being-in-itself and to restrict oneself to determining the ‘conditions of the possibility of knowledge’. It is to be radically self-critical and to avoid arbitrary assumptions” (Houlgate, forthcoming: 23). It is this notion of self-criticism that I now want to concentrate on, where the concern of this chapter is to explain what radical self-criticism means, and to do so by understanding Hegel’s philosophical project in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as the transformation of Kant’s philosophical project in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. However, rather than following Houlgate in emphasising the link between self-criticism and presuppositionlessness, I think our understanding of Hegel and Kant is going to be better illuminated by detailing the fundamental change in the *enquirer* once the enquirer starts to reflect from a *critical* perspective. Specifically, my focus is on the relationship between philosophical critique and the concept of self-transformation.

Given this, one might suppose that my interpretation is aligned to Bristow (2007), which also devotes great attention to the notion of self-transformation and its relation to critical enquiry. However, unlike my account, Bristow’s is principally concerned with connecting self-transformation and critical enquiry with Houlgate’s concern that Hegel is ultimately focused on establishing a completely presuppositionless starting point.[[139]](#footnote-139) To understand how my way of reading the idea of radical self-critique is supposed to work, we need to first understand the meaning of ‘critique’ in both the non-technical sense and in the technical Kantian sense.

The “generic concept” of ‘critique’ (cf. Bristow 2007: 55), refers to the practice of bringing a knowledge-claim or sets of knowledge-claims under exclusively rational evaluation. To criticise something involves testing the grounds for that position’s rational justification. Crucially, critique here does not involve any kind of theory-building or extension of knowledge-claims within a particular domain or various domains, but rather only refers to rationally assessing whether or not the various knowledge-claims brought before the tribunal of reason have sufficient grounds for justification. Understood in this way, we can understand why Kant (and others) regarded the Enlightenment as the Age of Criticism, insofar as no discipline is immune from rational assessment.

However, whilst *this* notion of critique is a familiar one to both philosophers and those of a non-philosophical persuasion, the question as to what constitutes the technical Kantian notion of critique yields a different answer. What Kant means by ‘critique’, as specified most obviously in the title of his most famous work, is not the same as the generic notion of critique. Of course, for Kant, the critique of pure reason inexorably involves bringing various propositions and knowledge claims before the tribunal of reason, so as to test whether or not those propositions and knowledge claims measure up to high levels of rational justification. However, the critique of pure reason also involves a form of enquiry which is distinct from the generic meaning of criticism. This is because the object of critique in the technical Kantian sense is reason itself. As such, the critique of pure reason does not simply ask whether or not certain knowledge claims are properly justified, but also asks how such knowledge is possible, if at all, and how far does our cognition genuinely extends. As Kant writes in the Introduction:

But since [the creation of a system of pure reason] requires a lot, and it is an open question whether such an amplification of our cognition is possible at all and in what cases it would be possible, we can regard a science of the mere estimation of pure reason, of its sources and boundaries, as the propaedeutic to the system of pure reason. Such a thing would not be a doctrine, but must be called a critique of pure reason … (A11/B25).

Two things should be noted here: (1) Kantian critique does not aim at system-building in the practice of critical enquiry itself. Rather, critical enquiry itself is required in order to establish the conditions required for possible knowledge and thereby establish conditions for knowing particular kinds of phenomena. (2) Unlike generic critique, Kantian critique is ultimately reflective or self-directed, in that the focus of critical enquiry on the technical perspective is not a particular set of knowledge claims or body of knowledge, but the subject of enquiry themselves.

With regard to (1), it is important to note that even though Kant describes the function of critique to be one of discipline and a practice that is propaedeutic to what he regards as philosophical enquiry proper, namely the system of pure reason, one must not regard Kantian critique to be tantamount to sharing generic critique’s purely negative functions. If we recall, generic critique has no interest in the propositions it assesses, apart from whether or not those propositions which it assesses have sufficient rational grounds for their respective justifications. Kantian critique, however, does have interests in the various propositions it criticises that go beyond whether or not they satisfy certain epistemic criteria. This is because Kantian critique is therapeutic in its design, in that the critical enquirer is concerned with also questioning whether or not a proposition or body of knowledge claims are ultimately ‘philosophically healthy’ propositions. For example, generic critique might bring before the tribunal of reason the specific arguments of rational theology, but only for the purpose of determining whether the argument contains logical failures or false premises. To put this another way, the question that generic critique asks in this context would be: ‘Are these arguments good arguments for the existence of God?’ However, the kind of question asked by Kantian critique when engaging with the arguments of rational theology do not simply consist of questions like the one posed by generic critique but crucially consist of questions such as the following: ‘Is rational theology possible?’ and/or ‘Should we continue with reflecting on theological concerns from the perspective of rational theology?’ Kantian critique, therefore, does not *just* ask questions about whether or not engaging in certain forms of enquiry genuinely consists of having met certain epistemic criteria, but also whether or not those forms of enquiry really do count as being genuinely philosophical enquiries. As such, whilst critique as Kant conceives of it cannot in and of itself *provide* systematic philosophical knowledge, it functions in a way so as to enable us to *possibly attain* such philosophical knowledge. To put this in the form of an analogy: just as Michael Collins regarded the treaty between the Irish and the British that marked the end of the war of independence as the freedom to achieve freedom, Kantian critique is designed to provide the appropriate framework for achieving contentful and well-articulated philosophical knowledge.

With regard to (2), the self-reflective dimension of Kantian critique is of particular significance, principally because since *we* are the subject of scrutiny, questions which we did not consider in previous philosophical discourse are now brought to the cognitive foreground, with the consequence that we have to reflect on whether or not we are conducting our enquiries in an appropriate manner. In bringing the disciplines of dogmatic metaphysics before the tribunal of reason, we do not only find ourselves facing the question of whether or not *the disciplines themselves* ought to be practised, but also questioning whether or not there is anything to be significantly gained by abandoning the project of transcendental realism. Whilst the Copernican turn is meant to transform the subject’s self-conception from a mirror of nature to an active participant in nature, the critique of our most treasured norms of enquiry and philosophical disciplines is designed to bring about self-transformation by asking us to be more sensitive to the demands of reason. In this way, we undergo a change in our normative attitudes by gradually becoming more and more open to being prepared to abandon even the most cherished ideas if we find that those ideas cannot genuinely be sustained. I think this is ultimately what the move to transcendental idealism is really concerned with, namely that as we enquire more and more critically into the conditions of cognition and the plausibility of certain modes of reflection and intellectual practice, we find we must dramatically alter how we conceive of ourselves if we are to be in a state of cognitive good-health. And in recognising what constitutes cognitive *bien-etre*, we discover how our theoretical enquiries are not in fact separate from our practical enquiries. Rather, we realise how certain ways of conducting our investigations into certain domains of theoretical reason do not just impact on our form of life, but also that the structure of our enquiries into the mind-world relation, etc. seem to mirror the structure of our enquiries into how we ought to live our lives. This is why even though at one level the *Critique of Pure Reason* appears to be a ‘standard’ academic treatise on a philosophical topic, nonetheless ultimately the work itself should be understood as a *Bildungsroman*: for, when we combine the sense of Kantian critique as propaedeutic and as self-transformational, we can properly appreciate why Kant devoted so energy into showing us *why* transcendental idealism ought to be adopted.

Looking at the following passage will give us an indication of what is at stake for Kant:

One can regard the critique of pure reason as the true court of justice for all controversies of pure reason; for the critique is not involved in these disputes, which pertain immediately to objects, but is rather set the task of determining and judging what is lawful in reason in general in accordance with the principles of its primary institution. Without this, reason is as it were in a state of nature, and it cannot make its assertions and claims valid or secure them except through *war*. The critique, on the contrary, which derives all decisions from the ground-rules of its own constitution, whose authority no one can doubt, grants us the peace of a state of law, in which we should not conduct our controversy except by *due process*. (A751/B779)

Read in conjunction with his famous remark that metaphysics is the battlefield of endless controversies,[[140]](#footnote-140) it is clear that Kant conceives of critique as having a normatively significant function. Just as society transforms itself by moving from political and moral chaos to political and moral harmony, so must consciousness move from upheaval to intellectual (and moral) peace. What is interesting to note now is what exactly the value is in adopting transcendental idealism and abandoning transcendental realism. For Kant, as many analytic commentators on him argue (cf. Strawson (1966), Matthews (1969), Guyer, (1987), and Van Cleve (1999)), the lesson to be learned from moving to transcendental idealism is a strong sense of epistemological modesty. Critique, thus, functions solely to bring our cognitive ambitions to *terra firma* and to keep them within the confines of sensibility and the conditions for knowledge. Of course, this is certainly a fundamental lesson that we learn from the *Critique*. However, what is philosophically interesting is that the post-Kantian idealists, specifically Hegel, seemed to regard Kantian critique as having a different kind of moral. Rather than emphasise modesty, something which we have seen Hegel regarded to be deeply problematic, Hegel is concerned with developing instead the idea of self-transformational critique. However, what I mean by this is *not* what Bristow (2007) means,[[141]](#footnote-141) namely the idea of Hegel eliminating presuppositions contained in the notion of Kantian critique itself. In contrast to Bristow, my reading of Hegel as hoping to complete the Kantian notion of self-transformational criticism consists in seeing how Hegel aims to extend the notion of critique here to the forms of consciousness and the laws of logic. However, for the purposes of drawing strong parallels between the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, I wish to focus only on the forms of consciousness.

Both Kant and Hegel regard their respective works as propaedeutic to their respective philosophical systems. As we have seen, Kant regards the critique of pure reason as the introduction to the system of pure reason.[[142]](#footnote-142) And, for Hegel, the dialectical critique of the forms of consciousness is regarded as enabling us to arrive at the standpoint of Science.[[143]](#footnote-143) So, for both Kant and Hegel, the idea of subjecting phenomena to purely rational standards ultimately provides the appropriate framework for doing philosophy in the future. Furthermore, whilst Kant’s *Critique* can be understood to be a *Bildungsroman*, even though the hermeneutics of the text do not obviously suggest that it is, it is clear that Hegel’s *Phenomenology* is a *Bildungsroman* both in terms of its function and its hermeneutical presentation: *we* are in some sense the protagonist of the *Lesedrama*, and the text is designed to reflect how we observe and reflect on our cognitive development as we progress through the various forms of consciousness.

However, the way in which Hegel conceives how exactly our cognitive development is to be understood differs from Kant. This is because Hegel places far more emphasis on the existential concern of philosophical critique. Specifically, the existential concern is what must a rational enquirer do in order to achieve proper knowledge of themselves, others, and the world as a whole. We have already seen in the previous chapter that Hegel takes the forms of consciousness to amount to existentially significant *Weltanschaungen*. But what we now need to see is what the relation between existentially significant world-views and phenomenological critique is for Hegel. The answer to this question lies in the Introduction to the *Phenomenology*, where Hegel conceives of philosophical critique in the following way:

[Philosophical critique] can be taken to be the path of natural consciousness which presses forward towards true knowledge, or it can be taken to be the path of the soul as it wanders through the series of the ways it takes shape, as if those shapes were stations laid out for it by its own nature so that it both might purify itself into spirit and, through a complete experience of itself, achieve a cognitive acquaintance of what it is in itself. (*PS*: §77)

In this passage, Hegel is making a clear analogy between the stages of moving through the various forms of consciousness until arriving at Absolute Knowledge and the various stations of the cross that Christ passes through on the road to Calvary and ultimately his resurrection. Now, Hegel makes this analogy because of the parallels he sees between subjecting oneself to complete rational critique and the Passion Christ undergoes in order to realise himself. A crucial component of both subjecting oneself to complete rational critique, where one’s world-view is brought under scrutiny, and Christ’s Passion is that both phenomena are self-imposed: consciousness forces itself to question whether or not its conceptual structure is coherent, and Christ forces himself onto the *via dolorosa*. Both activities are in some sense self-legislating and authentic, since no external force or principle or agent is the author of the respective performance. Additionally, both the rational enquirer and Christ undergo this pathway of despair in order to achieve self-transformation: the practice of subjecting oneself to bringing one’s entire world-view under rational scrutiny, to the extent that one might even believe that one’s experience of the world only justifies a thoroughly negative form of life, is designed to make the subject wholly open and sensitive to what constitutes a good form of social existence. We change as we reflect on world-views, because we discover what counts as a proper and rational justification for certain ways of *thinking* and certain ways of *acting* in the world. As I understand Hegel, the function of rational enquiry goes further than just a cognitive isomorphism between mind and world / thought and being: the principal goal is to provide the conditions for the subject of experience *on their own terms* to achieve at homeness in the world by altering their conception of their rational agency as one which dissociates them from their world and prevents them from establishing symmetrical recognition with other agents. As such, for Hegel, the ‘purification into spirit’, refers to the idea of rational agents properly understanding who they really are as rational agents embedded in a social world.

With regard to Christ, his self-transformation occurs through his being prepared to sacrifice his entire life in order to redeem mankind. Christ embeds himself in the world to the ultimate extent, in that when carrying the cross his back is cowed at all times, his eyes are firmly fixed on the ground, and he is both bearing the evil of mankind yet encountering virtue on the road to Golgotha, where virtue is personified by Simon of Cyrene. His transformation is not some trans-ontological change in which his material nature is destroyed and he becomes an immaterial being. Rather, he is transformed in the way that he understands himself and the world and that in doing so he is able to realise his humanity. Christ’s divinity, then, is not to be conceived of as being something in opposition to or distinct from his humanity: his becoming most human is what constitutes him becoming divine. As such, the relationship between divinity and humanity ought to be explicated in terms of an Aristotelian notion of the actualisation of humanity, rather than in terms which suggest some form of ontological move from one kind of being to another kind of being.

What is important to note in the comparison between the cognitive *via dolorosa* and Christ’s *via dolorosa* is that the progression to a state of hope and flourishing cannot be understood to be genuinely possible unless this end is bound up with immense suffering. Both Kant and Hegel are committed to the idea that the development of rationality from poor or insufficient philosophical attitudes to correct or sufficient philosophical attitudes is not something one can realistically achieve unless the rational enquirer is prepared to force themselves to be subjected to complete rational critique. As Bristow writes, “the development of a human being in relation to its end is distinguished from that of a natural organism exactly through its being *critical*. Since the human subject must *relate itself* to its end – that is, must determine its own end – it must *submit itself* to the crisis, hence to self-loss and to transformation, as a condition of attaining its end”.[[144]](#footnote-144) For Kant and Hegel respectively, philosophical enquiry faces a particular kind of crisis: according to Kant, the crisis is the state of metaphysics; according to Hegel, the crisis is not just the state of metaphysics but also the genuine threat of systematic sceptical irrationalism. This is why both philosophers do more than offer an argument which offers humanity some hope, but also why both philosophers regard their respective projects as offering a guide to how *we* can achieve some kind return to a cognitive prelapsarian and non-alienated state only by traversing through difficult labour and taking the various threats to our self-realisation and our *Bildung* with immense seriousness.

However, though we have discussed the ways in which both Kant and Hegel are committed to the notion that philosophical critique enables self-transformation to occur, one might be inclined to suggest that there seems to be reason to question whether or not self-transformation is a *uniquely* Kantian/Hegelian project. If the idea is that philosophical enquiry is meant to improve the subject and enable *eudaimonia*, then surely this idea can be found in Plato, Descartes, and Spinoza. Anyone who is familiar with their work will highlight how their metaphilosophical concerns are partly bound up with the project of self-transformation.

*Plato, Descartes and Spinoza*

With regard to Plato, the dialectical progression from *eikasia* to *noesis*, as developed in Book VII of the *Republic*, is meant to illustrate how critical reflection is designed to lead us out of a state of cognitive failure into a state of cognitive (and moral) flourishing. Moreover, Plato’s concerns in the Socratic dialogues, such as the *Gorgias*, whilst not explicitly detailing how flourishing is going to be achieved, still emphasise the importance of undogmatic critical philosophising. For, whilst the Socratic elenchus is not meant to give the subject a fully-worked out positive theory of knowledge or justice, engaging in elenctic practice, which necessarily involves presuppositionless examination of the relevant claims, transforms the subject’s epistemic outlook from one of a limited critical understanding to a far more grounded and rationally informed self-awareness. This is because satisfying the criteria for internally consistent and rationally justified beliefs forces the subject to become more aware of the positions they espouse and understand the *reasons* for those positions. Once this has been achieved, the subject can then be in a position to critically reflect on the various propositions. Furthermore, in achieving a critical disposition towards various arguments and theories, the subject, even if they are not yet able to reflect on first principles, such as Platonic Forms, is at the very least aware of the difficulties with certain patterns of reflection and certain ways of philosophising.

With regard to Descartes, the method of doubt is clearly designed to provide conditions to satisfy the standards of knowledge that are genuinely sceptic-proof. In engaging in hyperbolic scepticism, the subject of enquiry understands what kinds of claims are able to be doubted and what kinds of claims cannot be doubted on pain of contradiction. In drawing such a subtle distinction between reasonable doubt and unreasonable doubt, Descartes hopes that we can achieve knowledge in the appropriate normative manner. This is because enquiry is conceived of in completely critical ways: in bringing every proposition before the tribunal of doubt, *only* those propositions which cannot be reasonably doubted can be used as the edifice for further proper knowledge claims. The benefit of hyperbolic doubt, though, is not just that the subject will be able to achieve the epistemic ideal of knowledge, but also that the *practice* of enquiry is meant to be substantially improved by adopting a completely critical perspective: that the subject must be prepared to bring into question even their most cherished beliefs, such as the belief in a benevolent God, the belief that there is an external world, and the belief that they are conscious, illustrates to what extent must enquiry be properly normative if enquiry is to achieve both the epistemic ideal of knowledge and provide conditions for the subject to flourish by being a critical subject.

With regard to Spinoza, aspects of his metaphysics and his epistemology are also meant to incorporate the concept of self-transformation: Firstly, the understanding that God is not transcendent is designed to enable the subject to revise a fundamental conception of a belief that is central to the Enlightenment. Self-transformation can occur here, because we can now be in a position to be at home with the divine, and no longer fear the divine as being perennially out of our reach. Secondly, in moving from a substance dualist perspective on mind-body relations, we are going to be able to understand ourselves in the appropriate manner. Thirdly, in abandoning the concept of teleology, whether this is design-teleology or Aristotelian natural teleology, Spinoza hopes that we will not labour under any illusions about our relationship with our environment and our interpretation of nature. Fourthly, in recognising that we have no free will and that everything in nature is subject to strict causal necessitation, we will no longer have a false conception of our own nature. For Spinoza, crucially, none of these shifts in our metaphysics or epistemology can be arrived at without the critical practice of adopting the geometric method in philosophy.

However, whilst there are of course similarities between the critical projects of Plato, Descartes, Spinoza, and Kant and Hegel, there are important distinctions between the Platonic and early modern critical projects and the Kantian/Hegelian programme.

Firstly, the way in which self-transformation occurs according to Plato differs from the way this occurs on the Kantian/Hegelian model: the subjects of the Platonic dialogues are not *us*, but rather figures that we might identify with intellectually and relate to. We are in some sense merely observers of a dialectical drama that is taking place before us and one which we are not directly engaged with. For example, Euthyphro’s dialectical progression is unfolding in front us as spectators, and if we do change as we enquire through the dialogue, that change is only possible through establishing a vicarious relationship with the relevant *dramatis persona*: I identify with Euthyphro, and as such I change as he transforms himself. In contrast, we have seen that the Kantian/Hegelian model of self-transformational critique can be described as *authentic*, because the subject of critique is *us*,[[145]](#footnote-145) and not some other agent through which we might establish some sense of cognitive identity and shared norms.

Secondly, there is an important difference between Platonic dialectic and Hegelian dialectic: the movement from *eikasia* to *noesis*, conceived of as the progression from the darkness of the sensible realm to the sunlight of the intelligible realm, is not the same as the development from *being-in-itself* to *being-in-and-for-itself*. For, Hegel’s concern is with providing the conditions for realising self-consciousness *within* the empirical and social world, rather than provide the conditions for realising self-consciousness by *escaping* the empirical and social realm.

Thirdly, the *content* of the cognitive state we attain is different for Hegel: on the Platonic model, *noesis* consists in having a firm grasp of first principles, which can then be used to formulate a theory of being and a theory of the good. On the Hegelian model, and to some extent on the Kantian model as well, absolute knowledge provides us with a perspective on how to avoid the pitfalls of various dualisms and how we can start to philosophise from the standpoint of science. This does not mean that absolute knowledge must be conceived of in entirely non-metaphysical ways, for whilst absolute knowledge does *not* provide us with a cognitive grasp of a particular kind of *object* (hence a crucial difference between Hegel and Plato), what absolute knowledge provides is the way to cash out the appropriate relation between thought and being.

Fourthly, one must not conflate Hegel’s method of doubt with Descartes’s method of doubt. The distinctions between the notions are made clear in this passage from the Introduction:

This path can accordingly be regarded as the path of *doubt*, or, more properly, as the path of despair, for what transpires on that path is not what is usually understood as doubt, namely, as an undermining of this or that alleged truth which is then followed by the disappearance of the doubt, and which in turn then returns to the former truth in such a way that what is at stake is taken to be exactly what it was in the first place … For that reason, this self-consummating scepticism is also not the kind of scepticism with which a fervent zeal for truth and science imagines it has equipped itself so that it might be over and done with the matter. It is not, that is, the *resolve* in science that one is not to submit oneself to the authority of others’ thoughts, that one examine instead everything for oneself, that one follow only one’s own conviction, or, even better, that one do everything oneself and take one’s own deed alone to be the truth. Rather, the series of its shapes which consciousness runs through on this path is the detailed history of the *cultural development* of consciousness up to the standpoint of science. (*PS*: §78)

Hegel makes three claims in this passage that I wish to focus on: (i) Hegel offers a critique of Cartesian doubt; (ii) he regards the kind of scepticism that the dialectical method induces in completely systematic terms; (iii) he contrasts certain features of Enlightenment philosophical methodology with the project of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

With regard to (i), Hegel appears to claim that Cartesian doubt lacks a certain level of sincerity, in that nothing really is *genuinely* put at stake on the method of doubt. Because scepticism is conceived of as *hyperbolic*, and in the Sixth Meditation we are able to secure good grounds for our optimism concerning *scientia*, Hegel admonishes Descartes for having presented us with a sceptical position which we do not in good faith sincerely consider to be possibly true: there is no cognitive *via dolorosa* that the rational and critical enquirer must traverse on the road to knowledge. I take this notion to suggest that Hegel shares with Peirce the idea that the problem with Cartesian hyperbolic sceptical enquiry is that such a position is not one which our natural epistemic attitude adopts,[[146]](#footnote-146) and that a distinguishing feature of Hegelian doubt in contrast to Cartesian doubt lies in how consciousness genuinely adopts the world-view of the relevant form of consciousness it progresses to after moving from the previous forms of consciousness. For example, when consciousness moves to Scepticism, consciousness endorses the conceptual structure of that *Weltanschauung*, where to overcome scepticism is not a cognitive achievement that is obviously guaranteed, and nor is scepticism presented as a thesis which we just have to consider already knowing that we are in the epistemic position to move beyond it.

With regard to (ii), Hegelian scepticism is partly distinguished by how epistemic enquiry is ultimately presented as an all or nothing enquiry, cf. Franks (2000). As we have seen, it is not just that individual knowledge claims or some doctrines are brought under rational scrutiny, but also specific ways of conducting philosophical enquiry and certain world-views themselves. As such, for Hegel, there is really no difference between theoretical reason and practical reason, so much to the extent that *all* enquiry is principally concerned with finding the conditions to offset existential angst and to thereby provide the conditions required to eventually attaining *eudaimonia*.

With regard to (iii), an important difference between Hegel and Descartes consists in how Hegel is opposed to the Enlightenment’s radical individualism, something which Hegel regards to be endemic in modern life. Whilst Hegel may agree with Descartes that good epistemic practice would require the subject engaging in rational enquiry to be critical and avoid dogmatic justifications, Hegel would not accept the idea that avoiding dogmatism eventually amounts to being completely cognitively self-reliant, in that one does everything on one’s own and does not regard other epistemic agents as potential sources of knowledge. For, Hegel always stresses the idea that we are members of a rational community and that by participating in genuine intersubjective relations, we can be in a position to achieve epistemic and moral ideals.

Turning now to the relation between Hegel and Spinoza, whilst there may well be a good degree of convergence between Hegel and Spinoza on the subject of connecting metaphysics with ethics, this positive connection between them appears to be dwarfed by Hegel’s vitriolic critique of Spinoza’s geometric method.[[147]](#footnote-147) In the *Difference* essay, Hegel writes that “no philosophical beginning could look worse than to begin with a definition, as Spinoza does” (II 37 / 105). Such scorn is repeated in the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where Hegel makes the following remark:

… it is worthwhile to keep in mind that the scientific regime bequeathed by mathematics – a regime of explanations, classifications, axioms, a series of theorems along with their proofs, principles, and the consequences and inferences to be drawn from them – has in common opinion already come to be regarded as itself at the least *out of date*. Even though it has not been clearly seen just exactly why that regime is so unfit, little to no use at all is any longer made of it, and even though it is not condemned in itself, it is nonetheless not particularly well liked … However, it is not difficult to see that the mode of setting forth a proposition, producing reasons for it, and then also refuting its opposite with an appeal to reasons is not the form in which truth can emerge. (*PS*: §48)

*Prima facie*, one mightbe tempted into seeing these two criticisms of the geometric method as nothing more than rhetorical bluster with little or no philosophical significance. For that matter, there is good reason to suppose that the critique of Spinoza in the Preface is simply motivated on the charge of antiquarianism and that Spinozism and the geometric method is simply rejected as being passé. However, whilst the letter of Hegel’s criticisms seems inelegant with hardly any substance, the actual meaning of his degradation of the geometric method is fascinating: the worry about this form of mathematical foundationalism is that such a mode of philosophical reasoning seems incapable of grasping the dynamical and developmental aspects of the notion of truth. Specifically, the focus of Hegel’s objection to mathematical foundationalism is on whether the *methodology* of mathematics is equipped in such a way so as to enable self-transformation to occur: Hegel’s concern is that the practice of mathematical enterprises, practices which necessarily follow from its methodology, are fundamentally *analytical*, and given this level of analysis, the subject of enquiry is not embedded in the content of enquiry. We are unable to achieve self-transformation if we reflect from a mathematical perspective, because such a perspective is too analytical, and its being too analytical is what makes such a methodology mechanistic. As we have seen, for self-transformation to occur, the subject must be bound up with a content that is constantly dynamical. Of course, the dialectic between Hegel and Spinoza on this topic requires considerably deeper discussion,[[148]](#footnote-148) one which I cannot offer here, but one which I wish to develop subsequently.

*The value of self-transformation*

To conclude this chapter, I would like to address a basic metaphilosophical concern. I have made it explicitly clear that a rather large amount of weight is to be placed on the concept of self-transformation. To phrase this in a more slogan-esque manner: it is not simply that we fail to account for the intricacies of Kantianism and Hegelianism without understanding the concept of self-transformation, rather we fail to properly understand Kant and Hegel *simpliciter* without understanding the concept of self-transformation. Now, such a claim appears to give rise to two means of responding to my challenge. Either, one may regard the concept of self-transformation as worth pursuing or one may regard the Kantian and Hegelian project, if focused on self-transformation, as rather fanciful and outmoded, as a kind of whistling in the dark. The reason for being suspicious about Kant and Hegel and the notion of self-transformation is that the notion of self-transformation could seem not only eerily metaphysical, but even if there is genuine content to that concept, one faces a difficult challenge in justifying why such a project is worth pursuing now. In our post-modern, post-Marxist world, ideas of self-transformation, self-realisation, flourishing, and being-at-home-in-the-world seem to be out of touch with the current state of things: global economic chaos, tyrannical regimes, impending ecological disaster etc. all would suggest that not only are we very much in a post-lapsarian world, but also that any claim which suggests that a return to a pre-lapsarian epoch is *genuinely* possible is in plain truth deluded.

I think this worry is expressed well by Katrin Pahl, who writes: “The feeling of despair is largely covered over by the teleological narrative that the phenomenologist tends to construct. It is for the most part lost on the protagonist as well. Consciousness does not have the face of despair. In fact, every time it is crushed, it cheerfully starts anew. The introduction to the *Phenomenology* announces that this is a text of despair. But once the text begins, it seems to forget this proclamation” (Pahl, 2011: 142). What concerns Pahl seems to be that Hegel claims that the road to Absolute Knowledge is hardly smoothly paved and that we must suffer to a great extent in order to flourish. However, all we appear to receive from Hegel is a rather simple-minded panglossian attitude to dealing with philosophical problems and existential crises, so much so that the dialectic of consciousness is ultimately nothing more than a bizarre and rather unpleasant triumphialism about reason and humanity’s abilities to be at home in the world.

I think this is a very problematic reading of Hegel, though: whilst Hegel is confident that we can and eventually will achieve reconciliation, this vision of human freedom is one which is necessarily bound up with the hell of despair. Both Kant and Hegel do not present pictures of human cognitive development as one of a jocund cognitive enquirer, who when confronting the idea that critique requires them to abandon certain *Weltanschauungen* and forms of philosophical reflection, merrily accepts this demand. As Bristow correctly writes: “However, the conception of our freedom (or of its discovery) as bringing with it a hell is an old idea which both Kant and Hegel preserve and express in their distinctive ways. The despair of this path is bound with its hope, which Hegel represents as the eventual reconciliation with the initially opposed other” (Bristow, 2007: 246). That Hegel conceives of philosophical enquiry as a passion of reason clearly illustrates that he is not committed at all to a naïve and uncritical conception of progress and development, nor does Hegel regard the negativity in the world to be simply goodness in disguise or just a rather limited degree of goodness.

Perhaps what is the most culturally significant feature of the project of being at home in the world is the unifying soteriological theme of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the Passion of Christ, and the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism.[[149]](#footnote-149) Despite all their respective differences, all these accounts are devoted to providing us with a way to understand our world and ourselves on our own terms, and to eventually be in a position to finally achieve a genuine and meaningful sense of peace and freedom. For this reason, these projects are to be cherished, and we must always take them with the utmost seriousness. In the wave of response to the Critical Philosophy, it was Hegel who produced the most ambitious and interesting take on Kant’s theoretical philosophy. Indeed, such was the grand nature of his project that naturally “as a thinker who suffered more than most from superficial criticism, Hegel was right to think that others would find it easier to attack him than to take trouble to understand him fully”.[[150]](#footnote-150)

So, to come back to where we began: for most of its time, the analytic tradition has wanted to isolate itself from the work of thinkers like Hegel, seeing the Continent as a breeding ground of obscurantism, pseudophilosophy, and charlatanism, whilst at the same time viewing its own philosophical work with unjustified superiority. Thankfully, though, the period of antagonism towards the Continent has slowly begun to improve, because traditional caricatures have been found to be nothing really more than just caricature. Hegel, initially the enemy of the Anglo-American naturalist community, is gradually becoming accepted as a serious modern philosopher of substantial philosophical value; and the transition from villain to possible hero mirrors the analytic tradition opening itself more and more to the Continental tradition, which would not only suggest that there is the possibility of dialogue and mutual recognition, but that such a possibility is being realised.[[151]](#footnote-151)

It is therefore perhaps fitting to end with the words of Rorty on this topic: “philosophers in non-anglophone countries typically think quite hard about Hegel, whereas the rather skimpy training in the history of philosophy which most analytic philosophers receive often tempts them to skip straight from Kant to Frege. It is agreeable to imagine a future in which the tiresome ‘analytic-Continental split’ is looked back upon as an unfortunate, temporary breakdown of communication – a future in which Sellars and Habermas, Davidson and Gadamer, Putnam and Derrida, Rawls and Foucault, are seen as fellow-travellers on the same journey, fellow-citizens of what Michael Oakeshott called a *civitas pelegrina*”.[[152]](#footnote-152)

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1. P. Redding, [http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hegel/#Bib](http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hegel/" \l "Bib) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. F. C. Beiser, 2005: 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. J. Searle, 1983: x. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Of course, this does not apply to the analytic tradition’s general difficulty with interpreting the *Science of Logic*. That difficulty seems to be caused by the triadic structure of the work itself and the very dense language that Hegel uses. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. This is also known as the ‘spirit monist’ view. See Taylor (1975) who adopts the spirit monist interpretation. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. R. B. Pippin, 1989: 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The following passage from William Bristow elegantly expresses this idea: “To someone who appreciates Kant’s critical project – who has felt the excitement of a powerful new beginning in epistemology aroused by appreciation of it – Hegel’s suspicion is bound to seem relatively shallow, even if not totally unmotivated. Hegel himself subscribes to the dictum that criticism of a philosophical system has little weight unless it engages seriously with that in the system that seems compelling to its proponents. It may seem that Hegel’s objection against Kant’s project of critique … does not engage very seriously or directly with what strikes students of Kant’s epistemology as its substantial core. And so Hegel’s apparently dismissive criticism of Kant’s critical project is dismissed in turn by Kantians. Consequently, the Hegel-Kant engagement often strikes us, I think, as philosophically sterile.” (W. F. Bristow, 2007: 64) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. F. C. Beiser, 2008: 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See Hylton (1993), and Candlish (2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. It is important to note that the non-metaphysical reading of Hegel differs from what can be loosely called the Strawsonian-inspired view of Hegel, as espoused by Allen Wood. Wood, like Peter Strawson did with Kantianism, sees a repugnant side to Hegelianism but also takes there to be something of philosophic value to Hegel’s philosophy, particularly Hegel’s analysis of the state and morality. Consequently, Wood tries to separate Hegel’s ethics and political philosophy from Hegel’s theoretical concerns, cf. Wood (1990). This is very similar to the Strawsonian tendency to separate Kant’s transcendental programme and theory of experience from transcendental idealism. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Pippin, 1989: 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. I am using Paul Redding’s terminology from his *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* entry on Hegel. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. An important point must be noted regarding the exact significance of the Kantian critique of metaphysics: Kant did not criticise metaphysics in the way that Hume and the Logical Positivists did; he did not regard the discipline *per se* to be a meaningless philosophical enterprise. Rather, Kant’s concern was to put metaphysics on the “secure course of a science” (Bxiv) – i.e. purge the discipline of any fallacies and obscurities by prioritising logic and epistemology as the first stages of any philosophical enquiry. See Adrian Moore’s discussion of Kant in Moore (2012). This topic is also discussed in O’Neill (1992), and Grier (2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Beiser, 2005: 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. The charge of extravagance is levelled by Ameriks (1991). See Stern (2008) for a response. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Beiser, 2005: 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. I. Soll, 1969: 48-49. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Pippin, 1982: 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Cf. the following claims Aristotle makes: “[The soul is the] first actuality of a natural organic body” (*De Anima* II 1, 412b5–6); “[the soul is] substance as form of a natural body which has life in potentiality” (*De Anima* II 1, 412a20–1); “[the soul] is a first actuality of a natural body which has life in potentiality” (*De Anima* ii 1, 412a27–8). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. In stressing the importance of form, specifically *conceptual* form (i.e. the Categories), in providing the “unity of nature”, I wish to draw attention to the following: the sense of unity here is different to (a) the sense of unity *qua* transcendental synthesis, and (b) the sense of unity *qua* the category of unity. Unity *qua* transcendental synthesis is concerned with ‘combination’, namely the activity of bringing together representational contents to form a whole. For Kant, such a kind of unity is *not* provided by the category of unity, which is concerned with how we conceive of as being a ‘one’. As he writes,

    This unity, which precedes all concepts of combination *a priori*, is not the former category of unity; for all categories are grounded on logical functions in judgements, but in these, combination, thus the unity of given concepts, is already thought. The category therefore already presupposes combination. We must therefore seek this unity … someplace higher … (B131)

    What I understand Kant to be claiming here, though I admit that I find it very difficult to be entirely clear on this matter, is that the category of unity cannot be responsible for the synthetic unity of the manifold, because the category of unity is related to the logical function of judgement, whose unifying function differs from and is consequent to the function of synthesis in the imagination: the function of the imagination with regard to synthesis is to combine intuitions (representational contents) to form a whole. In this sense, unity is understood *qua* mereological unity – a combination of parts into a (unified) whole. The category of unity, because it is, for Kant, an *a priori* concept, is a rule for the representation of an object in general. The application of this concept (or in fact *any* categorial concept) is performed *only* after the object to which the concept is applied is presented to us as *something determinable*. To put the point differently:

    Synthesis enables a myriad of representational contents, *x*, to be presented as something determinable, Φ.

    In order for Φ to be experienced in a specific way, i.e. *as an empirical object*, Φ must be then subject to transcendental conceptualisation, because transcendental conceptualisation is what is required for us to have a full-blooded representation of an *object* at all. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. This, I believe, is the way in which we can see how transcendental (formal) idealism relates to empirical realism. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Van Cleve argues that Kant’s formal idealism must be no different to Berkeleyean (material) idealism, because “… it is inexplicable why objects should depend on us for being the *way* they are if they do not also depend on us for their *being*, period. To put it in a slogan, objects cannot depend on us for their *Sosein* unless they also depend on us for their *Sein*” (Van Cleve, 1999: 37). Van Cleve’s argument here can be expressed in the following manner: “If all objects in space and time are appearances and if appearances are virtual objects … it follows that all objects in space and time are logical constructions out of perceivers and their states” (Van Cleve, 1999: 11).The philosophical issue here is that “surely if space is ideal, then space and *everything in space* is ideal” (Langton, 1998: 212). Indeed, Kant himself seems to make this exact point in A370, writing that “[matter] is only a species of representations … which are called external … because they relate perceptions to the space in which all things are external to one another, while yet the space itself is in us”. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. See Bird (2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Hume is problematic here, as it is not implausible to suggest that Hume put forward a Copernican Revolution of sorts, insofar as he aimed to focus philosophical enquiry on the subject, rather than determine what reality was like in itself. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. M. Devitt, 1991: 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. P. Parrini, 2002: 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Ibid., p. 145. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. A. Savile, 1998: 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. The following passage is one clear example of Kant’s irritation at being branded Berkeleyean: “My protestation too against all charges of idealism is so valid and clear as even to seem superfluous, were there not incompetent judges, who, while they would have an old name for every deviation from their perverse though common opinion, and never judge of the spirit of philosophic nomenclature, but cling to the letter only, are ready to put their own conceits in the place of well-defined notions, and thereby deform and distort them. I have myself given this my theory the name of transcendental idealism, but that cannot authorize any one to confound it either with the empirical idealism of Descartes, (indeed, his was only an insoluble problem, owing to which he thought every one at liberty to deny the existence of the corporeal world, because it could never be proved satisfactorily), or with the mystical and visionary idealism of Berkeley, against which and other similar phantasms our *Critique* contains the proper antidote. My idealism concerns not the existence of things (the doubting of which, however, constitutes idealism in the ordinary sense), since it never came into my head to doubt it, but it concerns the sensuous representation of things, to which space and time especially belong”. (*Prolegomena*: 4:293) [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. *Essay concerning Human Understanding* II.xiii, and xiv. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Savile, 1998: 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. This also relates to the issue of synthetic *a priori* knowledge. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. The organisation of intuitions here refers to Kant’s theory of transcendental synthesis, whereby intuitions (representational contents) are unified by the imagination pre-consciously, in order to form something whole that can then be conceptualised. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Savile, 1998: 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. James’s elegant phrasing of Kant’s ‘rhapsody of sensations’ nicely captures the meaning of Kant’s assertion. See James’s *Principles of Psychology*: 462. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Of course, though, Kant’s other term for objectivity, ‘objective reality’, may also be involved in Kant’s meaning, for when the Categories are applied to representations, the rule-status of these concepts (along with the forms of intuition, transcendental synthesis in the imagination, and the transcendental object) serve to provide our sensory content with the features of *objectuality*, i.e. the characteristics of an object.  [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. See *Prolegomena*, 4:298. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. *Metaphysical Foundations*: [541]. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. In addition to these textual sources, one can include (as Friedman, 2004: xxi does) Kant’s comment in the 1787 Introduction about how pure natural science is possible. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. A somewhat analogous remark may be made against a traditional objection to the Metaphysical Deduction of the Categories, which claims that Kant derives the pure concepts of the understanding from the Table of Judgements, and that such a move is absurd. I do not believe that this objection holds, simply because I do not believe that Kant makes this illegitimate move. The Table of Judgements, a formal list of the logical functions (or forms) of propositions, does not serve to *entail* a list of metaphysical concepts. Rather, the Table of Judgements is used to allude to the categorial concepts (cf. the notion of a ‘clue’). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. See also *Prolegomena*: 4:318.  [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. H. Putnam, 1981: 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. D. Moran, 2000: 94. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Putnam, 1981: 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Ibid., p. 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. D. Cox, 2003: 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. H. Putnam, 1981: 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Cf. K. Westphal, 2004: 123, 124, 125-6, 127, 223. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. H. Robinson, 1994: 424. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. As Allais (2007: 463) writes: “Kantian appearances depend on us, but at the same time, they constitute the

    objective, external world: they are empirically real and transcendentally ideal. Commentators tend to find room to do justice to only one of these aspects of Kant’s position. Those who stress the transcendental ideality in Kant’s position tend to see Kantian appearances phenomenalistically (such as Van Cleve), while those who stress the empirical reality tend not to find any idealism at all (such as Abela). Kant’s position must include both. We need an account of appearance which allows the appearances of things to be real, non-illusory, public constituents of an objective world, but which also allows a way in which they are mind-dependent, and can be contrasted with the way things are in themselves.” [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Ibid., p. 463. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. G. Bird, 1987: 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. The now notorious review was written for *Göttingen Learned Notices* by Christian Garve, but extensively revised by the editor of the journal, J. G. Feder. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Bird, 1987: 67. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Ibid., p. 67. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Ibid., p. 73. See also p. 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. S. Sedgwick, 1997: 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Hund (1997: 229) claims that “[t]he central role given by Kant to the subjective consciousness in imposing structure on the world is what leads Hegel to call Kant’s idealism a system of subjective idealism”. The way Hund understands formal idealism is a classic example of the Imposition Model, given the claim that ‘subjective consciousness’ imposes ‘structure on the world’ – however, as I have argued, the Imposition Model is a very problematic reading of Kant, especially because it assumes that the world pre-conceptualisation is unstructured and indeterminate. The problem, then, with Hund’s account is two-fold: (a) it fails to do adequate justice to Kant’s formal idealism, and (ii) because of (i), it ascribes to Hegel a flawed interpretation, which, by consequence, prevents us from taking his critique of Kant’s subjective idealism with serious attention [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Sedgwick, 1997: 30-31. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Ibid., p. 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Bird, 1987: 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. It is clear that regarding Hegel’s idealism to be objective in the sense that I have described opposes subjectivism *tout court*: Hegel’s objectivism denies that (a) an *individual* human mind structures the world of experience, (b) a *community* of human minds structure the world of experience, and (c) a divine mind structures the world of experience – cf. Beiser (1993, 2005), Stern (2002, 2008, 2009), K. Westphal (2003), and Kreines (2006, 2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. A version of this chapter is appearing in the forthcoming collection, *Subjectivity and the Social World*. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Pippin, 1989: 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Ibid., pp. 26-27. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. As Hume famously writes in the *Treatise of Human Nature*: “For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe any thing but the perception. When my perceptions are remov’d for any time, as by sound sleep; so long am I insensible of *myself*, and may truly be said not to exist. And were all my perceptions remov’d by death, and cou’d I neither think, nor feel, nor see, nor love, nor hate after the dissolution of my body, I shou’d be entirely annihilated, nor do I conceive what is farther requisite to make me a perfect non-entity. If any one upon serious and unprejudic’d reflexion, thinks he has a different notion of *himself*, I must confess I can reason no longer with him. All I can allow him is, that he may be in the right as well as I, and that we are essentially different in this particular. He may, perhaps, perceive something simple and continu’d, which he calls *himself*; tho’ I am certain there is no such principle in me... But setting aside some metaphysicians of this kind, I may venture to affirm of the rest of mankind, that they are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement”. (*Treatise of Human Nature*: Book I, Part 4, Section 6) [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Support for this reading can come from how Hegel runs his criticism of Kant and Fichte together in the opening of Observing Reason – though, of course, Hegel does not mention *either* by name. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. R. Stern, 1990: 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Pippin, 1989: 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Ibid., p. 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Beiser, 2005: 171. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Pippin, 1989: 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. M. Grier, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-metaphysics/#RejSpeMetTraDia. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Pippin, 1989: 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. The argument in the Refutation of Idealism is as follows: “I am conscious of my own existence as determined in time. All determination in regard to time presupposes the existence of something permanent in perception. But this permanent something cannot be something in me, for the very reason that my existence in time is itself determined by this permanent something. It follows that the perception of this permanent existence is possible only through a thing without me and not through the mere representation of a thing without me. Consequently, the determination of my existence in time is possible only through the existence of real things external to me. Now, consciousness in time is necessarily connected with the consciousness of the possibility of this determination in time. Hence it follows that consciousness in time is necessarily connected also with the existence of things without me, inasmuch as the existence of these things is the condition of determination in time. That is to say, the consciousness of my own existence is at the same time an immediate consciousness of the existence of other things without me”. (B275-6) [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Beiser, 2005: 171. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. As Descartes concisely expresses the essence of mechanism: “I should like you to consider that these functions (including passion, memory, and imagination) follow from the mere arrangement of the machine’s organs every bit as naturally as the movements of a clock or other automaton follow from the arrangement of its counter-weights and wheels.” (*Treatise on Man*: 108) [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. There is an important qualification to make on the subject of Hegel and Romanticism. The German Romantics, as Beiser (1998, 2002) and Stone (2005) correctly note, regarded the modern era to have alienated man from the natural world and disenchanted nature by applying a very narrow and analytic form of cognitive enquiry. The Romantics believed that the Enlightenment had ultimately stripped nature and humanity off any beauty or real intrigue. As Beiser writes, “[Romanticism] hoped to restore the beauty, magic and mystery of nature in the aftermath of the ravages of science and technology”. Furthermore, as Stone writes, “[f]or Schlegel … humans ‘disenchant’ (*entzaubern*) nature if they perceive it as not at all mysterious but completely intelligible by reason. Conversely, humans would ‘enchant’ (*bezaubern*) nature by perceiving it as partly mysterious, not fully rationally comprehensible” (Stone, 2005: 4). For Hegel, though, the Romantic appeal to mystery and rejection of reason is just as pernicious as narrow analysis. Therefore, Hegel’s ‘Romanticism’ only consists in sharing the *broad* Romantic concern to account for nature in rich and enchanting ways. *Contra* the Romantics, Hegel believed that only a rich conceptualisation of nature will enable humanity to be re-enchanted with the natural world. Furthermore, Hegel should be seen as taking some distance from Romanticism, given his criticisms of certain ways of conceiving force, and also in how force is not as crucial for Hegel’s philosophy of nature as it is for Schelling’s philosophy of nature. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Kant can be seen as following Boscovitch, given that in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, he argues against the idea that extension is the essence of matter, cf. §s 496-7 and 499. For an excellent overview of Kant’s anti-mechanistic theory of matter, see Beiser (2002), who argues that Kant’s critique of the Enlightenment places him as an important influence on the Romantic philosophers of nature, such as Herder, Schlegel, Schelling, Schiller, Novalis, and Hegel. Beiser supports this claim by regarding Schelling’s explicit critique of the physicist Le Sage, a famous exponent of mechanistic natural philosophy, as being directly influenced by Kant’s theory of matter, cf. Schelling’s *Idea of a Natural Philosophy*, II, 231. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. See Stone, 2004: 48, 103. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. See Beiser (1993, 2002, 2005), Stone (2005), Westphal (2008), and Ferrini (2009a, 2009b). Förster (2012) also discusses this topic. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. I think Hegel can be read as making an even deeper point than this: many philosophers have regarded a basic appeal to phenomenology as a justification for common-sense beliefs. What Hegel is suggesting is that an appeal to phenomenology can do more than just provide justification for ordinary beliefs: our perceptual experience can reveal to us – if we use the right framework – *philosophical* truths about the organic and rational world. The significance of this is that phenomenology both supports ordinary consciousness and undermines it, though in different ways: the primitive intuition that objects are different to one another is supported by how we analyse our visual spectrum ordinarily; however, when we think about our visual spectrum at the level of philosophical consciousness, such an intuition becomes ‘sublated’. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. However, one should note that Hegel is sympathetic to Bacon, cf. Ferrini (2009a). Nonetheless, one relevant example of Hegel admonishing Enlightenment science is Hegel’s comments about the difficulties Newton has in incorporating gravity into his ontology. These comments are made in Hegel’s *Philosophy of Nature*, and they have historically been staunchly criticised by some physicists. See Sambursky (1974) for a defence of Hegel against the charge of completely misunderstanding Newtonianism. For an excellent discussion of Hegel’s criticism of Newton, see Halper (2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Stern, 1999: 249. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. I write ‘material’ as opposed to ‘physical’ for a specific reason: Berkeley claimed that we have immediate access to empirical objects. However, Berkeley should not be called a direct realist, because though he denies a mediated relation between mind and external objects, like Searle, McDowell, etc., and though he does believe that empirical objects are physical, he denies their *material* status. Searle, et. al – i.e. direct realists – do not espouse immaterialism. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. M. Ayers, 2000: 107.

    Allais (2007: 468) and Foster (2000: 50) make similar claims about the phenomenology of perception.  [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Snowdon (2001: 217) and McDowell (1998: 342) make very similar remarks to this idea. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. B. Russell, 1997: 9.  [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. It seems fair to regard that Kant’s position on immediacy satisfies McDowell’s (1996: 143) understanding of the concept of direct access to perceptual content. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. See Martin (2002: 380-1). [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. W. Sellars, 1997: 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Stern, 1999: 256. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Sellars, 1997: 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. For support of this idea of assertive judgement being prior in experience, inferentialists can appeal to a basic point about phenomenology, namely that when we experience things like blue billiard balls, we do not say (or think) ‘Blue sense content in location x in physical body y’, rather we phrase our experience as ‘I see a blue billiard ball’. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. P. Abela, 2002: 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. J. McDowell, 1994: 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. C. Taylor, 1972: 185. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. See Moore, 2012: 166. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. A similar remark about the inescapability of metaphysics is made by Peirce, who writes the following: “Find a scientific man who proposes to get along without any metaphysics…and you have found one whose doctrines are thoroughly vitiated by the crude and uncriticized metaphysics with which they are packed”. (*CP* 1.129) [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. A. Moore, 2012: 192. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Indeed, some Kantians may wish to go a step further and suggest that it seems more appropriate to regard Hegel as a positivist, since whereas Kant is partly known for staying ontologically silent on the subject of whether or not noumena exist, given the Unknowability Thesis of transcendental idealism, Hegel is partly known for his explicit dismissal of the supernatural. However, I would stress caution to those Kantians who are inclined to pursue this line of arguments: critics of Kant, from Jacobi to the Logical Positivists, will always have their doubts about Kant’s silence about the existence or non-existence of noumena to the point where some may question the sincerity of Kant’s views on things-in-themselves. For example, Jacobi and arguably Hegel, claim that Kant’s silence reveals his struggle to uphold the principles of critical idealism given his basic commitment to the metaphysical phenomena present in the Kingdom of Ends, whereas Peirce and arguably Hegel as well claim that Kant’s silence belies a positivistic disposition to metaphysics which Kant did not wish to be made explicit. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. This seems to anticipate Peirce’s famous maxim: “Do not block the way of inquiry”. (*EP*2: 48)  [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. “Thus we could look at a goodly part of Wittgenstein’s argument in the *Investigations* as a transcendental one with the following starting point: to know, we must be able to say (in the sense in which admitting indescribability is also a form of “saying”). This gives the wherewithal to destroy the picture of preverbal consciousness which lends the notion of experience as private knowledge its plausibility… So that irreducibly private experience (experience not shaped through common language) could only be it if were not the case that to know is to be able to say; or in other words, a necessary condition of this seemingly undeniable facet of our conscious experience, that we be capable of speaking about it, is that there be no irreducibly private experience”. (Taylor, 1972: 155) [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Pippin, 1989: 95, 114, 123. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. S. Houlgate (forthcoming, where page references are to the manuscript of this paper). [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Stern (2012b). [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. “It is one of the profoundest and truest insights to be found in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that the *unity* which constitutes the nature of the *Notion* is recognised as the *original synthetic* unity of *apperception*, as the unity of the *I think*, or of self-consciousness.”(*SL*: 584) [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. One can also take my argument to directly oppose Longuenesse’s account, particularly her claim that “Hegel’s dialectical *logic* is ‘the true successor to Kant’s Transcendental Logic’ (Longuenesse, 2007: xiv). Her principal argument for this claim is (i) that like Kant, Hegel believes that a *concept* has a unifying function; and (ii) that Hegel’s view of ‘ground’ ties him closely to Kant’s transcendental epistemology and psychology. To justify these theses, she considers the following respective passages from Kant and Hegel:

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

     Now the Notion is that absolute unity of being and reflection ... (*SL*: 578)

     However, despite the differences she notes between Hegelian concepts and Kantian concepts, namely that Hegelian concepts do not only operate on sensible intuition but also on thought-determination, “what remains essential, then, is the fact that both Hegel and Kant characterise the concept as having a unifying function” (Longuenesse, 2007: 30). As Longuenesse writes, “... Hegel’s [dialectical] Logic is literally nourished by Hegel’s discussion of transcendental philosophy ...” (Longuenesse, 2007: 16). With regard to Hegel’s ‘ground’, i.e. “... one *of the determinations of reflection* of essence; but it is the last, or rather it is that determination which consists in being sublated determination” (*SL*: 444), Longuenesse suggests that this too has a unifying function, insofar as it is what provides unity to determinations and objects. As she writes, “ground is the unity of thought that stabilises the constant flux of determinations present in the moment of “difference”. As such, it is also the source of the objectivity of determinations, i.e. of their relation to an object, their unity in an object. The source of the unity of determinations is also the source of the unity of objects” (Longuenesse, 2007: 87).

     Regardless of whether Longuenesse’s argument is convincing, the kind of intimacy Longuenesse hopes to establish between Hegel and Kant is one which holds that Hegel’s logical system (i.e. the tenets of dialectical logic) *is* just the same as Kant’s, just differing in idiosyncratic or verbal nuances. Her account, therefore, is an endorsement of Pippin’s interpretation of Hegel as working within the constraints of transcendental idealism.

     Certainly, Hegel is greatly influenced by Kant’s transcendental idea that there is no workable distinction between immediate cognition and mediated cognition, given that concepts operate throughout all relevant cognitive levels, namely intuition and judgement. Furthermore, Hegel agrees with Kant that certain conceptual contraries are bound up with one another, given Hegel’s (muted) praise for the Antinomies of Pure Reason. However, it does not follow from this that Hegel worked entirely within the constraints of transcendental logic, to the point where dialectical logic is more or less identifiable with Kant’s insights into the nature of human cognition and phenomenology, simply for the reason that Hegel’s acceptance of these ideas does not commit him to transcendental idealism. More seriously for Longuenesse’s account is the fact that Hegel’s dialectical logic is principally designed to *undermine* the various dualisms and distinctions which are necessary for transcendental idealism, such as the appearance/thing-in-itself distinction, the form/content distinction, and the identity/difference distinction. Given this, then, the idea of Hegel as working within the constraints of transcendental idealism is not only false, but also a *contradictio in adjecto*. If one wishes to maintain that Hegel is Kant’s successor, then one must provide an alternative account of the nature of the succession. As such, the question now is to determine how if at all Hegel can be read as working within a broadly Kantian framework despite not being a transcendental/subjective idealist. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. “The central assumption of Taylor’s Hegel is that ‘to know is to be able to say’… Sense-certainty, however, proves unable to say what it knows without going beyond the sheer immediacies of which it takes itself to be aware and subsuming them under concepts. In this way, as Taylor’s Hegel shows, ‘the attempt to say will contradict the basic requirements of sensible certainty, will take us beyond its defining limits, and hence it will stand self-refuted’. The word ‘self-refuted’, however, is really out of place here, since sense-certainty is not refuted purely by its own model of experience. It is ‘refuted’ by the failure of that model to survive the challenge, addressed to consciousness by Taylor’s Hegel, to say what it means. This challenge is made because Taylor’s Hegel, though *not* sense-certainty itself, takes it for granted as ‘the basic starting point that to know is to be able to say’”. (Houlgate, forthcoming: 11-12) [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. “The new theory of language that arises at the end of the eighteenth century, most notably in the work of Herder and Humboldt, not only gives a new account of how language is essential to human thought, but also places the capacity to speak not simply in the individual but primarily in the speech community. This totally upsets the outlook of the mainstream epistemological tradition. Now arguments to this effect have formed part of the refutation of atomism that has proceeded through an overturning of standard modern epistemology.

     Important examples of arguments of this kind are Hegel’s in the first chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, against the position he defines as “sensible certainty,” where he shows both the indispensability of language and its holistic character; and Wittgenstein’s famous demonstrations of the uselessness of “ostensive definitions,” where he makes plain the crucial role played by language in identifying the object and the impossibility of a purely private language. Both are, I believe, excellent examples of arguments that explore the conditions of intentionality and show their conclusions to be inescapable”. (Taylor, 1987: 13) [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Cf. Houlgate, forthcoming: 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Indeed, the idea of seeing Hegel as Kant’s successor in the way I have presented finds support from Bristow (2007), who aims to show how Hegel took the Kantian notion of ‘critique’ in new directions, by applying the idea of critiquing our faculty of reason to the domain of self-transformation/self-development. Though Bristow’s concerns are different to those in this chapter, what both accounts share in common is the idea that Hegel is positively related to Kant without either being a transcendental idealist or working within the transcendental constraints of Kant’s enquiries into the conditions required for experience and cognition of objects. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. One might also claim that transcendental enquiry in general is limited to that extent as well. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Beiser, 2005: 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Stern (forthcoming) notes that the way Hegel understands the ‘all determination is negation’ principle seems to be the opposite of the way in which Spinoza himself understands it. For Spinoza, the negation that comes with determination is a privation of being – cf. his letter to Jelles of 1674:

     With regard to the statement that figure is a negation and not anything positive, it is obvious that matter in its totality, considered without limitation [*indefinitè consideratam*], can have no figure, and that figure applies only to finite and determinate bodies. For he who says that he apprehends a figure, thereby means to indicate simply this, that he apprehends a determinate thing and the manner of its determination. This determination therefore does not pertain to the thing in regard to its being; on the contrary, it is its non-being. So since figure is nothing but determination, and determination is negation [*Quia ergo figura non aliud, quam determinatio, et determinatio negatio est*], figure can be nothing other than negation, as has been said.

     Jacobi also notes that the ‘all determination is negation’ principle is meant to indicate a privation of being:

     *Determinatio est negatio, seu determinatio ad rem juxta suum esse non pertinent* [Determination is negation, i.e. determination does not pertain to a thing according to its being]. Individual things therefore, so far as they only exist in a certain determinate mode, are *non-entia*; the indeterminate infinite being is the one single true *ens reale, hoc est, est omne esse, & praeter quod nullum datur est* [this is the real being; it is the all of being, and apart from it there is no being]. (*Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza*: 219-20) [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Stern, forthcoming: 2 (where page references are to the manuscript of this paper). Not only that, Hegel’s notion of determinate being is crucial to his case against Schellingian monism, of which he is notoriously critical in the *Phenomenology*, cf. §16. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Beiser, 2005: 188. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. See Brandom (2000, 2002, 2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. “The object which the pure Ego of self-consciousness seeks essentially to abolish is, however, essential to its being as an abolishing activity, and is therefore always regenerated as much as abolished. Self-consciousness can therefore only achieve satisfaction in so far as the object abolishes itself, shows itself to self-consciousness as really being self-consciousness. Self-consciousness can only achieve satisfaction in *another*self-consciousness”. (*PS*: §175) [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. As Kant writes in the *Critique*: “The game played by idealism has been turned against itself” (B276). [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. This just refers to the idea of regarding oneself as an agent which has relations with other agents that are underpinned by certain normative considerations; these considerations range from playing the game of giving and asking for reasons to having duties to one another. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. See my comments on Joseph Margolis’s contribution to Angelico Nuzzo’s edited collection, *Hegel and the Analytic Tradition* – Giladi, 2012: 1221. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. One could say that this claim has a great sense of irony to it, for whilst philosophers such as Dewey would initially regard Hegel as a paragon of purely academic speculation, Hegel’s aim to give thought immense pragmatic importance seems to undermine the traditional caricature of him. However, this does not entail a view of Hegel as more or less the same as Dewey, for Hegel maintains that metaphysics must play a central role in our flourishing. What this does show is that Hegel wants to illustrate just exactly how thought and reason do not just have certain theoretical commitments but also that those very theoretical commitments will in turn impact our form of life in some ways. In this way, both Kant and Hegel can be regarded as hoping to bring the Enlightenment back to the original Hellenic interest in how theoretical reasoning relates to our everyday lives. And I think that this hope is one which we should aim to realise in contemporary analytic philosophy. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Given this way of understanding Hegel’s project here, there seems to be very good reason to draw parallels between Hegel’s notion of belief and that of Peirce. The Peircean account of belief conceived of belief as a rule for action. As James writes, “[to ask what a belief signifies is to ask for] the conduct it is fitted to produce” (*Selected Writings*: 4). In a superficial manner, this notion of belief is dispositional, insofar as having a belief inclines the subject of experience to have certain kinds of feelings or basic response-mechanisms to a specific content. However, the pragmatist notion of belief goes further than the Rylean dispositional account, by articulating the dispositions in a deeper way. This is expressed in Peirce’s notion of a *Weltanschauung*, in which having a belief about something does not simply provide the subject of experience with the ability to expect certain basic sensations or certain basic reactions to the relevant content; rather, our dispositions are ultimately going to amount to having a set of normative responses to our cognitive environment. In this sense, beliefs are not merely mechanical cognitive items which we use to represent contents or use to form simple emotional responses to contents; they are normative responses. The intimate relation between theoretical reason and practical reason is something which Hegel takes very seriously. Of course, there is still a lot more to be said on the relationship between Hegel and Peirce. Stern (2009) offers a good account of the complexity between Peirce and Hegel, and I think anyone who is interested in the Hegel-Peirce relation could use that account as the springboard for further research into an area which is far from a *terra incognita*, but still one which needs more investigation. Redding (2007) also provides a fascinating account of the connections between Hegel and pragmatism.   [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. A further parallel can be drawn between Hegel and the pragmatists here. The failure of asymmetrical social relations, such as mastery and the law of the heart, comes from the subject regarding the interlocutor in the relevant form of consciousness as not being the kind of consciousness to be recognised as rationally autonomous. Symmetrical social relations, for Hegel, are genuine social relations given how both participants in the relevant discourse regard one another offering reasons to accept certain beliefs. This idea of giving and asking for reasons also seems to be a central part of Peirce’s idea of the fixation of beliefs which individuals regard as necessary for social cohesion and flourishing. Like Hegel, whose ultimate social concern is to realise reason-giving and reason-asking in political institutions, Peirce hopes that the practice of giving and asking for reason will eventually establish properly reason-based actions that are socially integrated and will lead to some kind of flourishing. This is another example of connecting theoretical reason with practical reason, where Hegel and the pragmatists, in a remarkable way, regard linguistic issues as having direct social consequences on our form of life. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. The idea of belief as having direct and contentful normative significance is something which Peirce and James share. Hegel, I would argue, could accept Peirce’s formulations of the pragmatic maxim: “Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of those effects is the whole of our conception of the object”. (*EP*1: 132) “The entire intellectual purport of any symbol consists in the total of all general modes of rational conduct which, conditionally upon all the possible different circumstances and desires, would ensue upon the acceptance of the symbol”. (*EP*2: 346).

     For the matter, if we think about the project of the *Phenomenology*, particularly with regard to the transition from Consciousness to Self-Consciousness, the most powerful shift in the development of human thought is really how Consciousness recognises in itself that its theoretical beliefs amount to a way of conducting itself in the world as a rational agent. Why this is such a seismic shift in cognition is that consciousness no longer sees how *thinking* about the world is separate from *doing* certain actions in the world. Such a discovery explains why the forms of consciousness that Hegel directs us through in Active Reason and the rest of the *Phenomenology* are *explicitly* practical outlooks about self and other and self and world. These worldviews ultimately signify the end of the Cartesian conception of mind and fully actualise the post-Kantian conception of mind, for to be a *res cogitans* requires one to be an agent in the world.  [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. See Pinkard (2012) for a detailed discussion of being at home in the world. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. This is expressed in the following passage from the *Phenonomenology*: “We are in the presence of self-consciousness in a new shape, a consciousness which, as the infinitude of consciousness or as its own pure movement, is aware of itself as essential being, a being which *thinks* or is a free self-consciousness. For *to think* does not mean to be an *abstract* ‘I’, but an ‘I’ which has at the same time the significance of *intrinsic* being, of having itself for object, or of relating itself to objective being in such a way that its significance is the *being-for-self* of the consciousness for which it is [an object] … In thinking, I *am free*, because I am not in an *other*, but remain simply and solely in communion with myself, and the object, which is for me the *essential* being, is in undivided unity my being-for-myself; and my activity in conceptual thinking is a movement within myself”. (*PS*: 120)  [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. Cf. Pinkard (2002: 354). [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. As Huw Price (2004) suggests, the Placement Problem can be expressed in the following way: (1) All reality is ultimately natural reality; (2) whatever one wishes to admit into natural reality must be placed in natural reality; (3) moral facts, mathematical facts, universals, laws of nature, mental states, and so on do not seem admissible into natural reality; (4) therefore, if they are to be placed in nature, they must be forced into a category that does not seem appropriate for their specific characters, and if they cannot be placed in nature, then they must be either dismissed as non-genuine phenomena or at best regarded as second-rate phenomena. The Placement Problem is taken by Ram Neta (2007) to signify that there is no logical space for liberal naturalism, since it must either collapse into scientific positivism or supernaturalism. However, following Mario de Caro and Alberto Voltolini (2010), I think Neta has misunderstood liberal naturalism, and that because of this misunderstanding, the dilemma he poses for liberal naturalism can be dissolved fairly easily. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. The following passage from McDowell illustrates the difference between ‘bald naturalism’, i.e. reductionism, and ‘rampant platonism’, i.e. a bifurcation of reality into two ontologically distinct realms: “It can easily seem that there is no space to move here. Setting our faces against bald naturalism, we are committed to holding that the idea of knowing one’s way about in the space of reasons, the idea of responsiveness to rational relationships, cannot be reconstructed out of materials that are naturalistic in the sense that we are trying to supersede. This can easily seem to commit us to a rampant platonism. It can seem that we must be picturing the space of reasons as an autonomous structure – autonomous in that it is constituted independently of anything specifically human, since what is specifically human is surely natural … and we are refusing to naturalise the requirements of reason … But there is a way out. We get this threat of supernaturalism if we interpret the claim that space of reasons is *sui generis* as a refusal to naturalise the requirements of reason. But what became available at the time of the modern scientific revolution is a clear-cut understanding of the realm of law, and we can refuse to equate that with a new clarity *about nature*. This makes room for us to insist that spontaneity is *sui generis*, in comparison with the realm of law, without falling into the supernaturalism of rampant platonism” (McDowell, 1994: 77-78). [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. Two points should be noted here. Firstly, while one is naturally inclined to think that the later Wittgenstein stands in stark contrast to the early Wittgenstein, a crucial positive connection between the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations* is the desire to ultimately attain intellectual quietude by kicking away the ladder once it has been climbed. Of course, this is not meant to whitewash the significant differences between his philosophical periods. Secondly, the curious style and presentation of the *Investigations* strikes me as hermeneutically important: one has good reason to suppose that Wittgenstein regarded philosophical quietism as he conceived it to be therapeutic for both the discipline of philosophy itself and as self-therapeutic. On a somewhat harsh reading of this, one might regard Wittgenstein to be self-indulgent and even exceedingly arrogant, in regarding his personal quest for intellectual quietude as equivalent to philosophy finding peace. However, I think it is clear that such a reading is not the only one available to us. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. M. Grier, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-metaphysics/#DynAnt [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. For detailed discussion of Kant’s antinomies, see the following works: Strawson (1966), Heimsoeth (1967), Al-Azm (1972), Bennett (1974), Walsh (1975), Allison (1983, 2004), Van Cleve (1999), Guyer (1987), Watkins (1998, 2000), Grier (2001, 2006), Bird (2006), Thiel (2006), and Wood (2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. Beiser, 2005: 164. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. Ibid., p. 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. As Bristow writes in the following passage: “[Kant’s critical project] implies the view according to which we can know objects only as they are *for us*, whereas the things as they are in themselves and the unconditioned transcend the limits of our knowledge. But the critique of pure reason, according to the view of it taken here, already implies that the self-reflecting rational subject is the ultimate validator or legislator of the authority of the claims of reason; thus critique already institutes, methodologically, in the very stance of the epistemological investigation, ‘conformity to the subject’ as the normative ground of our knowledge, and with it, of course, Kantian subjectivism. Hence, the promise of the critique of pure reason to determine the fundamental authoritative norms of pure reason in an unprejudicial ‘free and open examination’ is disappointed”. (Bristow, 2007: 64)  [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Cf. (Aviii). [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. See the passage quoted in footnote 138. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Förster (2012) argues that Kant only came round to this view fairly late, after he had completed and published the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. One may claim that what I have written could suggest a *difference* between Kant and Hegel: the *Critique of Pure Reason* is the first part of the philosophical science, whereas the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is the ladder to philosophical science. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. Bristow, 2007: 246. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. One could regard this as an exaggeration, as it is not clear that anyone *really* holds sense-certainty. However, in response, I would say that I agree no one really holds sense-certainty but that the proper dialectical work starts in Perception. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. As Peirce famously writes: “We cannot begin with complete doubt. We must begin with all the prejudices which we actually have when we enter upon the study of philosophy. These prejudices are not to be dispelled by a maxim, for they are things which it does not occur to us *can* be questioned. Hence this initial skepticism will be a mere self-deception, and not real doubt; and no one who follows the Cartesian method will ever be satisfied until he has formally recovered all those beliefs which in form he has given up. It is, therefore, as useless a preliminary as going to the North Pole would be in order to get to Constantinople by coming down regularly upon a meridian. A person may, it is true, in the course of his studies, find reason to doubt what he began by believing; but in that case he doubts because he has a positive reason for it, and not on account of the Cartesian maxim. Let us not pretend to doubt in philosophy what we do not doubt in our hearts”. (*EP*1: 28) [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. Of course, this is not the only feature of Spinozism that Hegel criticises: Hegel’s philosophy of nature is in part a systematic criticism of Spinozist mechanism and espousal of only efficient causality. However, a confusing feature of the relationship between Hegel and Spinoza is that Hegel does *not* criticise Spinoza’s ‘All Determination is Negation’ principle – given the clear difference between Hegel’s and Spinoza’s respective understandings of determination and negation, one would naturally suppose that Hegel would be just as critical of Spinoza here as he is with regard to Spinoza’s mechanism and mathematical foundationalism. What is interesting to note is how one can trace Hegel’s philosophical development by observing how much affection he holds for Spinoza. For, after Hegel published the *Difference* essay, he appears to be staunchly opposed to the central features of Spinozism. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. See Beiser (2005) and Stern (forthcoming). [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. Though I have not discussed the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism in this chapter, I think there are compelling reasons to regard Buddhism as a form of philosophical quietism and concerned with the idea of self-transformation and being at home in the world. I hope to develop this interpretation of Buddhist doctrines in future research projects. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. R. Stern, 2002: ix. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. See Nuzzo (2010) and my review of that edited collection (2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. R. Rorty, 1997: 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)