

Hegel's Anthropological Conception of Logic

Joseph Carew
Department of Philosophy
McGill University, Montreal

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English Abstract

The traditional reading of Hegel's logic is that it is an account of the rationality of the cosmos. Contra this reading, I demonstrate that Hegel develops an original "anthropological" conception of logic overlooked in the history of philosophy. According to that conception, logic is not the basis for a novel rationalist metaphysics, but rather an account of the norms of a rationality that is instinctively operative in human experience as its condition of possibility. My first two chapters argue for my approach on textual and historical grounds and my second two expound how Hegel rethinks logic as a discipline.

In chapter 1, I ask how Hegel's *Phenomenology*, a book that deals with our consciousness of objects, the self-consciousness that motivates our actions, the reason that impels modern science, and the spirit of Western communities, might serve as an introduction to a new conception of logic. I submit that it is an attempt at proving, through an inner exploration of the fundamental dimensions of human experience, that rationality is at its source because it is the instinctive or biological form of human life. In chapter 2, I show how Hegel's *Phenomenology* thereby transforms the mission of logic. First, since we have an instinctive need to make our experience intelligible, our experience is structured (1) by the claims we instinctively make, already at the level of our bodies, about whether our perceptions are true or our desires should be acted upon and (2) by the universe of meaning that we instinctively create to explain the world around us and ourselves. Second, since claims can only be adjudicated in the social practice of giving and asking for reasons, we also have an instinctive need to find consensus concerning how we understand the world and act in it, which leads to the experiential emergence of societies whose communal worldviews historically evolve over time. Consequently, the rationality described by logic is the existential matrix of our perceptual, practical, scientific, and sociohistorical experience.

In chapter 3, I reconstruct Hegel's "Objective Logic." Following Kant, Hegel here provides a transcendental theory of categories. These categories, which range from "quality" to "actuality," set the *a priori* norms that must be satisfied for us to take something as an object of a certain kind, say, as an instantiation of a quality (e.g., red) or a self-actualizing process (e.g., the natural or social world as an unfolding system). In this sense, the categories draw up the blueprints for the universe of meaning that animates

human experience. In chapter 4, I reconstruct Hegel's "Subjective Logic," which radically reworks traditional logic into a transcendental theory of the distinctively human space of reasons: the subjective, but rational interests that compel us and the innate patterns of behaviour (conceiving, judging, and inferring) through which we pursue them, the *a priori* norms of this space being that which supports the universe of meaning in which our experience is realized. More precisely, the Subjective Logic describes the process of conceptualization that makes us human, that is, *Homo sapiens*: living creatures who are not just subjectively interested in survival and reproduction, as other animals are, but who embark, by their very nature, in the search for wisdom or truth.

French Abstract

La lecture traditionnelle de la logique de Hegel affirme que celle-ci est une explication de la rationalité du cosmos. En opposition à cette lecture, je démontre que Hegel développe une conception « anthropologique » originale de la logique négligée dans l'histoire de la philosophie. Selon cette conception, la logique n'est pas la base d'une métaphysique rationaliste nouvelle, mais plutôt une explication des normes d'une rationalité qui est instinctivement opérante dans l'expérience humaine en tant que sa condition de possibilité. Mes deux premiers chapitres plaident en faveur de mon approche sur des motifs textuels et historiques, et mes deux autres exposent comment Hegel repense la logique en tant que discipline.

Au chapitre 1, je demande comment la *Phénoménologie* de Hegel, un livre qui traite de notre conscience des objets, de la conscience de soi qui motive nos actions, ainsi que de la raison qui pousse la science moderne et l'esprit des communautés occidentales, pourrait servir d'introduction à une conception nouvelle de la logique. Je soutiens qu'elle est une tentative de prouver, par une exploration intérieure des dimensions fondamentales de l'expérience humaine, que la rationalité est à sa source parce qu'elle est la forme instinctive ou biologique de la vie humaine. Au chapitre 2, je démontre comment la *Phénoménologie* de Hegel transforme ainsi la mission de la logique. Premièrement, étant donné que nous avons un besoin instinctif de rendre notre expérience intelligible, notre expérience est structurée: (1) par les affirmations que nous faisons instinctivement, déjà au niveau de notre corps, concernant si nos perceptions sont vraies ou si nous devons agir conformément à nos désirs et (2) par l'univers de signification que nous créons instinctivement pour expliquer à la fois le monde qui nous entoure et nous-mêmes. Deuxièmement, étant donné que les affirmations ne peuvent être réglées que dans la pratique sociale consistant à donner et à demander des raisons, nous avons également un besoin instinctif de trouver un consensus sur notre manière de comprendre le monde et d'agir dans celui-ci, ce qui conduit à l'émergence expérientielle de sociétés dont le *Weltanschauung* évolue historiquement dans le temps. Par conséquent, la rationalité décrite par la logique est la matrice existentielle de notre expérience perceptuelle, pratique, scientifique et sociohistorique.

Au chapitre 3, je reconstruis la « Logique objective » de Hegel. À la suite de Kant, Hegel propose ici une théorie transcendantale des catégories. Ces catégories, qui vont de

« la qualité » à « l'actualité », définissent les normes *a priori* à satisfaire pour que nous puissions considérer quelque chose comme un objet d'un certain type, disons, comme une instanciation d'une qualité (par exemple, rouge) ou un processus qui s'actualise de lui-même (par exemple, le monde naturel ou social en tant qu'un système qui se déploie). En ce sens, les catégories dessinent les plans de l'univers de signification qui anime l'expérience humaine. Au chapitre 4, je reconstruis la « Logique subjective » de Hegel, qui retravaille radicalement la logique traditionnelle en une théorie transcendantale de l'espace de raisons distinctement humain : les intérêts subjectifs, mais également rationnels, qui nous motivent et les modes de comportement innés (concevoir, juger et inférer) à travers lesquelles nous les poursuivons, les normes *a priori* de cet espace étant celles qui supportent l'univers de signification dans lequel notre expérience est réalisée. Plus précisément, la Logique Subjective décrit le processus de conceptualisation qui fait de nous des êtres humains, à savoir des *Homo sapiens* : des êtres vivants qui ne s'intéressent pas seulement à la survie et à la reproduction, comme le sont les autres animaux, mais qui, de par leur nature même, sont à la recherche de la sagesse ou de la vérité.

List of Abbreviations

Hegel's works in German

- GW* *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Gesammelte Werke*. 31 Volumes. Edited by Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. Felix Meiner, 1968–.
- V* *Vorlesungen: Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte*. Edited by Pierre Garniron and Walter Jaeschke. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1983–.
- W* *Werke in zwanzig Bänden. Auf der Grundlage der Werke von 1832–45 neu edierte Ausgabe*. 20 volumes. Edited by E. Moldenhauer and K.M. Michel. Suhrkamp, 1970.

English translations of Hegel's works

- EL* *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline Part I: Science of Logic*. Edited and translated by Klaus Brinkmann and Daniel O. Dahlstrom. Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- FPS* *Hegel's First Philosophy of Spirit (being Part III of the "System of Speculative Philosophy of 1803/4)*. In *G.W.F. Hegel: System of Ethical Life (1802/3) and First Philosophy of Spirit (1803/4)*. Edited and translated by H.S. Harris and T.M. Knox Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979. 205-265.
- JPS* *Hegel and the Human Spirit: A Translation of the Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit (1805-6) with commentary*. Translated by L. Rauch. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983.
- Letters* *Hegel: The Letters*. Translated by Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.
- LL* *Lectures on Logic: Berlin, 1831*. Translated by Clark Butler. Indiana University Press, 2008.
- LHP I* *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. Translated by E. S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson. London: Humanities Press, 1996.
- LHP II* *Lectures on the History of Philosophy 1825-26. Volume I: Introduction and Oriental Philosophy, Together With the Introductions from Other Series of These Lectures*. Edited by Robert F. Brown. Translated by Robert F. Brown

and J.N. Stewart with the assistance of H.S. Harris. Oxford: Calredon Press, 2009.

LPWH *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History. Volume 1: Manuscripts of the Introduction and the Lectures of 1822–3.* Edited and translated by Robert F. Brown and Peter C. Hodgson with the assistance of William G. Geuss, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

PH *Philosophy of History.* Translated by J. Sibree. New York: Dover, 1956.

PM *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind.* Translated by W. Wallace and A.V. Miller. Revised by M.J. Inwood. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

PN *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature.* 3 volumes. Translated by M.J. Petry. Humanities Press, 1970.

PR *Elements of the Philosophy of Right.* Edited by Allen W. Wood. Translated by H.B. Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991

PS *Phenomenology of Spirit.* Translated by A.V. Miller. Oxford University Press, 1977.

SL *Science of Logic.* Edited and translated by George di Giovanni. Cambridge University Press, 2010.

English translation of Kant

A / B *Critique of Pure Reason.* Edited and translated by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood. Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Introduction: Hegel, the Philosopher of Human Rationality

What is logic? According to a longstanding philosophical *doxa*—one that spans from Schelling through Russell to Deleuze¹—Hegel’s infamous answer to this question is that the principles of thinking that logic describes are, at a more profound level, also the principles of being to which everything must conform. Consequently, by studying logic we also learn something primordial about ultimate reality because logic is, in short, metaphysics, a formal outline of the rationality of the universe at large and our place in it. The reason for this, so the *doxa* goes, is that Hegel’s logic demonstrates, through the invention of a new “dialectical method,” that the systematic order of the natural and human worlds is not the product of the will of God, substance, or the laws described by empirical science, but instead that of “the Concept” (*der Begriff*)—or, in more conventional vocabulary, Reason—which immanently exists in and organizes these worlds by its own inner rational principles as only a “speculative logic” can describe. In this regard, the three books of Hegel’s logic—the *Doctrines of Being*, *Essence*, and the *Concept*—deduce the basic categories structuring what is: how every quality comes and ceases to be by underlying substantial and causal principles, an ontogenetic process generated by an activity homologous to that of judgment and syllogism through which ontological subjects have predicates and are what they are because of their place in a larger whole.

This line of interpretation is the one I am challenging.² It has extreme and moderate versions. On one side of the spectrum, it endorses a “spirit monism”: the position that ultimate reality is a God-like “Spirit” (*Geist*), which may also be rendered as “Mind,” that unconsciously deploys itself in the universe, thereby creating and orchestrating the

¹ See, for instance, F. W. J. von Schelling, *On the History of Modern Philosophy*, trans. Andrew Bowie (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 134–63; Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (Simon and Schuster, 2008), 730–46; Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Patton, Paul (A&C Black, 2004), 9, 11.

² It was first introduced into English by Stirling and McTaggart. These are the first works of secondary literature on Hegel in English: James Hutchison Stirling, *The Secret of Hegel: Being the Hegelian System in Origin, Principle, Form, and Matter*, 2 vols. (Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, & Green, 1865); John McTaggart Ellis McTaggart, *A Commentary on Hegel’s Logic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910); John McTaggart Ellis McTaggart, *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1918); John McTaggart Ellis McTaggart, *Studies in the Hegelian Dialectic*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge University: Cambridge University Press, 1922). It continues strong up to today with some key commentators such as Taylor, Beiser, Houlgate, Stern, and countless others.

becoming of nature and human history with the aim of becoming self-conscious in and through it.³ On the other side of the spectrum, it advocates a “conceptual realism” according to which abstract universals are independently existing ideal forms that constitute the furniture of the universe.⁴ In-between, it signifies a “panlogism of the Concept,” that is, a revised Spinozism in which the universe, rather than being the effect of mechanical causation, is the realization of a living *logos*, making the natural and human worlds analogous to the purposive whole of an organism in which everything has its pre-ordained place set by the Reason that is intrinsic to the universe.⁵ What unities all these diverse takes is, their differences notwithstanding, the declaration that, for Hegel, the basic structure of our universe, if not its details, are, in principle at least, deducible from thinking alone because there is an identity of being and thinking: the principles by which *we* think are the same by which the *universe* constitutes itself.

This line of interpretation, despite its lack of agreement as to the specificity of Hegel’s rationalist metaphysics, is the standard one. But contra this tradition, I contend that there is simply *no* question of Hegel’s logic being a rationalist metaphysics that dialectically deduces the existence of some God-like Spirit or Mind realizing itself in the universe, the conceptual forms of ultimate reality, or a neo-Spinozism. It is, as the title of his magnum opus the *Science of Logic* already suggests, a systematic work in logic in the strictest sense of that word: that is, a normative account of the principles of thinking.

But that logic is, for Hegel, a theory of rationality does not entail that it is not a metaphysics of a very special type. Hegel is adamant that logic is not a merely formal discipline. True: its primary objective is to codify thinking. But since, as Hegel never tires of saying, “to be human is to think” (*der Mensch ist denkend*) (cf. *LL*, 7/*GW*, 23.2: 657), thinking is the activity that makes us ontologically distinct from all other animals. This is because, on Hegel’s account, while all living creatures have instincts and drives, that is,

³ This is the position of Stirling and Taylor. For the former, see the above footnote. For the latter, see Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge University Press, 1977).

⁴ Cf. Robert Stern, “Hegel’s Idealism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Frederick C. Beiser (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 137–74.

⁵ This is the approach of McTaggart, Beiser, and Houlgate. For McTaggart, see footnote 2. For the others, cf. Frederick Beiser, *Hegel* (Routledge, 2005); Stephen Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel’s Logic: From Being to Infinity* (Purdue University Press, 2006).

innate patterns of behaviour that they perform to satisfy specific needs, we alone are living creatures that are instinctively driven to think (cf. *LL*, 3, 22, 32/*GW*, 23.2: 654, 670, 679; *SL*, 17, 18, 19/*GW*, 21: 15-16, 16, 17), in other words, to provide reasons for what we should believe and how we should act by our biological nature. Consequently, we don't just provide reasons that explain the what, why, and wither of things and ourselves; we have a need to *produce and consume reasons*, to theoretically understand the natural and human worlds, like how other living creatures have a need to *seek out and consume food*.⁶ In other words, for Hegel we are human only insofar as we, in our experience, are concerned with pursuing a specifically rational interest in giving accounts of reality, just as plants and animals pursue specifically natural interests, interests that are in each case the foundation of a unique life-world. It is precisely this rational life-world, *our* life-world, that Hegel's logic describes. In the same vein that a tree is internally compelled to grow towards the sun, avoid the shade, and blossom, or a dog sniff out what is edible, an unhostile environment, and who are appropriate mates in order to sustain their lives and preserve the life of the species, the human being is internally compelled to create a universe of meaning in order to live—a universe of meaning formally outlined by his new, distinctive type of logic, a universe that we inhabit from the very beginning of our lives exactly like a plant or dog does theirs.

In this sense, I maintain that Hegel's logic does not draw up the blueprints for the basic structure of the *physical* universe as a product of "the Concept" writ large cosmically. Instead, it tells us the blueprints for the basic structure of the universe *of meaning* that we, as living creatures instinctively driven to think, create to circumvent our experience, a universe of meaning produced by the distinctively human process of conceptualization. The latter is all that Hegel denotes by "the concept," which must now be writ small. In this manner, the three books of Hegel's logic—once again, the *Doctrines of Being*, *Essence*, and the *Concept*—deduce the basic categories by which we are impelled to make sense of various qualities, provide substantial and causal explanations of them, and how these

⁶ Such a literal understanding of our need to produce and consume reasons along the lines of the animalistic need of seeking and consuming food takes inspiration from Hegel's own comparison of the instinct of reason with the instinct for eating we see in animals: "Just as the instinct of the animal seeks and consumes food, but thereby brings forth nothing other than itself, so too the instinct of Reason in its quest finds only Reason itself." (*PS*, 157 §258/*GW*, 9: 147).

accounts are taken as true in what Hegel, anticipating Sellars' logical "space of reasons,"⁷ calls the "pure space" of thinking: the activity of making claims and justifying them in discourse as a naturally occurring capacity in us central to what the human being is and which his logic formally outlines. In doing logic, we therefore do more than just learn about how we *ought* to think or talk; we learn about *our very essence* (*SL*, 10/*GW*, 21: 8), about the rational normativity that instinctively structures our behaviour and the specific need for meaning that gives our existence the character that it has. In other words, for Hegel logic is, strictly speaking, *anthropological* (taken in the general sense of the study of the human being, not in particular sense that Hegel bestows upon it in his later *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*). It is, in terms closer to those of his time, a metaphysics of spirit: an account of the rational and biological form of life, "spirit," that we possess, the form of life that explains why our experience has the specific shape that it does, why we do what we do vis-à-vis other forms of life, and what is our place in nature.

0.1 Logic, rationality, and the quintessential human experience of the world

According to Hegel's anthropological conception of logic, the rationality that logic distills makes possible the quintessential human experience of the world in two ways. First, insofar as we are living creatures who instinctively use thinking to traverse our surroundings, something can only enter into our experience *if we give a rationally satisfying account of it*, similar to how, for a shark, something can only enter into its experience if it is instinctively detected by its unique capacity for electroreception. As such, even our bodily perceptions and desires must be rational through and through: since we instinctively give and demand reasons for our beliefs and actions, we can only ever directly experience them as revealing information about the world or as pushing us to action because they are the product of our bodies making well-reasoned claims. By way of illustration, when I just see that the streets are wet, this perception strikes me as straightforwardly true because my body has instinctively inferred it from the fact that it had rained earlier. Likewise, when I feel strongly the urge to uphold a desire against someone who tries to impede it, this is because I have instinctively inferred that I am entitled to it. Perceptual content and

⁷ Wilfrid Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (Harvard University Press, 1997), 160, section 36.

desires—the most rudimentary experiences—*always already* stand in the logical space of reasons. As Hegel summarizes, rationality animates everything we do, even our “sensing, intuiting, desiring” (*SL*, 12/*GW*, 21: 11). In this respect, logic, on Hegel’s interpretation, describes the “*logical nature*” (*SL*, 17/*GW*, 21: 15) of the human being as a being endowed with what he refers to as “spirit” (*Geist*), a term of conceptual art that indicates not so much the human mind, mind being an alternate translation, but the distinctive features and existential implications of human mindedness:⁸ that we possess an instinctively driven need to produce and consume reasons so strong that “the concept,” Hegel’s choice word for the process of conceptualization as such, informs our conscious and self-conscious experience.

Second, the rationality that Hegel’s logic distils also explains why we are social beings who share *common ways of life and histories*. Rationality is the source of its own normativity: the reasons *I* provide for my beliefs and actions dictate how I think *you* should view the things around us and the goals of human praxis and vice versa such that only an exchange of reasons can adjudicate between which view should be taken as the standard one for us. In other words, spirit is, in Hegel’s famous phrase, an “‘I’ that is ‘We’ and ‘We’ that is ‘I’” (*PS*, 110 §177/*GW*, 9: 108). That is, in virtue of our instinctively driven need to produce and consume reasons, the process of conceptualization at the heart of the human experience has for its aim a *consensus* upon what is true and good, so that, in terms of the theoretical and practical commitments that we hereby would share, there would emerge an identity between me, you, and everyone else, a *communal worldview* with a concomitant common way of life, inasmuch as we take ourselves entitled to these commitments. Put differently, since we have, for Hegel, such a need for reasons, we therefore also have an instinctively driven need to communicate and we thus perforce engage in social practices of giving and asking for reasons like the discourses of science, politics, art, religion, and philosophy, discourses whose findings determine how we comprehend nature and give rise to the customs, laws, and principles in accordance with which we act, worldviews and ways of life that can revise themselves over time as the reasons we provide for them are corrected

⁸ For an alternative and insightful account of Hegelian *Geist* as mindedness, see Terry Pinkard, *German Philosophy 1760-1860: The Legacy of Idealism* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 268–84.

and modified. Or, as Hegel puts it, language is the “existence of spirit” (*PS*, 395 §652/*GW*, 9: 351) and “bears the mark of thinking” (*LL*, 11/*GW*, 23.2: 661), language thereby being more than a grammar and vocabulary for conveying information, but more strongly a discursive practice through which you and I establish which beliefs and values we, as a community, ought to agree upon. As that whose task is to describe the “essence” of spirit (*SL*, 10/*GW*, 21: 8), logic, for Hegel, therefore formally outlines the basic rational normativity that instinctively governs our use of language as a social practice taking place within the logical space of reasons, a space that informs our sociohistorical experience.

0.2 Hegel’s transformation of logic as a discipline

Hegel’s thesis is that, inasmuch as we are instinctively driven to think, we always seek, by an inner compulsion, to make things and ourselves *intelligible*, indeed, as intelligible as possible by making and justifying claims. The rationality that Hegel’s logic seeks to unearth is therefore that rationality through which thinking, the medium of which is language as discourse, endeavours to conceptually comprehend (the act of *begreifen*, related to *Begriff* or concept) a subject matter (*ein Gegenstand*) that it factually encounters in experience by making it something intelligible (*ein Objekt*) in a universe of meaning.⁹ Because thinking is not just an activity that *we* perform, but is, for Hegel, by definition *intentional*, about or directed at objects, he argues that logic must be divided into two distinct, but interrelated parts: so-called “Objective” and “Subjective” Logic.

0.2.1 Objective Logic: the formal outline of a universe of meaning

Following Kant, Hegel’s Objective Logic provides a transcendental logic of “categories”: *a priori* fundamental concepts of objects in general (*Gegenstände überhaupt*) that we bring to experience and against which we measure its intelligibility, concepts that set the standard for what *counts* as an object of a certain *kind* in our discourse. These categories, analyzed in the Doctrines of Being and Essence, range in the complexity of the objects that they formally outline from “being,” “nothing,” and “becoming” to “reciprocity.” The former set of categories stipulate the most elementary conditions that must be met for us to recognize

⁹ For the importance of this distinction, a distinction that has been largely missed due to the difficulty of translating *Gegenstand* and *Objekt* and which is crucial for my reading, see George di Giovanni, “Introduction,” in *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: The Science of Logic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), xxxvi.

the “being” of something, namely that it can be picked out as “this” and then “that” in a rhapsodic play of qualities found in experience. The latter set stipulates the compound conditions that must be met for us to recognize in such a play substances that causally conspire together to produce a teleologically structured system. These categories thus set the norm of meaning that must be satisfied by whatever is factually encountered in experience for us *to take* it as a real-life instantiation of a qualitative unity (say, this red or that person in the here and now) or a unity that comprises a reciprocal relation (say, a living organism or a state) and therefore claim that it is or ought to be *truly there*. In this sense, Hegel’s Objective Logic formally outlines the universe of meaning that we instinctively create to navigate our environment—those kinds of objects that we are always instinctively on the look for, just like a dog is always instinctively on the look for certain kinds of smells.

Hegel’s argument is that the categories formally outlined by his Objective Logic make for the universality and necessity of our claims, the objectivity of knowledge in the robust sense, by defining various types of objects that we may experientially find: whenever a subject matter is indeed made intelligible by a set of categories in our discourse about it, we are justified in believing that this set is a normatively appropriate response to said object, that is, to its intrinsic, mind-independent structure. It is therefore, on Hegel’s model of idealism, the object itself that, as it were, carries the normativity of the categories. For whether or not the application of any given set of categories is deemed valid will depend upon whether it is taken as actually capturing how things and ourselves truly are or ought to be or, instead, leaves their subject matter still lacking determination, ambiguous, surrounded in mystery, inconsistent, or perhaps fails to bring forth anything significant about them at all. Put differently, the categories are, from the beginning, beholden to the objects that they endeavour to make intelligible such that the point around which discourse orbits is “object-oriented” rather than “subject-oriented”: while the objective categories reflect the *activity* of thinking—the normative structure of the objects that they define govern the discourses we embark upon, the explanations we give, how we use concepts, and so on—Hegel’s contention is that logic should deal with how such activity can issue in the awareness of what something objectively *is*, not just how *we* think validly.

However, in analyzing these categories, Hegel’s Objective Logic does more than “list” our most primitive concepts. In the conceptual movement from one set of categories

to another, a movement through which each set is said to be deduced as universal and necessary, Hegel aims to demonstrate how we don't just use them *ad hoc* in the activity of giving meaning. Instead, these categories are shown to *take up* (“sublate,” *aufheben*) previous ones, qualifying, building upon, and expanding the objective content laid down by them in a norm-governed fashion. That is, the Objective Logic charts the conceptual moves that discourse must make in order to make an initial object more and more intelligible to us, how our knowledge of a given subject matter *should grow*. It grows by establishing the fulfilling conditions that must be met for the valid application of more and more advanced categories. To anticipate the main steps of this movement, the Objective Logic ideally dramatizes how discourse, after initially determining an object as being rhapsodically “this” and then “that” through the introduction of the categories of “quality,” should, to make this object more fully intelligible as such a play, introduce the categories of “quantity” and “measure” in an attempt to determine the formal unity that supports it. To make this unity even more fully intelligible, discourse should then introduce the categories of “essence” in an attempt to determine the inner principle that explains the play of qualities and quantities that makes up an object, eventually determining how objects interrelate in a dynamic causal nexus of a world in becoming. As such, Hegel's Objective Logic not only formally outlines the universe of meaning that we create and inhabit; it also formally outlines how the universe of meaning progressively develops itself.

0.2.1 Subjective Logic: the formal outline of the logical space of reasons

However, the categories on their own do not account for *why* or *how* we use them. In the transition from the Objective to the Subjective Logic, Hegel's position is that, were it not for our *subjective*, species-specific interest in reality having a reason for being whatever it *objectively* is, we would never go about the task of creating a universe of meaning in the first place. Put differently, we here transition from a realistic attitude—our certainty that our experience is populated by a variety of mind-independent objects that command an evidence over us—to the idealistic attitude that supports it. In this manner, Hegel's Subjective Logic reworks traditional logic by concerning itself with those categories, understood as instincts or drives (*SL*, 17/*GW*, 21: 15-16), through which we attempt to achieve that which would satisfy our interest in things and ourselves being intelligible by navigating the logical space of reasons. The Subjective Logic formally outlines that space,

now understood as a distinctively human space in which our experience is realized. In the first place, it concerns itself with the reciprocal conceptual determinations between “universality,” “particularity,” and “singularity” that set the ideal of meaning that we seek in our experience. This ideal is constituted by the norm of a universal concept that explains, by means of an inner principle, all the particular concepts under it, thus making itself into a singular universe of meaning. In the second place, it deals with the forms of judgment that stipulate the possible relations between these determinations. In the third place, it treats the forms of syllogism that can mediate a given relation by showing relations between determinations, placing judgments in inferential networks in which judgments back up one another. However, throughout Hegel’s formal outline of judgment and syllogism, we are never to forget that these categories are innate patterns of behaviour that we largely just unconsciously follow in making our experience intelligible. Thus, if the Objective Logic is an account of the conceptual moves of our discourse about things and ourselves, the kinds of intelligible presences that we are instinctively driven to look for around and within us and recognize as real, the Subjective Logic is an account of the conceptual moves of discursiveness as such: how we are instinctively driven to make claims and justify them according to our subjective interest in reality displaying complete intelligibility, an interest through which we are impelled to give meaning to experience. Consequently, if the Objective Logic formally outlines the universe of meaning that we create and inhabit, the Subjective Logic formally outlines how such a universe is only engendered and sustained from within the logical space of reasons through the coeval activities of conceiving, judging, and inferring.

Yet there is, according to Hegel, an important distinction to be drawn between how we, as creatures of “spirit” with a rational instinct, give meaning to our environment and how other animals give meaning to theirs by obeying their own instincts. This is because, for Hegel, the instincts of other animals internally compel them to pursue species-specific subjective interests whose sole purpose is to help their survival and reproduction. Nevertheless, Hegel does not believe that all animals besides us are mere automatons. They are, in point of fact, “idealists” (*PN*, vol. 3, 144 §359 Addition/*GW*, 24.3:1552) of a particular type inasmuch as they, too, engage in meaning-generating activities that carve up their experience in light of their respective species-specific subjective interests. But they

do so in accordance with interests that are admittedly subjective in the pejorative sense of the word: they are instinctively driven to make brute nature appear to them as water to be drunk, food to be eaten, places to seek shelter or avoid, beings to mate with, and so on. No such proto-conceptual distinctions reveal what objectively is; instead, they interpret being in a way peculiar to each animal's own life-world.

Hegel's position is that we should not uphold that our meaning-generating activities likewise issue in a merely subjective perspective for two reasons. On the one hand, there is something irreducibly unique about the human animal. We, in instinctively making claims about what things and ourselves truly are or ought to be and justifying these claims, are always beholden to objects themselves rather than concerned with how they "fit" certain practical concerns such as the biological interest in survival and reproduction or our self-conscious interest in action. In virtue of this, we are animals that by our very nature adopt a critical distance towards ourselves and approach what is speculatively. On the other hand, for Hegel being itself is intrinsically intelligible. We have no reason to assume that had we, say, access to a "God's-eye point of view" that this point of view would falsify what is known through the logical space of reasons, thereby rendering the entire realm of human experience and knowledge a mere appearance (*Schein*) of some underlying ultimate reality that, by definition, transcends our meaning-generating activities. There is, on Hegel's account at least, therefore no implication that the universe of meaning that we create and inhabit is merely "for us." In other words, although Hegel is post-Kantian, he is not postmodern: in his idealism, there exists no insurmountable gap between phenomena and noumena in virtue of the fact that the intelligible universe formally outlined by the categories is conceived of as revelatory of what being is "in itself." Consequently, Hegel's logic proves to be much more than a theory of categories, meaning, or the social practice of giving and asking for reasons—it is, more primordially, a theory of how our idealist attitude permits things and ourselves, which are otherwise just there, to appear as whatever they happen or ought to be. As such, Hegel's logic is a theory of truth that is non-deflationary (*SL*, 508/*GW*, 12: 6) in that the logical space of reasons that it defines is that

which enables us to discover what is as whatever it is, making the logical space of reasons itself what we may call “a space of discovery.”¹⁰

In describing the logical space of reasons, Hegel’s Subjective Logic therefore attempts to show how the process of conceptualization can issue in the genuine awareness of objects as they in fact are. Nevertheless, just as in his Objective Logic, his Subjective Logic does not merely “list” the basic forms of conceiving, judgment, and inference. It also formally outlines how judgments and patterns of inference contribute, in a norm-governed fashion, to the progressive development of a universe of meaning that can capture what is. In the conceptual movement from one form to another, a movement through which each form is likewise said to be deduced as universal and necessary, Hegel seeks to demonstrate how the forms underlying the activity of conceiving, as performed in judgments and inferences, intricately interplay with one another. The aim of his analysis is to show how thinking is, to use a contemporary metaphor and bestow upon it a technical meaning, a game of giving and asking for reasons. The pieces we play with are the conceptual determinations of “universality,” “particularity,” and “singularity” as these reflect determinations of objects. In that game, the goal is, by placing these determinations in certain relations according to certain strategies, to advance from judgments that make claims about perceptual facts to those of increasingly complex types (observational, theoretical, and evaluative), types which qualify, build upon, and expand one another until the arrangement of the pieces bring about a rationally satisfying account of something, through which the game is “won.” But judgments of any given type can only have an impact upon us if we give convincing reasons for them through appropriate patterns of inference, reasons that are open to counter-reasons and therefore demand new patterns of inference, with different tactics in that game, to make a subject matter more intelligible. In Hegel’s account of syllogism, just as in his account of judgment, each pattern qualifies, builds upon, and expands previous patterns. His Subjective Logic therefore charts the conceptual moves through which discourse proves to be a self-unfolding, self-revising universe of meaning capable, in principle, of complete intelligibility.

¹⁰ I borrow this expression from di Giovanni, who uses it to make the same point. di Giovanni, xxxviii.

0.3 Logic as “self-knowledge”: describing the rational form of human life

The anthropological interpretation of Hegel’s logic that I here espouse has much in common with recent, “non-traditional” readings of Hegel. These readings have offered diverse approaches to his logic, all with their merits, including construing it as a transcendental idealism à la Kant,¹¹ an account of meaning or discourse,¹² and a pragmatist theory of truth.¹³ I have tried to synthesize together what I take to be the most important insights from this recent scholarship, while emphasizing the realistic moment of his so-called absolute idealism I believe many of them have a tendency to ignore. Hegel’s logic is not as “subject-oriented” as they aver; it is “object-oriented” from the start. But, I wager, what all of these are additionally missing is that the stakes of Hegel’s logic are much higher than getting the right epistemology, philosophy of language, or explanation of conceptual content.

Hegel’s logic portrays, in the medium of formal reflection, *what we are*. This is because, as a model of the rationality that is always already instinctively operative in human experience, it is the logic of the existential quest for intelligibility that is the driving force behind human perception, action, and communities with their histories. For while it is nonetheless a formal discipline concerned with the codification of rational norms, Hegel saves logic as a discipline from the formalism of which it is often accused by elevating it to something of the greatest importance for us: an exercise in “self-knowledge” (*Sichwissen*) (*SL*, 17/*GW*, 21: 16), a distillation of human nature, in that the norms it codifies dictate the rational interests that motivate our behaviour from beginning to end

¹¹ The most famous of such an attempt is Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel’s Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge University Press, 1989). But see also, for instance, Klaus Brinkmann, *Idealism Without Limits: Hegel and the Problem of Objectivity* (Springer Science & Business Media, 2010); Tom Rockmore, *German Idealism as Constructivism* (University of Chicago Press, 2016).

¹² Cf. di Giovanni, “Introduction.”

¹³ The pragmatist reading has been more thoroughly developed as an interpretation of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The two major texts here are: Terry Pinkard, *Hegel’s Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason* (Cambridge University Press, 1996); Robert B. Brandom, *A Spirit of Trust: A Reading of Hegel’s Phenomenology* (Harvard University Press, 2019). However, Pinkard has also offered various sketches of Hegel’s logic along these terms. Cf. Terry Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 348–51; Terry Pinkard, “Hegel’s *Phenomenology* and *Logic*: An Overview,” in *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*, ed. Karl Ameriks (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 227–47.

and how we, in our behaviour, go about realizing them, largely unawares, with the same unconscious facility with which we digest to realize our biological interest in survival (*EL*, 30 §2 Remark/GW, 20: 41). Such a quest for intelligibility is not, for Hegel, something accidental to who we are—it originates from “the *Bedürfnis* to introduce unity into the manifold” of experience (cf. *EL*, 55 §21 Addition/GW, 8: 23.3: 816), *Bedürfnis* signifying a “need” or “vital necessity.” To say that rationality places within us a *need* to produce and consume reasons is to therefore say that we must comprehend the natural and human worlds *in order to live* just like other animals seek out and consume food. In a nutshell, reasons provide us with the “spiritual” sustenance necessary to satisfy the aims associated with our rational instinct or drive and relieve the tensions that burst forth when this instinct or drive fails to be satisfied. We can therefore just as little escape thinking and the social practices of giving and asking for reasons that it gives rise to in the pursuit of a flourishing life as trees setting roots, spiders spinning webs, or fish swimming in their own pursuit of living a life that is full.

It is this anthropological dimension of Hegel’s logic that I contend the transcendental, semantic, and pragmatist readings do not capture, a dimension that gives us a richer understanding of thinking and talking than these can. To think or talk is, for Hegel, more than applying *a priori* categories, conveying information through speech acts, of participating in a social practice of discourse. It is *to be human*. Our rational instinct or drive thus has an ontological implication: it entails that raising questions about the natural and human worlds, communicating our answers to one another, testing and questioning them, and coming to historically evolving communal worldviews—in short, creating a universe of meaning—is a fate to which we are, by (our) nature, destined. In this regard, as a model of the rationality instinctively driving human experience, Hegel’s logic is not to be judged just on the strengths or weaknesses of its deduction of the categories, its semantics, or its formalization of the social practice of giving and asking for reasons. As he revealingly makes the point, logic by itself is “the realm of shadows” (*SL*, 37/GW, 21: 42). Consequently, it only attains to its truth when seen as what I call the “existential matrix” of our experience and, as such, is only successful to the degree that it makes intelligent its underlying structure, the structure of our very life-world—in a way similar to how the grammar and vocabulary of a language should not be understood simply as the

topic of a language learning textbook in which its system is expounded, but should be understood as being the language of a living culture.

0.4 The “fiery leprosy of the sky”: the anti-Spinozism and anti-Romanticism of Hegel’s logic

I advance another claim as to the insufficiency of the transcendental, semantic, and pragmatist readings of Hegel’s logic beyond how they overlook its deeply anthropological task. They are also lacking in their avowedly non-metaphysical interpretations of the text. In contrast, I maintain that Hegel’s logic goes beyond the formalism of logic not only insofar as it describes the rationality of human experience, but also in how it undertakes, in a purely logical register, a series of metaphysical commitments: (1) being is in becoming; (2) the radical freedom of the human being qua rational; (3) the facticity of nature; and (4) the self-containedness and self-justification of our sociohistorical life, which makes spirit into the absolute rather than nature.

0.4.1 Being as becoming

There is perhaps no more well-known transition in Hegel’s logic than the opening moves from the categories of “being” and “nothing” to the category of “becoming.” With these, we are to give witness to how the mere predication of “being” to something fails to make it determinately intelligible: to the extent that anything that is anything *is*, to merely recognize its presence cannot provide us with cognitively significant about *what* it is, which requires of us to recognize how its presence differs from the presence of everything else. As such, the predication of “being” risks amounting to the predication of “nothing” insofar as it is empty of content. According to Hegel’s logical story of which further categories must intervene to make the initial predication of “being” more fully intelligible, this can only be done by conceiving both the categories of “being” and “nothing” as moments of the more concrete category of “becoming.” That is, it is only by assuming that something *becomes* whatever it is—by keeping, gaining, and/or losing traits or properties through an ontogenetic process—that it can be *meaningfully* distinguished from other things. Nevertheless, while this story is indeed logical in nature, it also provides a transcendental argument, as it were, for the metaphysical priority of becoming over being: unless being is *constitutively* in becoming, knowledge itself is impossible, for in that case the very domain of becoming, the domain of human experience itself, would be rendered into the illusory

appearance of some static eternal order that simply is whatever it is from eternity. On the grounds of this argument, Hegel's logic takes a stand against a major trend in Western metaphysics that started with Parmenides. As we shall see, by privileging the category of "becoming" instead of that of "being" and deducing the categories that must be brought into play to make "becoming" more and more intelligible, Hegel's logic is also able to articulate an epistemology according to which there is no ontic gap between human experience (the realm of appearance in its constant flux and change) and ultimate reality (the realm of the essential structures that underline appearance), thereby battling against any two-world metaphysics.

0.4.2 Spirit's break from nature

In the transition from the Objective to the Subjective Logic, Hegel's logic seeks to demonstrate how the manners through which we view and thus comport ourselves toward the natural and human worlds are *exclusively* determined by us in the logical space of reasons. The consequence of Hegel's model of rationality is that our need to produce and consume reasons makes human beings qualitatively different than the rest of nature. Mechanical laws cause the motion of bodies in space and time; chemical laws cause chemical reactions; and living creatures are under the sway of their physiology, which dictates how they perceive the world, and their instincts and drives, which dictate their needs, what objects will satisfy them, and the innate patterns of behaviour followed for this purpose (e.g., their complex hunting and mating rituals, their migratory patterns, their social orders, and so on). But what is so distinctive about our species-specific need for reasons is that its presence is so strong as to *override* the givens of our physiology and all other needs. We can, for example, acknowledge that an object that looks one colour is, in fact, another because of suboptimal lighting conditions. As for our needs, our rational instinct or drive is able: (1) to re-write all others, whether it be eating, drinking, or copulation (e.g., in the name of a justified political cause, we may go on a hunger strike, courting death); (2) to elect the very objects that will satisfy our needs by choosing what needs we will pursue (say, social recognition, which goes over and above what we biologically need to survive and reproduce, the main goals of a merely natural life); and (3) generate new patterns of behaviour (say, moral or social principles of action). Other living creatures cannot accomplish such feats. And this is because, since we *demand* and

therefore *respond* to reasons for belief and action, we never merely *react* to causes such as the external stimuli that cause us to see this or that or the internal stimuli that impel us to do something. Rationality is therefore *the* determining factor of our behaviour, making our experience—how we literally see the world and act in it—something that can only be grasped from within the logical space of reasons. In this regard, Hegel takes his logic to be nothing short of the proof of our radical freedom: “In the concept the kingdom of *freedom* is disclosed” (*SL*, 513/*GW*, 12: 15).

Nevertheless, inasmuch as rationality is an instinct or drive constitutive of a form of life and instincts, drives, and life itself are a product of nature, so too is, ultimately, spirit. In other words, Hegel’s logic rejects reductive naturalism in the sphere of human behaviour. That means it is decisively anti-Spinozistic. It puts forth the metaphysical thesis that nature is *non-all*: that there is at least one creature in it that can “carve out” a space in which it can live out its own life on its own terms; that, contra a monistic cancellation of all peculiarity in the all-pervasive “weave” of the one and only substance, a self-enclosed deterministic system of causes, our instinct or drive of rationality engenders and sustains a “kingdom within a kingdom” (*imperium in imperio*),¹⁴ namely the irreducible logical space of reasons. Consequently, Hegel’s logic proclaims that we can only make sense of our rational power to freely determine our experience if nature brings forth, in us, a metaphysical *novum*: a *sui generis*, self-grounding domain of reasons, the formal outline of which is given by logic. This unique balance of a non-naturalism and naturalism about the logical space of reasons is why Hegel is convinced that his logic is the “only possible refutation of Spinozism” (*SL*, 512/*GW*, 12: 15).

0.4.3 The impotence of nature

Hegel’s logic advances another metaphysical thesis. As living creatures instinctively driven to think about the natural world, we always measure the natural world according to an ideal of meaning: a universal concept that, in and through its own principle, exhaustively specifies itself into all the particular concepts that it subsumes, whereby it makes itself into a singular, self-contained and self-justifying universe of meaning. In such a universe, there

¹⁴ Benedictus de Spinoza, *The Ethics and Selected Letters*, ed. Seymour Feldman, trans. Samuel Shirley (Hackett Pub. Co., 1982), 103 (III pre).

is no extra-logical remainder: there is a rationally satisfying reason for everything within it. Hegel's point is that, were it not for such a discursive norm that orients all our rational attempts at comprehension as their *telos*, we would never embark upon them. However, the fact that we *expect* clarity, distinction, and explanatory completeness does not entail that we will discover them. Indeed, Hegel contends that the categories that define the logical space of reasons entail, at the level of the physical cosmos, the exact opposite, what he calls "the impotence of nature" (*die Ohnmacht der Natur*) (*SL*, 536/*GW*, 12: 39; *PN*, vol. 1, 215 §250/*GW*, 20: 240).

What Hegel signifies by this turn of phrase is that nature has an insurmountable air of *facticity* about it. For in it, "contingency," "rulelessness," "external determination," "arbitrariness," and "lack of order" prevail (*PN*, vol. 1, 215 §250 & Remark; translation modified/*GW*, 20: 239-240) such that it always resists rationally satisfying explanations. A mechanical object arises through accidental relations over which it has no control. A chemical object, however, comes to be through elective affinities between objects that dictate the conditions under which they will react and form a new substance, minimally controlling their becoming by an inner principle. Nevertheless, it is still bound to the vicissitudes of its environment. In a living creature, we have an object that maintains its own identity over space and time by growing, preserving itself, and reproducing the species by a self-generating and self-organizing principle that more fully controls its becoming. But here, just like at the lower levels, there is facticity: not only is there no good reason why this mechanical law, that chemical elective affinity, or such-and-such a biological form exist (we can always conceive it possible that they were otherwise); these objects, insofar as they are not in full control of their becoming, are also always open to unpredictable external influences—all of which prevents them from displaying complete intelligibility. Hegel's argument for why this is the case is simple and elegant. Nature just is whatever it is ineluctably. It may have laws, principles, forms, and a systematic order, yet, as soon as we start asking why they are the way they are, we cannot help but see them as largely factual. Nature has no need for reasons to be whatever it happens to be. To assume that it must exhibit the logical closure that our rationality demands is thus to falsely project and hypostasize the ideal of meaning that orients our thinking. In short, Hegel's logic commits him to a non-rationalist conception of nature.

The consequence of such a metaphysical commitment to the facticity of nature runs deep. It means that Hegel's logic is additionally metaphysically committed to the intrinsic intelligibility of being to us by opposing itself to another trend in Western metaphysics. For instance, according to Kant and Spinoza, had we access to, say, the mind of God in which everything that exists or occurs follows a hidden purpose in the design of the cosmos or the order of Substance in which relations of cause and effect are entailed with the same transparency as logical consequent and antecedent, we would see that what *seems* to us as contingent is *in fact* necessary. On their epistemic model, facticity of any kind is a mere result of the limitations of our rationality brought about by our inability to see the true reasons for what is such that being, as it were, *outruns* intelligibility for discursive intellects like ours, which risks making a mockery of our cognitive projects in that they are always "for us." By making facticity an *objective* feature of reality, however, Hegel forecloses the very possibility of a "God's-eye point of view" that could falsify our knowledge claims: there is *no* standpoint outside of the logical space of reasons that could make them a potentially illusory perspective on a reality whose structure always exceeds our capacities. For Hegel, we *can* truly comprehend why nature has this law or form rather than another, why this occurs rather than something else, and so on. If this comprehension is not satisfying to a full extent, it is not because we are, by definition, incapable of elevating ourselves to the point of view that would account for nature without any extra-logical remainder. Rather, because at some level the physical cosmos *just is what it is* with no clear, distinct, or explanatorily complete reasons for it not being otherwise, to assume that some other intellect could succeed where we fail is to operate with a theory of truth that is inapt with regards to the very structure of nature.¹⁵

0.4.4 Human history as the self-writing epic of spirit

Nevertheless, if nature itself is zone of irreducible facticity, things are different in the case of spirit. Since our behaviour is characterized by our demand and responsiveness to reasons, rather than being directly open to external influences, how we behave towards nature and one another is determined by the rational attitudes that we adopt, not by our

¹⁵ If the motto of Kant's philosophy is "to limit knowledge to make room for faith," perhaps a good motto for Hegel's philosophy would be "to limit being to make room for knowledge."

causal reaction to physiological stimuli, biological needs, psychologically conditioned behaviours, or what have you. But these attitudes are, for Hegel, first and foremost products of our worldviews and their concomitant ways of life: how we understand what is around us and how we should act derives from pre-existing systems of thought into which we are socialized. Interestingly, on Hegel's account this puts us in full control of our becoming while ensuring that this becoming does not in principle resist rationally satisfying explanation. To grasp why an individual or a community behaves the way it does, we simply have to grasp how the beliefs and values that guide the behaviour of each have come to be. And since these are the result of the social practices of giving and asking for reasons, realized in the discourses of science, politics, art, religion, and philosophy, there must always be good reasons for why they came about rather than others when they are placed in the history of their unfolding. Hegel's audacious idea is that logic, as a model of human rationality, captures the rationality that explains why "its [spirit's] becoming, *history*, is a conscious, self-mediating process" (*PS*, 492 §808/*GW*, 9: 433), that is, a self-contained and self-justifying sociohistorical life, thereby making spirit and its history the closest approximation that we have to what Spinoza called "substance."¹⁶

We should not be surprised, therefore, when Heinrich Heine reports how once, after he "rhapsodized about the stars, calling them the abodes of the blessed" at a party at which Hegel was in attendance, Hegel "growled out: 'The stars—hum! hum!—they are nothing but a fiery leprosy of the sky.'"¹⁷ In an age of Romanticism where everyone wished to return to Spinoza to revitalize a metaphysics in which humankind was one with nature, Hegel desired to show above all else that this nostalgia for a lost unity was misplaced. We have no need to overcome the nature/culture divide that the Romantics lamented wreaked havoc in modernity and risked depriving human life of meaning. To look for the meaning of human life in the life of nature is bound, according to Hegel, to disappoint. Nature is "without why." There is no Grand Narrative of the cosmos that would give us a rationally satisfying sense of purpose. The only such purpose we can find must therefore emerge from

¹⁶ Cf. Harris: "*the nearest substance is the communities we build.*" H. S. Harris, "Lecture Notes for Course on Hegel's Encyclopedia Logic" (1993), 5, <http://yorkspace.library.yorku.ca/xmlui/handle/10315/943>.

¹⁷ Heinrich Heine, *Heinrich Heine's Life Told in His Own Words*, ed. Gustav Karpeles, trans. Arthur Dexter (H. Holt, 1893), 112.

the meaning that we give to our lives as a community asking what the goals of our life should be. Hegel's claim is therefore that, insofar as I participate in culture, I am participating in the human historical drama of our search for meaning—a self-unfolding, self-revising universe of meaning (a rational becoming) that, as it were, breathes life into us, gives us things worth believing in, upholding, and even dying for, a universe that precedes our natural birth, invests it with an irreducibly spiritual significance, and will continue to work its magic long after us, provided nature does not cause “spirit to miscarry” (*LPWH*, 143/GW, 18: 19). Hegel's logic thus has the non-conventional aim of describing the rationality that makes the self-writing epic of spirit possible.

0.4.5 Problems of interpretation: “deflationary” vs. “inflationary” readings of Hegel's logic

In this fashion, my anthropological interpretation of Hegel's logic responds to the criticism long since held as the trump card against non-traditional readings *tout court*: that any such approach is *deflationary*, downplaying or ignoring Hegel's metaphysics, which can only issue in a historically inaccurate picture of Hegel.¹⁸ One of the earliest critiques comes from Michael Rosen, who asserts “that—whether one likes it or not—Hegel's speculative philosophy plainly corresponds to what, from the Kantian point of view, would be counted as ‘dogmatic metaphysics.’”¹⁹ I endeavour to show that, in developing an anthropological conception of logic, Hegel is not just concerned with categories, the conditions of intelligibility, linguistic matters, social practice, human historicity, or what have you. The “big questions” about the universe at large and our place within it are never far from his mind. To grasp the uniqueness of Hegel's logic, we must therefore grasp how it is a special type of metaphysics, a metaphysics of spirit: an account of the rational, biological form of life that we possess, its freedom and distinction from the rest of nature despite being a product of it, and the consequence of this that we can only find the rational satisfaction we so desperately seek when we turn our thought to spirit and its history and never in any, say, cosmogony.

¹⁸ A notable exception to this trend is di Giovanni, who argues that Hegel's logic “*does* make an ontological commitment, namely that being is in becoming” and that nature is irrevocably contingent. See di Giovanni, “Introduction,” liii–liv, lv–lvii.

¹⁹ Michael Rosen, “From *Vorstellung* to Thought: Is a ‘Non-‘Metaphysical’ View of Hegel Possible?,” in *Metaphysik nach Kant? : Stuttgarter Hegel-Kongress 1987* (Klett-Cotta, 1988), 255.

Beyond correcting this deficiency in non-traditional readings, I thereby also endeavour to show how my anthropological interpretation of Hegel's logic gives us a more historically accurate version of Hegel's metaphysics than the traditional view. The latter, by maintaining the rationality of the universe, is unable to account for the facticity of nature that is so central to Hegel's philosophical vision. For if we take the omnipotence of nature seriously, not only is it impossible to construe nature and ourselves as part of the self-actualization of some God-like Spirit or Mind or to *a priori* deduce the forms of nature, but it is also impossible for nature itself to a purposive whole in which everything has a pre-ordained place set by the Reason that exists immanently within and structures nature. Consequently, if the argument of those advocating a traditional reading is that non-traditional readings regrettably *deflate* Hegel's metaphysics, I turn this critique back at them, claiming that they regrettably *inflate* it so that it, in fact, is a historically inaccurate picture of Hegel.²⁰

0.5 An outline of the argument

While there is a longstanding history of non-traditional readings of Hegel and his logic in particular akin in spirit (pardon the pun) to the one I advance,²¹ it is debatable whether such work has brought about a paradigm shift. In face of Hegel the Kantian, the philosopher of language, and the pragmatist, Hegel the spirit monist, the conceptual realist, and panlogist of the Concept are still very much alive as the most adequate ways of approaching his

²⁰ James Kreines has recently made the case that current Hegel scholarship has reached a standstill. Both traditional and non-traditional readings have well-founded support. However, given the speculative impulse of Hegel's thought, non-traditional readings, which are generally non-metaphysical, are at a distinct disadvantage. To this effect, he proposes a new approach: "The old debate tends to be a zero-sum game, where any advantage for a 'non-metaphysical' account is a disadvantage for 'metaphysical' interpretations, and vice-versa. Once we focus instead on debating the specific character of Hegel's metaphysics, we open up the possibility of hybrid accounts. For it may be possible to follow traditional accounts of Hegel's metaphysics in some respects while also following nontraditional accounts of Hegel's metaphysics in other respects." James Kreines, "Hegel's Metaphysics: Changing the Debate," *Philosophy Compass* 1, no. 5 (2006): 475–76. By showing how Hegel's logic, precisely as a work *in logic*, is a unique metaphysics of spirit, I take myself to be developing one such hybrid account.

²¹ Cf. J. N. Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-Examination* (Oxford University Press, 1958); Walter Kaufmann, *Hegel: Reinterpretation, Texts, and Commentary* (Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1965); Klaus Hartmann, "Hegel: A Non-Metaphysical View," in *Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Alasdair C. MacIntyre (University of Notre Dame Press, 1972), 101–24.

philosophy.²² Besides the criticism that these readings can make no room for Hegel's metaphysics, another reason for their lack of popularity is that non-traditional readings are often met with the dismissive charge of ascribing to Hegel what the interpreters want to see in him by cherry picking textual evidence. Thomas E. Wartenberg is representative of this charge, alleging that what is symptomatic of those pursuing a non-traditional reading is that:

the point of pursuing the history of philosophy is not so much to understand what a given philosopher might actually have thought about their own system of thought, but to analyze the position of the philosopher from the standpoint of legitimacy. [...] The guiding principle of their interpretations is therefore to isolate the argumentative structure that will allow the name "Hegel" to stand for an intelligible position on contemporary philosophic issues.²³

Frederick Beiser is expressive of the same trend, provocatively protesting that this literature "does not mark an advance but a decline in Hegel scholarship, a deep drop in standards of historical accuracy and philosophical sophistication. There is nothing to be lost, and much to be gained, by simply ignoring it" because it, as he continues, "impose[s] upon" Hegel's thought philosophical content "a priori from some arbitrary contemporary perspective."²⁴

This is the prejudice against which any non-traditional reading of Hegel in general and his logic in particular must battle. I choose to face it head-on. To this end, I present my case for Hegel's conception of logic being anthropological in four chapters. The first two argue for this interpretation on historical and textual grounds found in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* and in his various preliminary discussions of the nature of logic in the *Science of Logic*, the *Encyclopedia Logic*, and his lectures on logic, while also referring to other writings and lectures. The second two reconstruct the textual mechanics of Hegel's logic on the basis of these grounds. In other words, while I do import vocabulary from contemporary philosophy ("norms," "normativity," "social practice," "discursive

²² For references, see above footnotes 2-5.

²³ Thomas E. Wartenberg, "Hegel's Idealism: The Logic of Conceptuality," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, ed. Frederick C. Beiser (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 121.

²⁴ Frederick Beiser, "Hegel, a Non-Metaphysician! A Polemic," *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain* 32 (1995): 12.

practice,” “the game of giving and asking for reasons,” “the logical space of reasons,” and others) to help demystify Hegel’s language, this is done according to grounds internal to Hegel’s corpus.

In chapter 1, I ask how Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, a book that deals with our consciousness of objects, the self-consciousness that motivates our actions, modern scientific reason, and the history of Western communities, could serve as an introduction to logic. I submit that it is an attempt at proving, through an inner exploration of the fundamental dimensions of human experience, that rationality is at its source because it is the instinctive or biological form of human life. In chapter 2, I show how the *Phenomenology* leads to the transformation of the mission of logic. By proving that rationality animates our experience, in logic we now learn about the rational instinct or drive for meaning that determines our behaviour, our conceptual reflex to explain nature and who we are. But since this instinct or drive is something we largely unconsciously follow in everyday linguistic practice, this, in addition, makes logic, to play with a phrase from Brandom, the “making explicit” of the implicit but always already formal structure of that practice as a discursive and intrinsically social practice of giving and asking for reasons in accordance with which we strive, by nature, to make things and ourselves intelligible, indeed, as intelligible as possible.

In chapter 3, I reconstruct Hegel’s Objective Logic, which contains the Doctrines of Being and Essence. I argue that these are logics of our most basic categories through which we, as rational animals, divide up the natural and human worlds. In this sense, the categories provide the blueprints for the universe of meaning that we instinctively create to make experience intelligible—a theory of how we are bound to look for objectively existing qualities in things and ourselves, give substantial explanations of why they come and go in certain objects, and place these objects in dynamically unfolding causal nexuses, in order to navigate our environment. In chapter 4, I reconstruct Hegel’s “Subjective Logic,” which radically reconceives traditional logic. Were it not for our *subjective* interest in reality having a reason for being whatever it *objectively* is or ought to be, we would never be instinctively driven to search for intelligibility. As such, Hegel’s Doctrine of the Concept is a logic of the categories that make up the distinctively human space of reasons—the conceptual moves that normatively govern conceiving, judging, and inferring—that

supports the universe of meaning in which all our experiences and activities are instinctively realized. After said logical space is expounded, we pass to an account of the types of experiential worlds that we might discover from within it as Hegel discusses in the next part of his Subjective Logic. This permits me, in the conclusion, to advance two sets of claims. (1) How Hegel's account of the logical space of reasons, as a space of discovery and therefore truth in the robust sense, makes his idealism distinct from the metaphysical, Kantian, and pragmatist variants with which it is often equated. (2) How Hegel's understanding of that space, as emergent from within nature yet irreducible to it, sketches a solution for how to square a naturalist conception of the world with a conception of rationality and human experience as ontologically unique.

Chapter 1: From Phenomenology to Logic: Proving the Rationality of Human Experience

Since the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is avowedly Hegel's introduction to his logic, before we can have an adequate idea of his conception of the latter, we must first grasp what the project of the former consists in and why it is to serve as a preliminary instruction to a new kind of logic. However, to say that the *Phenomenology* is a complex work is an understatement. The large amount of themes that abound in it—to gloss the topics of the main segments: the nature of object-oriented consciousness; self-conscious action as motivated by desire and in particular the desire for recognition; modern scientific reason in its impartial observation of nature and the human being; the historical transformation of social beliefs and values from ancient Greece up to the birth of modern Germany, the spirit of Western communities; and so-called “absolute knowing” as the culmination of this trajectory, the standpoint of science—has led some commentators to proclaim that the project is methodologically inconsistent.²⁵ The problem that any charitable reader of Hegel's *Phenomenology* thus faces is to discern a single argumentative thread with one

²⁵ As H. S. Harris underlines out, this is an old criticism that goes back to Hegel's reception. In 1857, Rudolf Haym argued that the *Phenomenology* is a combination of a “transcendental-psychological proof” of absolute knowing with a “historical proof,” whereby we must declare that “the *Phenomenology* is a *psychology brought to confusion and disorder by history, and a history brought to ruin by psychology*.” Nor was he the first to believe such. H. S. Harris, *Hegel's Ladder: The Pilgrimage of Reason*, vol. 1 (Hackett Publishing, 1997), 10. But this sentiment can already be seen in the early reviews and discussions of the *Phenomenology*, none of which could come to any consensus about the meaning of the work. Was it, as the first anonymous review of 1807 in the *Oberdeutsche Allgemeine Litteraturzeitung* proclaimed, a continuation of the Schellingian position that swallowed up everything in the absolute? Or was it, as Fries maintained in a letter to Jacobi, a universal history of spirit, understood as an extension of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* to the realm of spirit? Perhaps it was, as K.I. Windischmann contended in the *Jenaische Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* in 1809, a theology? For a helpful summary, see Pinkard, *Hegel*, 258–65.

distinct thematic that guides its diverse transitions,²⁶ making the text unified in both form and content.²⁷

What, then, is the project of Hegel's *Phenomenology* and its connection to his logic? I contend that it is a treatise about human rationality as the originating factor of human experience. It is the endeavour to demonstrate, through an inner exploration of the fundamental dimensions of our experience and their history, that rationality reveals something essential about who we are: that we are beings endowed with what Hegel calls "spirit," a capacity for thought, discourse, or theoretical mindedness in virtue of which we are instinctively driven to produce and consume reasons for our beliefs and actions in order to navigate our environment, just as other living creatures follow their own innate patterns of behaviour in order to navigate theirs. Its claim is that, be it our consciousness of objects, the desires that motivate our self-conscious actions, the sciences we embark upon through reason to comprehend nature and the human being, or the social beliefs and values that make up our historical communities, their inborn spirit, these only take on the shape that they do because we, both unconsciously and consciously, place things and ourselves in a universe of meaning supported by what Hegel calls, anticipating Sellars' logical "space of reasons,"²⁸ the "pure space" of thinking (*LL*, 8; translation modified/*GW*, 23.2: 658), that is, the process of conceptualization Hegel designates by "the concept." By forcing us to give witness to the presence of rationality throughout the fundamental dimensions of

²⁶ The difficulty of the transitions from chapter to chapter and even section to section has been a notorious one for the Hegelian commentator. For a now classical article dealing with it, see Robert B. Pippin, "You Can't Get There From Here: Transition Problems in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, ed. Frederick C. Beiser (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 52–85.

²⁷ Throughout the long history of its reception, there have been many hypotheses concerning what this thematic is. The most widespread proposal is that it is a transcendental rehabilitation of metaphysics in the aftermath of Kant. See, for instance, Beiser, *Hegel*, 172; Rolf-Peter Horstmann, "Hegels *Phänomenologie Des Geistes* Als Argument Für Eine Monistische Ontologie," in *Hegels Phänomenologie Des Geistes. Ein Kooperativer Kommentar Zu Einem Schlüsselwerk Der Moderne*, ed. Klaus Vieweg and Wolfgang Welsch (Suhrkamp, 2008), 58–78; Stephen Houlgate, *Hegel's "Phenomenology of Spirit": A Reader's Guide* (A&C Black, 2013), 12. A more recent popular reading is that it is work of pragmatism, a demonstration of how theoretical and practical knowledge derives from the social practice of giving and asking for reasons. The major texts here are Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology*; Brandom, *A Spirit of Trust: A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology*.

²⁸ Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, 160, section 36.

human experience and their history, the *Phenomenology* therefore accomplishes a transformation of the mission of logic. Its task becomes, strictly speaking, *anthropological*: instead of being merely a codification of the formal consistency of rational thought, it is now conceived of as a theory of the rationality instinctively operative in human experience as its structuring principle.²⁹ For Hegel, logic thereby unearths the logical categories that make possible all the kinds of experiences and the activities associated with them described by the *Phenomenology* as rationally oriented from the very beginning. As such, the projects of a “phenomenology of spirit” and logic deal with the *same* subject matter—typically human life—from two distinct, but inseparable perspectives: one experientially and historically and the other logically, the latter distilling the existential matrix that holds the former together.

But in proving to us that our rationality structures the entirety of human experience, the *Phenomenology* maintains that our rationality has drastic implications not only for our we are to understand our experience, but also for how we are to understand our relationship towards nature. Since the objects around us, our desires, scientific theories, and social beliefs and values can only have an impact upon us insofar as they are justified from within the logical space of reasons, we can no longer hold that the normative status of our theoretical and practical claims are fixed by some *given* order. Theoretically, this entails that it is *we* who rationally decide, without any external support for truth, the truth of our claims about the world around us. Their truth is not determined by, say, sensory data or our everyday perception of things as just immediately present to us or by the mind-independent structure of nature as something readymade to which our representations are to correspond. Our sensory and perceptive experience, as well as our experience of a universal and necessary metaphysical order, are always already *products* of the process of conceptualization. In other words, the *Phenomenology* advances a form of idealism. Practically, this entails two further, interrelated points. First, we can always act against our given animal nature if we rationally decide that the desires implanted in us by the latter are not worth acting upon. Since we can always deliberate about what we *should* do, our

²⁹ Here I agree with Harris: “The Hegelian Logic is, first of all, the theoretical structure of rational selfhood.” H. S. Harris, *Hegel’s Ladder: The Odyssey of Spirit*, vol. 2 (Hackett Publishing, 1997), 776.

motivations are primarily rational. Second, values do not derive their authority from being inscribed in some pre-, non-, or supra-human realm or from being mere social conventions. Only those values that can be justified are taken as normatively binding. As such, ethical naturalism, realism, and traditionalism as well divine commandment theory have no basis. As a result, the *Phenomenology* also defends what we may call “rationalist constructivism.”

Taken together, these theoretical and practical implications signify *an ontic gap* between nature and spirit. They demonstrate how we, in virtue of the rationality that structures our experience, engender and sustain a universe of meaning *all of our own*, a universe that, since it is governed by the irreducible normativity of the logical space of reasons, has no precedent in nature. By *showing* us how our very experience entails such a gap in all its fundamental dimensions, the *Phenomenology* therefore assures that the anthropological task of logic is not just an artificial model of our rationality. For while logic, as a formal outline of logical categories, is not metaphysical, it nevertheless has metaphysical significance for how we are to comprehend ourselves and our place in nature at large. It is, to put it in terms closer to those of Hegel’s time, a metaphysics of spirit: as that which distills the rationality instinctively operative in our experience, logic is, properly understood, an account of the ontologically distinctive, biological form of rational life, spirit, that we possess and the qualitative changes that occur in us, due to the work of rationality, vis-à-vis (our) nature, despite the fact that this form of life is itself produced by the latter.

1.1 The existential role of the production and consumption of reasons in human Life

For Hegel, the idea that the production and consumption of reasons is the defining feature of human life, the one that best explains *what* the human being is and *how* it should live, was *tacitly* realized in the widespread conviction of his time that genuine science (*Wissenschaft*) was not only possible but had actually come upon the scene of the human historical drama (*PS*, 48 §76/*GW*, 9: 55). This conviction had steadily gained strength through the achievements of the new natural sciences and their distinctive methodology, the integrity of which had been established by Galileo, Bacon, Descartes’ epistemology, and most powerfully by Newton, whose ability to subsume the particular laws of motions

for earthly and celestial bodies under more general laws served as a prime illustration of what human rationality, unfettered by anything but its own rational interests in explanation, could accomplish. But it had also gained strength in the new social sciences that these figures and their methodology inspired, as seen in the works of Hobbes, Locke, Vico, and many others, whose goal was to establish the laws of civic life according to rationally assessable claims.³⁰

In drawing our attention to this widespread conviction, Hegel points to a fundamental shift in the history of the West. From modernity onward, what existentially matters for us in terms of how we are to understand things and ourselves is not to be determined by inherited tradition, whether it be philosophical, scientific, cultural, political, or otherwise, religious doctrine established by revelation or decree, or anything else that acquires legitimacy by presenting itself as mere facts of the natural and human worlds to be accepted as they are given. Instead, what existentially matters for us is determined by the rational norms for what counts as a good and bad reason to believe or act. As such, only that which holds up to scrutiny can now be endorsed as what should mould our sense of what is and who we are. Whatever fails this test—no matter how true, good, or sacrosanct it may have appeared to us throughout the ages—is to be rejected. The tacit presupposition of the widespread conviction in science is that human rationality is its own source of authoritativeness, which inaugurates a radically new model of self-comprehension and, with it, a radically new, self-sufficient way of life.

Put differently, according to Hegel the discovery of modernity is that, because we are rational by nature, our rational interests, and these interests alone, are to dictate how we should live our lives. Nothing has the right to infringe upon these interests. Nevertheless, our self-comprehension as beings who should live by reasons in all matters of existential importance is itself a historical appearance, indeed one that came quite late upon the scene of the human historical drama. This causes a problem. As something so new, Hegel believes the distinctively modern insight into our rational nature and its broader real-life consequences has yet to assert its truth in the West against the other, untrue models

³⁰ For a discussion of the beginnings of a scientifically grounded social philosophy in modernity and the changes that this made vis-à-vis the ancient understanding of politics, see chapter 1 of Jürgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice* (John Wiley & Sons, 2015).

of self-comprehension and their concomitant ways of life that still exist alongside it. While in his times, for instance, in the philosophical realm Jacobi, the Romantics, and religious literalists battled against the dominance of science and rationality in human affairs, in the political realm traditionalists and theocrats battled against the threat of a fully rationalized state, most clearly visible in the reaction to the Napoleonic restructuring of the German states in the years following the publication of the *Phenomenology*. These movements were based on different conceptions of human life—that there was a realm of common sense, feeling, revelation, or cultural or religious identity that, while defying a strict rational procedure of assessment, was just as or more vital for living the truest human life than the new science that threatened them. As such, for Hegel the widespread conviction in science and its tacit presupposition that there is something in the production and consumption of reasons that captures who we are in our heart of hearts, the irreducible distinctiveness of human life, must demonstrate its pride of place in human life to those who still do not accept it:

But Science, just because it comes on the scene, is itself an appearance: in coming on the scene it is not yet Science in its developed and unfolded truth. In this connection it makes no difference whether we think of Science as the appearance because it comes on the scene alongside another mode of knowledge, or whether we call that other untrue knowledge its manifestation. In any case Science must liberate itself from this semblance, and it can do so only by turning against it. (*PS*, 48 §76/*GW*, 9: 55)

How could we be justified in taking rationality as being more than just another historical appearance of a model of self-comprehension or way of life amongst the many that came before it, the many that exist alongside it, and the many that might come after it? Why should we take it to reveal something essential about who we are? It is these worries that the *Phenomenology* responds to. With the acknowledgement that rationality itself *has a history*, Hegel came to the conclusion that the only way to subjectively secure certainty about it and the existentially all-pervasive science that it champions was to demonstrate, through an inner exploration of the fundamental dimensions of human experience and how we have tried to interpret them historically, both (1) how we came to the standpoint of

science and (2) how there is nothing accidental about the idea that rationality is the defining feature of human life, what motivates our behaviour all along. For rationality to hold supreme, rather than being just one option that has emerged amongst others, it would have to prove itself to be *not only* the rational outcome of an experiential development, something whose authoritativeness is intelligible in light of what has transpired in our past and the lessons that we learned in it about who we are, *but also* that which enables us, the philosophers, to retrospectively comprehend its otherwise seemingly fortuitous development—the constant shifts and turns in how we understand things and ourselves, the theoretical, practical, and social outlooks that come and go, often with the rise and fall of nations and even entire civilizations—as rational in nature, even if only implicitly or unconsciously so,³¹ and remember these lessons as slowly expressing the truth about who we are. The purpose of the *Phenomenology* is therefore to demonstrate that we were rational *from the very beginning* by demonstrating how, without this assumption, we cannot even make sense of our most rudimentary or most complex experiences by revealing how this modern sense of rationality has *always already* been, instinctively at least, operative throughout human experience and unpacking what this rationality entails for our self-understanding.³² Only in this fashion might the widespread conviction in science and its tacit presupposition of rationality as the defining feature of human life be vindicated, for if

³¹ Take, for instance, Pinkard's succinct summary: "A dialectical history tells a different story from that of the history of historians in that it does not concern itself primarily with how things came about—what social forces were at work, what contingencies were brought into play—but with showing how succeeding 'social spaces' contained resources within themselves that were able to explain and justify themselves over and against earlier alternative accounts and to demonstrate for themselves that their own accounts of themselves were satisfactory. This dialectical history of self-consciousness is thus also a history of rationality itself." Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology*, 11–12.

³² I owe this idea to Harris. "Hegel's years with Greek literature and the Bible, with Hölderlin and the 'biography of God,' taught him that rationality has a *history*. Everyone knows that, in order to be morally rational in the modern way, we must be properly educated. But our education itself is enough to show us that there may already have been forms of rational life that are in some ways preferable to our own. If our religious and philosophical education has somehow brought us to the intuitive conviction not only that all true thinking belongs to a single scientific 'system,' but also that the same 'universal Real' is present everywhere in the historic experience of human communities (including those 'happier' ones), then perhaps the right—the convincing—introduction to speculative wisdom is a developmental account of how rationality has revealed itself in the story of our culture." See H.S. Harris, *Hegel: Phenomenology and System* (Hackett Publishing, 1995), 16.

this reconstruction is successful we will arrive “at a point where appearance becomes identical with essence” (*PS*, 57 §89/*GW*, 9: 62).

For this demonstration of the inviolable status of rationality to function, Hegel’s *Phenomenology* cannot, however, assume the rationality whose presence it attempts to prove in the various dimensions of human experience. This would not allow it to introduce its reader to the standpoint of science, who may very well have doubts about its pride of place insofar as they have an alternate understanding of human life. Consequently, such a demonstration requires a unique method to get off the ground. For Hegel, this signifies that the *Phenomenology*’s reconstruction of the course of experience can only work by internally exploring what he refers to as “shapes of consciousness” or “shapes of spirit,”³³ models of self-comprehension and the ways of life that they make possible,³⁴ by means of their re-enactment. The idea is that, by first articulating what counts for a given model as the appropriate reasons for belief and action, we can philosophically dramatize its respective way of life and its interpretation of experience, in order to see how it gives meaning to its life and whether that act of giving meaning is satisfactory on its own terms. It does so by looking at the language that a way of life deploys to make sense of what is around us and ourselves, recreating it from within and asking *us*, the readers, to enter into

³³ Hegel more commonly throughout the text refers to them as “shapes of consciousness.” However, there is no inconsistency in also referring to them as “shapes of spirit.” The net result of his argument, as we shall see, is that, through the progression of shapes of consciousness, we are to see that while we normally take consciousness to be irreducibly first-personal, it is always already inflected by the more fundamental sociohistorical dimension of spirit.

³⁴ For Hegel, because the human being is rational, there is an interpenetration between theory and praxis such that human life only has meaning in relation to the models of self-comprehension through which it tries to make sense of itself. Hyppolite puts it well: “For Hegel philosophic doctrines are not abstract doctrines, they are ways of life. Skepticism, Stoicism, unhappy consciousness, the moral world view: these expositions are not of philosophic thought but of experiences of life. Their human universality is fulfilled only in the actual experience of a particular consciousness. But, conversely, the meaning of that actual experience lies only in a thought that is universal.” Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s “Phenomenology of Spirit”* (Northwestern University Press, 1979), 49.

its semantic world to determine whether that world is internally consistent.³⁵ As Hegel says, language is the “existence of spirit” (*PS*, 395 §652/*GW*, 9: 351).³⁶

In this sense, Hegel’s method in the *Phenomenology* is presuppositionless. It does not judge any given way of life that it re-constructs on the basis of some presumed criteria external to its model of self-comprehension, but instead judges that way of life on its own account by allowing that way of life, in living itself out, to pass judgment on itself. If that way of life cannot ground what it claims about things or what are right actions by appeal to the norms operative in it existentially, it and we, the readers, following its re-enactment, will have encountered an immanent limitation in those norms that, ultimately, prevent it and us from endorsing them. But once the semantic world that supports a way of life has generated skeptical doubt (*Zweifel*) about itself, it thus collapses under its own limitations: it sees no way forward and falls into a state of existential despair (*Verzweiflung*) (*PS*, 49 §78/*GW*, 9: 56). Such a “reversal of consciousness itself” (*PS*, 55 §87/*GW*, 9: 61) is, however, the *necessary*, but not *sufficient* condition for the historical emergence of a new

³⁵ Hegel introduces the distinction between the phenomenological reconstruction of each shape and the “we” that follows its internal exploration at *PS*, 55-56 §87/*GW*, 9: 60-61.

³⁶ Surprisingly little has been made of the role of language in the *Phenomenology*, although it is present at every step. In a theoretical mode, Hegel speaks of the language of sense-certainty consisting in the use of indexicals (cf. *PS*, 60 §97/*GW*, 9: 65) just as much as he speaks of the language of various types of observing reason such as that of phrenology (cf. *PS*, 207-208 §342-343/*GW*, 9: 190-191). In a practical mode, he refers to the language by which various communities constitute their shared understanding of who they are: the universal language of the customs and laws of ancient Greece through which everyone comes to have preordained roles that make for a social whole in which they feel at home (*PS*, 213-214 §351/*GW*, 9: 194-195); the alienation of medieval culture as a product of its language (cf. *PS*, 308-309 §508/*GW*, 9: 276); how the language of the Enlightenment, its declaration of a universal law that destroys social strata and political oppression, leads to the Terror of the French Revolution (*PS*, 357-360 §585-590/*GW*, 9: 317-321); and the language of Kantian morality, which, by demanding of us to speak in terms of universal duties, leaves the individual dumb, that is, unable to speak of its real-life duties, which are always specific (*PS*, 396 §653/*GW*, 9: 351). Indeed, there are 63 instances of “language” in the text. In this fashion, the *Phenomenology*, as an account of the history of rationality, is itself an account of the evolution of the languages that we have developed over time to make sense of things and ourselves. On this point, see George di Giovanni, “How Necessary Is the Phenomenology for Hegel’s Logic,” accessed October 11, 2016, <http://george.digiovanni.ca/Papers/How%20Necessary%20is%20the%20Phenomenology%20for%20Hegel's%20Logic.pdf>. There are, however, some exceptions to scholarly lacuna. The most notable is Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s “Phenomenology of Spirit.”* But see also Daniel J. Cook, *Language in the Philosophy of Hegel* (Mouton, 1973).

way of life.³⁷ It is therefore up to us, the reader, to introduce the latter, a shape taken from the annals of the history of our own culture, as the next moment of phenomenological reconstruction. For this new way of life is something that the initial way of life itself was *not able to foresee*—its norms arise as something radically new and unpredictable—and the new way of life, as it is concerned with living itself out according to its own semantic world, has a tendency to *forget* its own past that provided the very conditions for its own emergence. As Hegel puts it, absorbed in the existential state of affairs that is its present, it does not see what has already happened “behind its back” (*PS*, 56 §87/*GW*, 9: 61).

In placing these models of self-comprehension and their concomitant ways of life one after the other according to the chronological sequence that they occur in history, we the readers are supposed to see what the players of our own history, immersed in their own lives, could not: how the norms that constitute each historically emergent way of life and their immanent limitations interrelate by seeing how these players would have been led to go from adopting one set of norms to another in virtue of reasons internal to the movement itself, thus bringing into the open its implicit, non-self-conscious rationality. This movement continues until eventually rationality arises as the most fitting explanation of human experience and by consequence human life: “The series of configurations which consciousness goes through along this road is, in reality, the detailed history of the *education* of consciousness itself to the standpoint of Science.” (*PS*, 50 §78/*GW*, 9: 56)

In this fashion, Hegel’s *Phenomenology* is a defence of his own brand of “absolute” idealism in which the standpoint of science consists: the claim that the natural and human worlds only exist for us because we have a distinctively human, rational interest in making things and ourselves intelligible, indeed, as intelligible as possible. Were it not for this need implanted in us by our “*logical* nature” (*SL*, 17/*GW*, 21: 15), we would never build a universe of meaning that tries to explain what things are and how we should act. But this defence is conducted in an experiential or historical register rather than a logical one. As such, rather than *arguing* for its thesis by means of a transcendental deduction, it seeks to

³⁷ I owe this point to George di Giovanni, who constantly stressed its importance, a point that he himself took from Emil Fackenheim’s seminars on the *Phenomenology*. It is one that is missed entirely in the standard reading, which sees in the progression of shapes an *a priori* movement in which each shape simply entails the others such that human history unfolds with a logical necessity.

show us, through an inner exploration of the course of human experience, how we came to the self-knowledge of ourselves as creatures of thought motivated by rational interests and rational interests alone, interests that in fact structure the very fabric of human experience from the very beginning. In other words, this is why a phenomenology of spirit, a reconstruction of the history of how we came to understand rationality as the defining characteristic who we are, is necessary as an introduction to the proper anthropological conception of logic. As Hegel puts it later: “Human beings have thought from the beginning, to be sure, since they distinguish themselves from animals only through thinking. And yet it took thousands of years before it came to grasping thought in its purity and at the same time as absolutely objective” (*EL*, 138 §86 Addition 2/*GW*, 23.3: 862).

However, as we shall see, the *Phenomenology* is simultaneously more than a defence of Hegel’s own idealism. It may be an account of the education of the West to the standpoint of science, a retracing of how we have come to see the truth of ourselves as concept-mongers by essence. But in any education, those who undergo this education learn lessons upon the way as they try and test various understandings of themselves to determine what does and doesn’t work. Consequently, in following the historical failures of certain models of self-comprehension and the ways of life they make possible, we succeed in learning much about ourselves. In this sense, the *Phenomenology* is not just a philosophical *Bildungsroman*, a story of the formative years of spirit as it discovers its own rationality. It is also a science of experience (*PS*, 21 §36/*GW*, 9: 29)—this being its original title—that aims, through the reconstruction of the course of experience in its conscious, self-conscious, scientific, and sociohistorical dimensions, to show us what it means existentially to be a creature instinctively driven to produce and consume reasons. It does so by dramatizing how the very rational structure of these fundamental dimensions of our experience commits us to a certain metaphysical theory of spirit and its relationship towards the natural order of things, namely the fact that because of the rational interests that orient our behaviour we are irreducible to the latter.

1.2 The experience of consciousness: rationality as the creation of a universe of meaning without external support for truth

Hegel's *Phenomenology* begins with an inner exploration of our conscious experience of objects and the history of various ways we have interpreted the source of our knowledge of them: the realist attitudes of natural consciousness, empiricism, and modern science. It starts here because we tend to assume that rationality is how we make claims about the world and what makes these claims true is their correspondence to facts against which they can be checked. To introduce the reader to the standpoint of his absolute idealism, Hegel has to show how we, if we follow the historical course of how we have tried to make sense of our conscious experience, are forced to concede that what explains our knowledge of objects is idealist and not realist criteria. As such, he has to display to us how the objects that we normally take to be just there in our everyday existence and our epistemological practices are always already products of the process of conceptualization.

1.2.1 Sense-certainty: the instinctive rationality of the body

Hegel begins his phenomenological re-enactment of conscious experience with a theoretical model and way of life that he refers to as “natural consciousness.” Presumably, the first manner through which we would have tried to give meaning to our conscious experience of objects would have arisen from the fact that in said experience objects are *immediately given* in all their concrete richness with a force that is existentially irresistible (*PS*, 58 §91/*GW*, 9: 63). This realist attitude, which Hegel calls “sense-certainty,” is committed to the objective norm of truth being this direct apprehension (*Auffassung*) of objects: to know something doesn't require conceptualization (*Begreifen*), the linguistic or conceptual articulation of content, because the intelligibility of things around us is readymade (*PS*, 58 §90/*GW*, 9: 63). In an aphorism from the time he was writing the *Phenomenology* (*GW*, 5: 489 §11), Hegel uses the example of a farmer's wife (*Bauersfrau*) to drive home what he has in mind:³⁸ a naïve realism in which we go about our quotidian business with the conviction that things are exactly as we sense them, so that we can capture

³⁸ I take this reference from Harris, *Hegel's Ladder*, 1997, 1:212. For his discussion, see Harris, 1:212–18 & 221–28. Admittedly, this choice of example is sexist and elitist.

what something is simply by pointing to “this” or “that” object *just there* in the here and now of experience, whether this pointing is performed physically or with indexicals.

The question is why such a theoretical model and its respective way of life would have come to abandon this conviction, however much we in our day-to-day lives work under its assumption. The issue is the *shifting* nature of objects themselves, which are in a ceaseless state of becoming and hence can never be definitively pinned down by merely referring to them. The here and now of experience to which the farmer’s wife points is, by definition, inconstant: what is now has already become, at the precise moment it is referred to, a then, just as a here has already become a there. In short, no object is as readymade as it seems to be in our conscious experience of it: what is immediately given only shows itself by disappearing such that any intended reference to it will miss the mark. In this sense, when pressed to specify more exactly what she means by “this” or “that,” the farmer is forced to concede that the presence of objects is not as stable as it initially gives the impression of being, causing her faith in their being just there to be picked out to waver. It is a matter, then, of determining how the farmer’s wife could have had the conviction in their immediate givenness in the first place.

This can only be possible, as Hegel’s phenomenological argument goes, because the farmer’s wife, even if she is unaware she is doing so, has said more than she intends. Although she takes herself to be *extra*-linguistically or *extra*-conceptually indicating something just there, in the very act of pointing to it physically or with indexicals she is in fact *already situating* it in a pre-existing and self-unfolding universe of meaning that she creates and which alone can make it definite by holding together all the moments of an object in its becoming. In Hegelese, the immediacy of sense-certainty is mediated. In other terms, an object can only be picked out as a “this,” “that,” “here,” or “now” (or what have you) replete with rich content in so far as our *discourse about it* ties all its appearances and disappearances into one. As Hegel puts it, such locutions only function at all insofar as they are implicitly universals that bring together particular determinations (cf. *PS*, 60-61 §96-98/*GW*, 9: 65). For instance, *this* cow right here can be *meaningfully* pinned down by the farmer’s wife only because it is taken as the same one she just saw a second ago over there, that she bought a couple years ago as a calf, and has seen grow up into an adult with distinctive traits and characteristics—each particular instance of *this* universal “cow,” in

its becoming spread over space and time, coalescing into one singular object by the process of conceptualization by which she gives meaning to her otherwise rhapsodic experience (*PS*, 63-64 §107-108/*GW*, 9: 68).

With these phenomenological opening moves, Hegel has begun introducing his logic. We are to witness to how the farmer's wife can believe that objects are just there in her senses only inasmuch as she does not recognize that her *body itself* has produced their rich content through a conceptual process that, because it happens at the level of her sensibility, has occurred without any mental effort on behalf of her conscious mind. They therefore look like "immediately given" material even though her experience of them is constituted conceptually: already when she, say, *sees* one of her livestock, it is her *eye itself* that is placing it within a rudimentary universe of meaning that she, in the here and now of experience, involuntarily navigates. But this entails, as Hegel says later in the *Phenomenology* and various versions of the logic, that rationality is an "instinct" (cf. *PS*, 149 §246/*GW*, 9: 140; *LL*, 3, 22, 32/*GW*, 23.2: 654, 670, 679; *SL*, 17, 18, 19/*GW*, 21: 15-16, 16, 17) and its categories "drives" (*SL*, 17/*GW*, 21: 16) such that much of its activity is "unconscious" (*SL*, 15, 16, 19/*GW*, 21: 13, 15, 18).³⁹ Consequently, we see the first fashion that Hegel's *Phenomenology* serves as an introduction to his anthropological conception of logic: it shows us that his logic will consist in unearthing the rationality instinctively already operative even in the most elementary level of experience—the body's sensibility. In particular, its Doctrine of Being, as that which describes the basic categories in accordance with which we make sense of various kinds of qualities, will describe how even our experience of "this" and "that" in the here and now is supported by conceptual moves with a logic of their own: "immediate sensory consciousness, insofar as its behaviour involves thinking, is chiefly limited to the abstract determinations of quality" (*EL*, 136 §85 Addition/*GW*, 23.3: 860).

But these opening phenomenological moves also intimate the opening conceptual moves of Hegel's logic: its deduction of "becoming" as the first self-contained category of which "being" and "nothing" are mere abstract moments of the more concrete categories of "coming-to-be" and "ceasing-to-be." Here, as there, Hegel's thesis is that something

³⁹ A detailed analysis of these references in the logic will be given in the next chapter.

only is whatever it is *by becoming it*, by maintaining its identity by taking on, losing, or preserving various determinations according to an inner norm that enables us to recognize what and why it is this or that stable object with discernable features. Insofar as the appearing and disappearing of a thing can only be held together by our discourse about it, the primary task of Hegel's logic will be to describe the conceptual moves by which said becoming can be fully intelligible as an ontogenetic process. To illustrate the idea, the project is to elaborate the rational norms in accordance with which a conceptually convincing narrative of something in flux is to be written, similar to how a literary narrative can be written in which a single theme *becomes* evident through all the twists and turns of a plot, indeed a theme that shows itself as structuring the plot from the outset—a plot that may be *in media res* when the reader encounters it—by providing the framework in which various occurrences that are otherwise just isolated events that come and go make sense, instead of being mere random happenings.

1.2.2 Perception: the theory-ladenness of our experience of objects

Let's return to Hegel's phenomenological argument. The lesson learned from the experience of sense-certainty is that its object is never a mere "this" or "that" immediately given in the here and now. It is, from the very beginning, an object whose becoming, as spread over space and time, must be held together from within a universe of meaning that we instinctively create. But this an insight that the farmer's wife still cannot attain. She is still convinced by the realist attitude according to which something just there is the basis of our conscious experience of objects. It is therefore only fitting for her to try to locate a more stable object that can serve as an objective norm of truth. And she finds one in the theoretical model of a thing with properties. For a thing is not just a "this" or "that" fully present in experience—as an object that appears just as much as it disappears, a thing is complex in that it holds within itself a multitude of "thises" and "thats" as that which belong to it as its own.⁴⁰ In other words, it is a universal that holds together a number of particular instances, thereby making itself something singular. As such, the farmer's wife now realizes that there are no objects directly apprehended in conscious experience (*aufgefasst*).

⁴⁰ The German for properties, "*Eigenschaften*," displays the same etymology as the English.

Instead, they are only there in our *perception* (*Wahrnehmung*) insofar as *we take them as true* (*nehmen...wahr*), that is, as what is truly present in the otherwise inconstant play of appearance. With the transition from sense-certainty to perception, the *Phenomenology* thus introduces a new theoretical model and its concomitant way of life, one that has learned from the failures of the previous to give meaning to our conscious experience and knowledge of objects: a more philosophically-informed type of common sense.⁴¹

The problem, however, is that the farmer's wife is once again unable to find anything self-identical in experience that could undergird perception. She slowly discovers that a thing has two irreducible and, indeed, contrary meanings. On the one hand, it is, as a universal with particular determinations, a *many*, "a *simple togetherness* of a plurality": an inclusive medium—what Hegel calls "an also"—in which its various properties coexist (*PS*, 68 §113/*GW*, 9: 72), no one property "affect[ing]" the others (*PS*, 68 §113/*GW*, 9: 72). On the other hand, properties are "only determinate in so far as they *differentiate* themselves from one another, and *relate* themselves to *others* as to their opposites" (*PS*, 69 §114/*GW*, 9: 73). In contemporary vocabulary, we would say that properties stand opposed (1) to one another in relations of *mere difference* (whereby they can be combined even though they are incommensurable with one another) and (2) to other properties in relations of *material incompatibility* (whereby they mutually foreclose one another and hence cannot be combined). However, by so "negating" one another in a determinate manner, properties thereby acquire their full-fledged meaning as traits *proper to this*, rather than *that*, thing to the extent that, by having these properties, a distinction is drawn between this thing and something else.⁴² Consequently, a thing is equally a singular *one*, an exclusive unity that stands by itself. Nevertheless, for an object that is just there in perception to be simultaneously *one* and *many* is a contradiction. As a result, in order to stave off this contradiction the farmer's wife ends up alternating between which dimension of a thing she takes as true and which she takes as merely subjective.

⁴¹ In labelling it so, I am following Harris, *Hegel's Ladder*, 1997, 1:238.

⁴² A more detailed analysis along these lines can be found in Robert B. Brandom, "Holism and Idealism in Hegel's *Phenomenology*," *Hegel-Studien* 36 (2001): 61–95. For a systematic take on determinate negation in Hegel and in particular his logic, see Terje Sparby, *Hegel's Conception of the Determinate Negation* (Brill, 2014), <https://brill.com/view/title/26625>.

First, the farmer's wife takes the *oneness* of a thing as true. But she is nonetheless aware that the thing itself has *many* properties. To save the self-identity of the thing, she thus conceives of its properties as stemming not from the thing itself, but instead from how her body's physiology processes its unity in a piecemeal manner, making our perception the medium in which they coexist (*PS*, 72 §119/*GW*, 9: 75-76). The price the farmer's wife pays for keeping the objective unity of a thing separate from the subjective play of its properties in us, however, is that the object becomes unknowable. It gets turned into a Lockean substance—"nothing but the supposed, but unknown, support of those Qualities we find existing"⁴³—since it is only in virtue of its properties, now taken as subjective, that it is recognizable as the distinctive thing that it is. Realizing this, she changes her realist stance. She takes as true the thing as a medium in which properties coexist. As such, the thing itself is construed as a bundle of *many* self-identical properties onto which perception can latch, whereby any sense we have of them belonging together in *one* thing becomes a side effect of how the conscious mind in perception brings about said unity through subjective, psychological mechanisms (*PS*, 73 §121/*GW*, 9: 76). Nevertheless, she has difficulty "prevent[ing] these properties from collapsing into the oneness of the thing" (*PS*, 73 §121/*GW*, 9: 76). Since it is the conceptual assembly of mere differences and material incompatibilities that define what this thing distinctively is in contrast to other things, she cannot but take these properties as moments of its exclusive unity.

Because the farmer's wife cannot keep the two dimensions of a thing separate in her conscious experience of it, she is forced to concede that both meanings of the thing, it being a one and a many, go into its objective constitution. But she has another trick up her sleeve to preserve its self-identity. She now conceives of a thing's unity as something independent (what Hegel names its "being-for-itself") and its many properties as arising from its relation to other things (its "being-for-another") (*PS*, 74 §123/*GW*, 9: 78). Nevertheless, the same problem persists. In order to be the separate thing that it is, it must have some essential character that marks it off—but that implies that the actual nature of a

⁴³ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 296, Book II, Chapter XXIII, §2 & 305, Book II, Chapter XIII, §15.

thing, what it is on its own account, is only identifiable by how its defining traits distinguish it from other things.

This entails that a shift must occur in our theoretical model of perception and its respective way of life, a philosophically-informed common sense. It demonstrates there is nothing self-identically present in perception (*PS*, 75-76 §125/*GW*, 9: 79). A thing is experienced *as* this or that thing only because: (1) it has properties that we *know* can coexist; (2) these properties contrast it from other things with properties that we *know* are materially incompatible with its own; and (3) it is precisely this intellectual framework that *makes it known* as a distinctive thing that is separate from other things. In other words, our *perception* of a thing is a moment of our *understanding* of it: what we take as true in it is never something just there, but a product of our process of conceptualization. Consequently, even a perception as mundane as that of table salt (Hegel's favourite example in this chapter) is only intelligible insofar as a theoretical construct produced by our discourse about it governs our experience of it. When we see it immediately there *as* salt, we in fact *already see* that it is this or that thing with these properties that can coexist (white, granular, tart, etc.), that these properties exclude it from being something else (say, sugar, which while also white and granular is sweet), and that these properties thus belong to it as the thing that it is (salt). Our perception navigates, from the beginning, a complex universe of meaning. Put differently, empiricist common-sense epistemology, which thinks that theory is somehow built upon some kind of raw given data, is wrong because there is no direct access to things or their properties: experience is, *all the way down*, theory-laden. Or, as Hegel puts it, "a human being as a thinking being is a born metaphysician" (*EL*, 155 §98 Addition 1/*GW*, 23.3: 871).

This shows a second manner that Hegel's *Phenomenology* is an introduction to the anthropological task of his logic. Our perception of the innumerable array of diverse things that just seem to populate our average everyday existence is supported by our understanding of them—and the more robust our understanding of something is, the more vibrantly will that thing present itself to us. Conceptualization does not remove us from the richness of "immediate" experience; it is, for Hegel, at its very origin such that, in the any real-life movement from perception to understanding, we are only trying to make more explicit or concrete what is already implicitly or abstractly there as when we, for instance,

take this salt as a substance with accidents (sodium chloride) and further as something that was causally produced (by, for instance, a refinery of halite deposits) within a larger causal nexus (of the natural and social worlds). In describing the basic categories through which we instinctively seek substantial or causal principles in things, Hegel's Doctrine of Essence therefore describes (1) how the intellectual frameworks of understanding, even when we are unaware of them doing so, influence how we experience even the most quotidian things and (2) those conceptual moves by which we instinctively seek to make those frameworks as determinate as possible.

1.2.3 The understanding: the source of true beliefs in the rational self-satisfaction of discourse

The problem that plagues the philosophical common sense of perception is that, faced with a thing and its properties, the perceiver must sort out what is objective and subjective in their conscious experience of an object, but cannot do so on the basis of merely given data. Instead, objects are recognized as objects only insofar as some theoretical construction, which goes beyond what is otherwise just there in our consciousness, enables us to recognize what something is in distinction from other things. We have thereby transitioned from the stance of perception to that of the understanding. Put differently, the farmer's wife now realizes that things cannot be made fully intelligible just by pointing to them—that she has, in other words, to become a scientist if she is to know what they truly are.

But the farmer's wife is still unwilling to back down from her conviction that something *out there* is ultimately what makes our discourse about things true. Although a stable object is not to be located in the sensible realm of experience, it can, she now believes, be in the supersensible realm of which our experience is the appearance. Appearance is indeed in flux. Nevertheless, this flux is not a series of random happenings in which things erratically come and cease to be. It has recognizable patterns. To the extent, therefore, that the metaphysical foundation of objects is taken to be that which internally governs the ever-changing sensible world of appearance, she postulates that the “real” world consists in a realm of eternal laws that, while transcending phenomena, nonetheless immanently structure them (*PS*, 90-91 §149/*GW*, 9: 91). Since a law is only a law to the extent that it effectively reigns over its domain, this new realist model establishes a

putatively sure-fire method for securing knowledge: we know that our theoretical construction of a law corresponds to a law in the supersensible world when it can be *verified* by the observable world by the degree to which our model of the latter enables us to make successful predictions about it.

Now the farmer's wife leaves her farm and goes about the task of building scientific hypotheses. In going about the task of explanation, however, she runs into four problems even when her models make successful predictions. First, she encounters an innumerable multitude of laws that explain an innumerable multitude of phenomena. This entails that the world of laws itself needs explaining too: we must construct a *system* of laws, a Theory of Everything, that makes them intelligible, the impetus for which in Hegel's time was how Newton was able to subsume the particular laws of motions for earthly and celestial bodies under his more general laws (*PS*, 91 §150/*GW*, 9: 92). Second, the more we reduce laws to more universal ones, the more these universal laws become distant from the realm of appearance that they are to explain (*PS*, 91 §150/*GW*, 9: 92). As such, they are not easily verifiable through it. Third, even on the basis of more universal laws that explain particular ones, we come to realize that we have no idea *why* any law obtains. They display an insurmountable facticity: we can easily conceive it possible that *other* laws could obtain (*PS*, 93 §152/*GW*, 9: 93-94). Fourth, since the content of such constructions derives from experience, it may be the case that they are just accidentally true *generalizations*, rather than get at something *lawful* behind phenomena (*PS*, 94-95 §154-155/*GW*, 9: 95).

If our theoretical constructions of laws are not obviously made true by the world of experience—we can always question why a law obtains; a system of laws may not have a direct connection to experience;⁴⁴ and a law can be attacked as a mere generalization—the question is how we can have conviction in their truth that we in fact do display in our scientific practice. At this point, idealism enters upon the scene. According to Hegel, we must phenomenologically concede that what accounts for our knowledge of objects is idealist rather than realist criteria when we recognize that why the work of explanation was

⁴⁴ This is a problem acknowledged by contemporary Theories of Everything such as superstring theory. The latter argues that even if the entities that it postulates as the building blocks of the universe may not admit empirical verification, nevertheless we have good reasons to posit their existence.

deemed successful was because, in dealing with appearances and their putative foundation in transcendent principles, the understanding was only dealing with the *movement of understanding itself* (PS, 101 §163/GW, 9: 100-101). In other words, a theoretical construction is taken as true whenever we are *rationally satisfied* that the discourse about something adequately explains the phenomenon under investigation by capturing what it truly is: “The reason why ‘explaining’ affords so much self-satisfaction is just because in it consciousness is, so to speak, in an immediate conversation with itself [*in unmittelbarem Selbstgespräche mit sich*], enjoying only itself; although it seems to be busy with something else, it is in fact occupied only with itself.” (PS, 101, §163; translation modified/GW, 9: 101)

Let’s take an example. Stars themselves do not make what we say about them true or false. At first, they were just meaningless blotches of light. However, when we began to form an understanding of them, we were led to postulate a Ptolemaic universe—and were rationally satisfied that this model was the right one because it was determined as the best explanation. Regardless, it slowly became evident that this model could not fully explain all heavenly motions. This lack of rational satisfaction led to a new model: that of a Copernican universe. This is why, for Hegel, truth is never a mere matter of verification against *given* facts, but a function of our universe of meaning *itself*, which, without external support of truth, establishes what counts as true beliefs that arrive at facts (the sun orbits around the earth vs. the earth orbits around the sun)⁴⁵—or, to let Hegel make the point in his own voice: “the Understanding experiences only itself” (PS, 103, §165/GW, 9: 102).

Consequently, the primary lesson of the experience of the understanding is that there is no need for an *adequatio* between idea and reality to account for truth. When we are rationally satisfied that we are entitled to our theoretical commitments, we are permitted to assume the objective existence of what our discourse claims unless our entitlement comes into question in discourse. This is why the naïve realism of sense-certainty and the

⁴⁵ I take this point from Žižek according to whom one of Hegel’s great achievements is “embracing the self-referential play of the symbolic with no external support of its truth. For Hegel, there is truth, but it is immanent to the symbolic process—the truth is measured not by an external standard, but by the ‘pragmatic contradiction,’ the inner (in)consistency of the discursive process.” Slavoj Žižek, *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (Verso, 2013), 77–78.

philosophical common sense of perception, as well as the more sophisticated realism of modern science represented by the understanding, were able to believe that representationalist criteria, rather than idealist ones, were that through which we adjudicate knowledge claims. They mistook our *rational satisfaction* in the claims we make for a *matching up* of idea and reality when it is in fact precisely such satisfaction that bestows upon us the conviction that our ideas have gotten reality right.

In other words, what Hegel's inner exploration of consciousness and the failure of historical attempts at construing the structure of that dimension of our experience and the source of our knowledge of objects avers to have shown to us is the following. Our realist attitude towards objects is idealistically generated by the rational norms internally governing the development of our universe of meaning. Paradoxically, realism does not make a realist. Here we see the third manner that the *Phenomenology* functions as an introduction to the anthropological task of Hegelian logic. In describing how we create a universe of meaning that provides the logical structure of our conscious experience, we describe an idealism that is "absolute." For the *Phenomenology* has, according to Hegel, now proven that our universe of meaning is *self-contained* and *self-justifying*: self-contained, because to become more consciously aware of what an object is, to track truth about it, we just have to say more and more about it in discourse; self-justifying, because our certainty that the object is whatever we say it is comes from the rational satisfaction derived from what is said, not from correspondence to given facts, for what is taken as a fact is itself a product of the process of conceptualization. As Hegel puts it elsewhere: "All revolutions, whether in the sciences or world history, occur merely because spirit has changed its categories in order to understand and examine what belongs to it, in order to possess and grasp itself in a truer, deeper, more intimate and unified manner." (*PN*, vol. 1, 202 §246 Addition/*GW*, 24.3: 1183)

With this phenomenological insight gained, a significant change has occurred in our comprehension of our conscious experience of objects. We, the readers, are supposed to have given witness to how, in picking out "this" or "that" in the here and now of experience and providing explanations of them, *we* are creating a universe of meaning with no external support. This signifies that consciousness is never merely awareness of *an object*: there is always an element of *self-consciousness* at play that exceeds the mere

consciousness of an object by operating as a necessary deep structure of any successful act of cognition, namely an awareness of the *distinctively human, subjective* interests whose satisfaction we seek whenever we engage in making an object intelligible. This entails that the entirety of the preceding discussion was missing an analysis of the very presupposition that makes it possible, which forces us to expand our analysis by focusing on a new dimension of experience from which we, without knowing, made abstraction. For making things intelligible is an activity that we perform and, as Hegel points out, “[a]ctivity always proceeds from *need*” (*LL*, 5/*GW*, 23.2: 656) such that, without this need that impels our activity, we would never go about it. Hence, when we tear open the curtain of appearance to see what lies behind, *we see only ourselves* (*PS*, 103 §165/*GW*, 9: 102).

1.3 The experience of self-consciousness: rationality and our metaphysical achievement over (our) nature

The conceptual artistry of Hegel’s *Phenomenology* is such that whenever such a major transition occurs, we get a more comprehensive picture of the fundamental dimensions of human experience, how certain dimensions are the deep structure supporting others, and the existential implications of our rationality as that which makes these dimensions possible. What we overlooked in the inner exploration of our consciousness of objects is the fact that the rationality behind our realistic attitude is not just a *neutral* task of conceptualization: were it not for the *distinctively human, subjective* interests motivating that activity, we would never be internally compelled to create a universe of meaning. For something to have *meaning* for me—to appear on my radar, as it were, as something to make intelligible—it must be something of concern to me if it is to grab my attention in the first place. To use a wordplay, it must *mean* something for me. Consequently, to grasp why we are instinctively driven to understand objects, we must situate our understanding, the basic structure of our consciousness of objects, in the broader *goals* of human life. We therefore transition from the realistic attitude of our object-oriented consciousness to the idealistic attitude of our self-consciousness of the subjective interests that motivate our

actions, interests in accordance with which we build the universe of meaning in which we live.⁴⁶

Hegel's transition from consciousness to self-consciousness thus appears to mirror not only Kant's declaration of the primacy of the practical in the *Critique of Practical Reason*,⁴⁷ but also more strikingly Fichte's more elaborate transcendental deduction of the same in his 1794 *Science of Knowledge*. Making the self-positing freedom of the "I" into the first principle of philosophy, Fichte here derives the basic structure of human experience from it. For Fichte, because our originary freedom finds itself "checked" or "limited" by the constraints of the natural and social world in which it is embodied, the "not-I," our agency is always confronted with its radical finitude vis-à-vis its inborn drive to fully actualize its own infinite freedom. This sets up our need to cognize the world in order to morally transform what the world *is* into what it *ought to be* if we are to concretely realize our freedom in it, reducing theory to a moment of the more primary goals of praxis.

The innovation of Hegel's phenomenological re-enactment of self-consciousness, however, lies in how he goes beyond such a practical idealism according to which it is principally due to our practical subjective interest in action that we create a universe of meaning and advances a distinctive form of theoretical idealism. For Hegel, theorization does not arise from a more rich and all-encompassing world of pragmatic concern to which it is subordinate, but instead responds to an irreducible existential concern: the distinctively human subjective interest in theoretical knowledge, whereby we create a universe of

⁴⁶ In this regard, I endorse Pippin's reading of the transition from consciousness to self-consciousness as a phenomenological justification of idealism and disagree with more neutral readings that see here nothing more than the transition from theory to practice. Cf. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, 131–42; Harris, *Hegel's Ladder*, 1997, 1:308. For an overview of the problem, which sides with the latter, see Robert Stern, *The Routledge Guide Book to Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Routledge, 2013), 66–70.

⁴⁷ Kant argues that there is a disconnect between the theoretical interest of knowing what the world is and the practical interest of realizing what the world ought to be through action—a disconnect that leads to a "conflict of reason with itself." Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 236. To unify these opposed tendencies in how the subject approaches the world, he maintains the absorption of theoretical interest within practical interest as a necessary moment of its activity: "all interest is ultimately practical and even that of speculative reason is only conditional and is complete in practical use alone." Kant, 237. Earlier in the text Kant had already proclaimed that "the concept of freedom [...] constitutes the *keystone* of the whole architecture of the system of pure reason and even of speculative reason." Kant, 139.

meaning *and act in it the way that we do* because we cannot help, as rational creatures, to explain the world around us and ourselves.⁴⁸ Consequently, the net result of his phenomenological reconstruction will be that it is only because we are, as it were, theoreticians *from the very start* that (1) human praxis has the ontologically unique structure that it does⁴⁹ and (2) we, in modernity, come to place such an inviolable status on science for how we are to live our lives. In this sense, the transition to modern scientific reason in the next chapter of the *Phenomenology* is already implicitly made at the very origins of human history that Hegel here dramatizes. It is a matter of displaying how historical players came, simply by seeking to self-consciously achieve the goals of human life, to the acknowledgement of the presence of rationality already instinctively at work in the electing of these goals and transform it into a self-aware way of life, thereby letting humans become explicitly what they always were.

1.3.1 The desire for recognition: the ontological distinctiveness of human vis-à-vis animal life

Hegel begins his inner exploration of our self-conscious experience of action with the position of the human being as seemingly fully immersed in nature. The reason for this is that one might think that us humans, at the historical beginnings of experience, were beholden to entirely natural desires. In living out our lives, our primary pragmatic concern would have therefore been, just like that of all other organisms, to satisfy the main subjective interest of all life: survival and reproduction. In attaining this purpose, we would have obeyed our animal instincts and drives. As Hegel points out, even if our behaviour was here largely unconsciously motivated, this instinctively driven engagement would have already been a shape of self-consciousness. Satisfying natural desires is *what first*

⁴⁸ The anti-Kantian character of Hegel's making praxis a moment of theory deserves to be highlighted. Kant claims that "one cannot require pure practical reason to be subordinate to speculative reason and so reverse the order." Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, 237.

⁴⁹ To put it in Brandomian terms, it is not that semantics must answer to pragmatics. See Robert B. Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment* (Harvard University Press, 1998), 83–84. To the contrary, pragmatics must answer to semantics. This is why Hegel is not a pragmatist: logic is not the mere making explicit of the implicit rationality of our linguistic practices, their materially inferential structure, but is instead that which makes explicit the always already implicitly formal structure of these practices, this formality being alone, for Hegel, that which makes possible these practices.

makes something into an I, an independent subject that stands in a relationship of freedom towards the order of nature: in pursuing such subjective interests, an agent imposes its will on objects and thus reduces them to the orbit of its pragmatic concerns, thereby gaining a sense of self-certainty, a stable self-identity over and against a world that has acquired meaning with respect to these concerns. Intriguingly, this entails that non-human life-forms also possess *I-hood*, *subjectivity*, and *freedom* and, moreover, that bacteria, plants, and animals are *already idealists* because they make an otherwise brute nature re-exist as meaningful in accordance with their subjective interests (e.g., mere nature is proto-conceptually divided up into inedible matter vs. food).

But why would have humanity ever stopped behaving like animals under the sway of naturally motivated interests and started establishing historical communities whose spiritual interests surpass these, interests in accordance with which they make nature re-exist as meaningful in a distinctively human way? According to Hegel, the movement from our “immersion” in nature to human history has to do with the constitutive *restlessness* of human desire, which makes it impossible for us to be satisfied as long as we only chase after the objects required to survive and reproduce. But this is unlike anything in animal life. As Hegel later argues in his *Philosophy of Nature*, animal life is characterized by a cyclical oscillation between lack and fulfillment: whenever a certain desire emerges, an animal feels a lack and its self-consciousness and hence its idealistically constructed world are put in danger, setting in motion a process whereby it seeks out, consumes, or creates, via its instinctual programming, whatever object will fill in said lack so that its identity and world will continue: water, food, shelter, a mate (*PN*, vol. 3, 141 §359/*GW*, 20: 358). Although any given natural desire will eventually reassert itself, the natural desires of animal life are *not* restless. At the very moment that the intended object is procured, a natural desire *is fully satisfied*, no matter how transient that satisfaction may be. Hegel’s point is that the human being is barred from all such *natural* satisfaction. Our desires are, from the very outset, spiritual rather than natural: we crave something more than a particular object and the satisfaction they result in can never be reduced to physiological gratification that an object grants (*PS*, 109-110 §175/*GW*, 9: 107-108). But what, then, do they seek and what is the nature of their satisfaction?

Hegel's original thesis is that our desire is spiritual because its effects on human experience already display the work of rationality *over* our given biological systems. Our rationality, as it were, "short-circuits" our immersion in nature. At the most basic level, because we must conceptualize to have an experience of the objects that we may desire, the fact that we are theoretically minded changes the very structure of our desires. For instance, we never merely perceive this or that object; we always perceive objects as particular instances of universal classes. As a result, even Aurignacian hunters and gathers would have desired more than just this or that object: since issues such as their theoretical knowledge of its supply would have influenced their actions, if an object (e.g., water) was, say, known as a scarce resource required for their existence, in desiring it they would have felt that it was their right, a right that others should acknowledge.⁵⁰ Similarly, if we take the mythopoetic origins of ancient Greece, what counts for the warriors battling at Troy is not the mere physiological gratification of a natural desire (e.g., for Helen) that has been thwarted, but Menelaus' and Paris' feeling that their desire is their right, one that others should take as inalienable.⁵¹ In other words, our desires are always already caught up in our *claims* of right to which we feel *justified* because of their place in our universe of meaning.

The upshot of Hegel's analysis of distinctively human desire is two-fold. On the one hand, while we may assume that conceptualization was not *consciously* active at the historical beginnings of human experience, nevertheless that such agents *felt* themselves justified to the objects of their desires demonstrates that conceptualization is instinctively at work *in the body as its desires motivate action*. As such, our desires are not a testament to our rootedness in nature despite our rationality: rather than being derived from the instinctual programming of our biological systems, they always already stand in the logical space of reasons. On the other hand, as soon as desire is so structured, we are foreclosed from being satisfied by drinking, eating, having shelter, copulating. These are never

⁵⁰ While the example is my own, I take the general idea from George di Giovanni, "Religion, History, and Spirit in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*," in *The Blackwell Guide to Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, ed. Kenneth R. Westphal (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 230–31.

⁵¹ This is a modified version of an example from di Giovanni, "How Necessary Is the Phenomenology for Hegel's Logic."

sufficient to live a fulfilling human life because what existentially matters the most for us is not so much the objects we claim as a right or the physiological gratification they grant. A claim of right *itself* must be vouchsafed by others, for when we are denied something we *think* ourselves entitled to for this or that reason, it is not just we lose access to some particular object—our self-conscious identity is struck down. As such, what we desire the most is the social recognition of our claims of right and the feeling of prestige that comes from it. As Hegel puts it, “[s]elf-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness” (PS, 110 §175/GW, 9: 108).

On this basis, Hegel next submits two interrelated theses concerning the structure of human action as inflected by the desire for recognition. (1) This desire renders self-consciousness intrinsically antagonistic. A claim of right inevitably comes across the counterclaim of another self-consciousness. For in seeking recognition, we are in effect investing what are otherwise *singular*, naturally conditioned desires with *universal* significance, in short: asserting *ourselves*, whereby claims that stand in conflict with one another are unavoidable. This is why, in Hegel’s phenomenological narrative, the struggle for recognition does not begin in loving dialogue, but rather in a life and death struggle. Our desire for recognition is so existentially irresistible that we are prepared to die and even murder to get our fundamental *ideas* of who we are and what we have a right to recognized. Hegel’s argument is that we can only make sense of our readiness to risk death in the name of recognition on the assumption that rationality is, implicitly at least, here too instinctively at work. Since our doings, just as much as our sayings, take part in the game of giving and asking for reasons, if we take an action, a specific move in that game, to be valid, then we have no reason to *ever* retract that action or move, but on the contrary *every* reason to demand that all others who play the game should plan their next action or move accordingly. Rationality, contra the optimism of the Enlightenment, is therefore the origin of strife as well as brutal cruelty, our capacity to inflict violence upon one another instead of ceding to someone’s demanded rights, even if it is also the hope for reconciliation.

But this, for Hegel, proves that us humans have decisively swapped a merely natural desire for a strictly speaking spiritual one. It entails that rationality implants within us motivations for actions with no biological gain in homeostasis or the preservation of the

species.⁵² It renders us, as Hegel puts it, “not attached to life” (*PS*, 113 §187/*GW*, 9: 111), thus making the structure of human action ontologically unique in the animal kingdom. As such, the experience of self-conscious action reveals a profound truth: that there is *an ontic gap* between the goals of merely natural life and those of human life; that we, in virtue of our rationality, can stipulate the conditions for our own existence (the rights that are existentially all important for us, the subjective interests that organize our very life-world) *against* any pre-given natural facts about who we are (biological imperatives that dictate what, when, and how we should try to eat, drink, find protection, and copulate). Put differently, whereas animal desire is instinctively programmed to seek out, consume, or create certain objects to survive and reproduce, our own rationality, while itself an instinct, is an instinct of a distinctive type: for the sake of what we think ourselves entitled to, we can override our basic animal nature, our very biological system, by supplanting them with greater spiritual ones—just as, for instance, when a protester will go on a hunger strike get the worthiness of a cause recognized, even to the point of courting death.

This leads to Hegel’s second thesis about human action as inflected by a desire for recognition. A claim of right cannot so possess us unless we take it as justified, as something that, because rational, I have no reason to step back from—and neither do you. Consequently, when *I* demand that you acknowledge my claim and *you* demand that I acknowledge yours, what we are actually demanding is that *we* come to a rational consensus on what our mutual rights are. Recognition is, according to Hegel, a *cognitive* achievement and the feeling of prestige that we so strongly crave is a distinctively *rational* satisfaction. It derives from others accepting that the reasons we give for our claims of right. But consensus is the basis of any social existence. Our rationality therefore not only changes the structure of desire; it also makes our desire for the recognition, the most basic human desire, the source of social normativity. For as soon as individual agents come to some agreed-upon understanding of their mutual rights, which is the ultimate aim of the

⁵² As Kojève succinctly says: “the being that is incapable of putting his life in danger to attain ends that are not immediately vital—i.e. the being that cannot risk its life in a Fight for *Recognition*, in a fight for pure *prestige*—is *not* a truly *human* being.” Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* (Cornell University Press, 1980), 41.

struggle for recognition on Hegel's account as a cognitive activity, a community with shared values emerges.

This signifies that the authority of practical norms is, for Hegel, not grounded in a social contract to which we consented in order to escape the state of nature, a war of all against all in the competition of resources in which the strong prevail. Hegel maintains that we *never* were in a state of nature, but *always already* in a struggle for recognition in which the question of which rights we should bestow upon one another is centre stage, even when violence is at play as in the battle of life and death. It also signifies that their authority cannot be grounded in any biological or psychological fact about what we are—say, in those values or laws that would best enable our biological flourishing or in some psychological capacity for sympathy that marks our given animal nature. What underlies their authority are our rational deliberations about the rights we claim such that the norms that make up our practical ways of life are *sui generis*.

It is precisely in virtue of this that Hegel can here, already in the second segment of his *Phenomenology*, tell us what it existentially means for us to be beings endowed with “spirit,” a capacity for thought, discourse, or theoretical mindedness. The idea is that, because we are instinctively rational, our self-conscious experience of actions is so structured that (1) we *demand* that others recognize our rights, leading to the emergence of communities with a common conviction in what our rights are, and (2) these rights *irreducibly* arise from within the logical space of reasons. Consequently, “spirit is—this absolute substance which is the unity of the different independent self-consciousnesses which, in their opposition, enjoy perfect freedom and independence: ‘I’ that is ‘We’ and ‘We’ that is ‘I’” (*PS*, 110 §177/*GW*, 9: 108). Put differently, human life, as a life that lives in the logical space of reasons, is “absolute” in the sense that it has no external support for the truth of the subjective interests that it pursues (e.g., they are not, say, explainable by naturalist principles). Instead, it rationally elects what existentially matters for it through a process of conceptualization that aspires towards a shared understanding of the goals of human life (an “I” that is a “We” and a “We” that is an “I”). The human being, as theoretically minded, therefore creates practical ways of life “in and through itself” that are self-contained and self-justifying on their own terms in that what counts are *exclusively* our fundamental ideas of who we are and the recognition that we demand from one another

that these ideas are the best ones. But this in effect makes “spirit” into what the tradition called “substance,” that is, a self-sufficient universe, except now writ historically rather than cosmically—a claim that Hegel, incidentally, makes here proleptically but fully in the chapter on full-fledged spirit to come.⁵³

1.3.2 From the struggle of life and death to unhappy consciousness: human history as a self-contained and self-justifying universe of meaning

This puts into relief the primary lesson of the experience of self-consciousness: if our desire were simply natural and not always already spiritual through and through, we would have forever remained at the level of self-preservation and the propagation of our progeny and never have entered the realm of human history, the experiential origins of which are precisely at stake in these passages.⁵⁴ In this inner exploration of the experience of the motivations guiding self-conscious action, we are therefore supposed to give witness to how human history is a metaphysically *sui generis* domain conditioned by our rationality, one that can only be understood on the spiritual, i.e. rational terms that it sets for itself. In this regard, our rationality is not responsible, to speak metaphorically, for our fall *downwards* from “true” being, nature, as the Romantics of Hegel’s time contended. By engendering and sustaining the self-contained and self-justifying universe of meaning in which we live, our rationality makes possible our metaphysical achievement *over* the latter, our elevation *upwards* into a self-standing world of rationally elected subjective interests that are irreducible to nature.

Consequently, we see the fourth manner that the *Phenomenology* serves as an introduction to the anthropological task of Hegelian logic: it shows us that the claims we make and the justifications that we provide for them make up the ontologically unique life of human history. For in describing the basic categories underlying judging and inferring, the conceptual moves that we make in the logical space of reasons to create a universe of meaning, we therefore do more than describe the rational consistency of valid thought—we distill the rationality that has been instinctively operative throughout human history,

⁵³ See below 1.5.

⁵⁴ This is why it would be misleading to assert that human desire arises from *organic* life. Cf. Pinkard, *Hegel’s Phenomenology*, 48. For Hegel, because we are rational our desire attests to how our life is always already oriented by the ontologically distinctive demands of a *spiritual* life.

the logical space of reasons in which we live and which makes it possible as a zone of activity all of its own. This is why Hegel, in the transition in his own logic from the Doctrines of Being and Essence to the Doctrine of the Concept, asserts that we are not only disclosing the kingdom of freedom (*SL*, 513/*GW*, 12: 15), but also providing the “only possible refutation of Spinozism” (*SL*, 512/*GW*, 12: 15). For in describing the logical space of reasons, we are in effect describing that which brings forth what Spinoza said was impossible: a “kingdom within a kingdom” (*imperium in imperio*),⁵⁵ that is, a product of nature that could live according to its own dictates. For while the rationality that logic describes is an instinct and hence a product of nature, it represents a place in nature where nature itself gives rise to a metaphysical *novum*.

At this stage in the phenomenological re-enactment of our self-consciousness, we have thus entered the realm of history as something ontologically distinct from nature and which must be grasped in and through itself: a self-contained and self-justifying pragmatic universe of meaning in which what counts are our fundamental ideas of who we are and the recognition that we demand from one another of these ideas, a recognition that presupposes that we have the proper cognition of the reasons why we think the way we do because without thinking that we have the best reasons we cannot expect others to bind themselves to them. In Hegel’s reconstruction of human history, he accordingly tries to show the irreducibly spiritual motivations that led us from human prehistory through ancient Greece to medieval Christian Europe and how these motivations came to be believed and disbelieved in given certain social practices of giving and asking for reasons. He does by tracing how different historical players, by acting according to self-conscious goals determined from within their pragmatic universe of meaning, caused that universe to generate doubts about itself, making it fall into existential despair and leading to the existential necessity of new interests articulated by new universes, because the language through which this semantic world established itself was acknowledged as rationally unsatisfying.

In so doing, these historical players found new models of self-comprehension and respective ways of life, going from living as a master or slave, a stoic, and a skeptic to an

⁵⁵ Spinoza, *The Ethics and Selected Letters*, 103 (III pre).

unhappy consciousness searching for union with God, as these models and ways of life collapse under their own weight in being acted out. The battle of prestige only comes to an end when a historical player decides, in the name of it being rationally better to live another day, to give up their claims of right, bestowing upon nature a new meaning: the indispensable horizon of the life of spirit. However, in adopting the claims of right of another to maintain themselves in existence, rights that are in opposition to their initially demanded rights, the stage is set for their enslavement. But since genuine recognition requires equals, the master is unable to procure the recognition that they need from the slave. The slave, on the other hand, in transforming nature according to the master's desires must learn nature's universal and necessary laws to do their work. However, to know the structure of the universe is to also know one's existential place within it. Consequently, once it is believed that we are subject to these laws that admit no exception, the master and slave have no choice but to become stoics who, realizing the contingency of desire and social rank as products of nature's impersonal *logos*, elect new goals for human life—only, in the end, to have these brought to ruin by the skeptics' retort that it is impossible, from within the ever-changing play of appearance, to cognize the unchanging laws that set the framework for what we can do and expect. Yet the skeptical self-consciousness and way of life, caught as it is in the insolvable opposition between the changeable nature of embodied existence and continued desire to grasp the unchangeable that could alone tell it the true meaning of human life, is intrinsically unstable.

In Hegel's phenomenological narrative, a decisive turn occurs in the history of the West with the coming upon the scene of Christianity, which claims, in its faith in the Incarnate God, that nothing in principle separates our self-consciousness, despite its finitude, from the infinite reason of a transcendent God who has decreed the goals of human life. To ascertain these, all we have to do is, with the appropriate social practices of devotion, asceticism, and service, elevate ourselves to union with Him and thereby know, with certainty, how we are to live our lives. Nevertheless, these practices cannot fulfill their promise. Medieval Europe is, for Hegel, the world of "unhappy consciousness": on the one hand, the more the believer denies their finitude to reach God, the harder it is to stand in a personal relation of recognition with Him; on the other hand, the more they bring God closer to themselves, the more they run the risk of blasphemy. The realm of the unchanging

is still unreachable from within the realm of the ever-changing—but it was precisely access to this through certain Christian practices that was upheld to ground our identity. How, then, are we to self-consciously know what to do, what our best subjective interests are?

1.4 The experience of reason: rationality and its discontents in modern science

Hegel's point is that through the experience of Christianity, the *necessary*, but not *sufficient* conditions are laid down for a new model of self-comprehension and way of life—one that is able to reconcile the changeable and the unchangeable, subjectivity and objectivity, where Christianity and its social practices failed: modern science. All it takes to make the existential leap from the former to the latter is the realization that, by trying to evacuate our own subjectivity to attain to the standpoint of God, the objective point of view—what the Christians took as that of God—is not something transcendent to us, but instead something to which we have access once we have the right methodology for guaranteeing impartiality. But this could not be possible if such a standpoint of reason was not already with us from the very beginning—all we needed was, through the discipline gained through the experience of the slave, stoic, skeptic, and medieval Christian, to become convinced in the powers of our rationality to bring us to it.

With the emergence of the modern scientific revolution, however, we hit a new impasse in our phenomenological re-enactment. It decisively demonstrates that we do more than live out our lives caught within our spiritually created life-world of action because our self-consciousness contains more than our awareness of *who we are and the subjective interests that guide our lives*: there is always an element of *reason* at play that exceeds our self-consciousness by operating as the necessary deep structure of any successful act of such self-consciousness. Because self-consciousness, as a practically oriented activity, is infused from outset by theory, we are never just concerned with how to live out our lives—we are never just part of a pragmatic, action-packed universe of meaning—but must always already be engaged in some degree of scientific enquiry, in the modern sense of that term, if the norms of action that structure our praxis are to be authoritative for us. This, in turn, gives us a more comprehensive picture of the fundamental experiential dimensions of human life and what our rationality existentially means to us by adding a new dimension to our “list”: the *speculative use of reason* as a means of giving meaning to things and

ourselves, a use that has been tacit throughout the experience of self-consciousness (be it in the slaves' *cognizing* of nature's laws, the stoic's metaphysical *modelling* of the universe, the skeptics' *critique* of the criteria of truth, or the Christian *idea* of God). As such, while the revolution of modern science occasions a fundamental paradigm shift in our self-comprehension and thus a new, self-consciously rational way of life emerges, it is not here, for the first time, that reason comes upon the scene of the human historical drama. Rather, with it we just make more explicit its implicit activity throughout that drama, now equipped with the unique conviction that objectivity is at hand. In other words, while this conviction may be a historical achievement that consequently becomes widespread across Europe, it also encapsulates something essential about who we are.

What we overlooked in the case of our inner exploration of our self-consciousness was precisely the extent to which a speculative use of reason is determinative for our actions. In short, for Hegel we cannot separate practical and theoretical reason: what we comprehend as the goals of action will depend upon how we answer the "big" questions concerning what the natural world and the human being are, for our answers are always the backdrop in accordance with which we are certain of (1) what the subjective interests that motivate us should be and (2) whether those subjective interests can, in fact, be objectively realized. This is because, in Hegel's eyes, we are not, first and foremost, *pragmatic* beings, but instead *thinking* beings—since we cannot help but reflect, how we *think* in a speculative register influences what we *do*. However, this does not mean, according to Hegel, that the most adequate or satisfactory way of life would be one of "pure contemplation." Rather, the transition from self-consciousness to reason testifies to there being a continuity between the practical and the speculative. Inasmuch as reason is here shown to be the deep structure of praxis, one way of saying it is that we must all be, to some degree or other, scientists "before" we are practical, for the latter only arises as something feasible from within our broader scientific account of things and ourselves; but one could equally say the opposite: were we not trying to practically maintain ourselves in existence, to pursue our subjective interests, we would not be scientists. Scientific enquiry is an existential affair, how we live our lives. Reason is, as Hegel revealingly puts it, for us an "instinct": "The instinct of Reason, on the other hand, is at the same time self-consciousness" (cf. *PS*, 157 §258/*GW*, 9: 147), that is, an innate pattern of behaviour that characterizes typically human life, just

as the instincts of flying, singing songs, and building nests to nurse their young are the innate patterns of behaviour that characterize typically avian life. To mix Aristotelian and Sartrean metaphors, we are *condemned to wonder* and were it not for this condemnation, this inescapable need to infuse the very fabric of our experience with scientific enquiry, we would not be human. Put differently, since we have an instinct to embark upon science, in some shape or other, in our everyday practical lives, we were always already modern.

1.4.1 The scientific observation of nature, the Sphinx whose riddle cannot be solved

Hegel thus begins his inner exploration of this new dimension of experience with the contention that, in light of reason's conviction in its own reach, there is an ingrained conviction that there exists a metaphysical identity between being and thinking (*PS*, 139-140 §232/*GW*, 9: 132-133). After all, it is only if being is rational through and through that we could hope, in providing theoretical constructs of it, to come to know it in a manner that would be rationally satisfying. In this respect, reason is representative of a certain inborn optimism in the power of our rationality. Modern science is such a definitive stage in the history of the West and our own self-comprehension as beings endued with spirit because it takes what is otherwise a mere confidence that we can attain knowledge and converts it into a methodologically rigorous procedure for guaranteeing it, a certainty, thus permitting us, in principle, to always be able to assuage our instinct of reason in that this procedure is free from all the inner limitations at overcoming subjectivity and capturing objectivity present in previous historical models of construing the use and reach of rationality and the ways of life that they made possible (those of the stoic, the skeptic, and the medieval Christian). For reason in this new guise, the mind-independent order of things, "nature" broadly construed, is now experienced as open to our rationality to an extent never before imaginable. As Hegel says, "[a]pprehending itself in this way, it is as if the world had for it only now come into being" (*PS*, 139-40 §232/*GW*, 9: 132).

The experience of reason under investigation is therefore one according to which we are convinced not only that being is inherently rational, but also that we can explain it in a rationally satisfying way. Taking modern science as the zenith of such an endeavour at rationally satisfying explanations thanks to the certainty given to it by its method, Hegel phenomenologically re-enacts its observation of nature to determine, when push comes to

shove, whether it can live up to its promise at making nature fully intelligible. But this equally means that when we, in the mode of modern science, observe nature—which is not a mere empiricist “seeing” in which sensory experience dominates (*PS*, 147 §244/*GW*, 9: 139), but entails proposing theoretical constructions whose explanatory merit we adjudicate in and through the method of scientific discourse, making it a brand of idealism, despite what certain scientists may think they are doing (*PS*, 147 §242/*GW*, 9: 138)—we are, in effect, measuring nature against the ideal of meaning that we bring to experience. This ideal is nothing other than the discursive norm for what would count as a rationally satisfying explanation: what in Hegel’s logic is defined as a universal concept that, in virtue of its inner principle, exhaustively specifies itself into particular concepts, thereby making itself into a self-contained and self-justifying universe of meaning in which clarity, distinctness, and explanatory completeness are reached.⁵⁶ In this fashion, when we are looking for the presence of reason in the natural world, we are looking to see if *our* expectations of meaning are truly realized in it. In Hegel’s own words, “the *existence* of the world becomes for self-consciousness its own *truth* and *presence*; it is certain of experiencing itself therein” (*PS*, 140 §232/*GW*, 9: 133)—or, as he also puts it in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, which recasts the period of modern science here under phenomenological reconstruction from the point of view of the philosopher observing history: “Thought is the grade to which Spirit has now advanced[, ...] challenging the external world to exhibit the same Reason which Subject [the Ego] does,” for they only “feel a real interest in the universe, when they recognized their own Reason in the Reason which pervades it” (*PH*, 439-40/*W*, 12: 521).

To put it differently, the question is whether our theoretical constructions of the natural world are able to make fully intelligible the lawfulness that we encounter in it. As the modern scientist looks through the wealth of knowledge that they have before themselves, they quickly, however, run into a dilemma. Although there is nothing epistemologically obstructing them from grasping what is in its inner principle, as they go through the “endless particularization of the chaos of animals and plants, of rocks, or the metals, earths, etc.,” reason is never rationally satisfied with its explanations (*PS*, 148

⁵⁶ See below, 4.1.

§245/GW, 9: 140). Despite being certain that they can unpack the truth of what is around us to a rationally satisfying degree, everywhere the modern scientist looks there is, instead, a surd that resists explanation, which leaves reason discontent in its quest for intelligibility, whether it be at the level of the classificatory systems that we create to describe natural kinds, or the laws that we hypothesize as underlying nature, or whether we are at the level of physics, geology, chemistry, botany, or zoology (cf. *PS*, 150 §247/GW, 9: 141). As Hegel puts it, they discover in the impartial observation of nature that “reality directly comes to be for it a reality that is just as much not that of Reason, while Reason is at the same time supposed to be all reality. This Reason remains a restless searching and in its very searching declares that the satisfaction of finding is a sheer impossibility” (*PS*, 145 §239/GW, 9: 137). Exhibiting at each level a stubborn immediacy that can never be conceptually mediated, the natural world therefore contains an element of *brute facticity*—it ultimately just *is* what it is, with no other reason for why it is that way and *not otherwise* besides that being the way that it ineluctably is, which prevents us from making it fully intelligible. As Hegel makes the point later in his *Philosophy of Nature*, instead of presenting us with a clear, distinct, and explanatorily complete order, nature exhibits, on the contrary, an insurmountable factor of “contingency,” “rulelessness,” “external determination,” “arbitrariness,” and “lack of order” (*PN*, vol. 1, 215 §250 & Remark; translation modified/GW, 20: 239-240) that is a *scandal* to reason and the rational closure it seeks.⁵⁷ It is in no manner a logically self-contained, self-justifying order, a substance, purposive creation, or absolute totality à la Spinoza, Leibniz, or the early Schelling.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Raoni Padui claims something similar: “The disjunction between the concept and reality is not simply a limitation of our discursive understanding, a defect of our human finite intellect, but is rather the expression of something essential about nature—namely, its own resistance to full incorporation into the categories of universality and necessity.” Raoni Padui, “The Necessity of Contingency and the Powerlessness of Nature: Hegel’s Two Senses of Contingency,” *Idealistic Studies* 40, no. 3 (October 1, 2010): 253, <https://doi.org/10.5840/idstudies201040316>.

⁵⁸ Already in his 1805-6 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit*, written just before the *Phenomenology* where Hegel was still experimenting with and defending a Schellingian version of identity-philosophy in which the absolute unity of nature and spirit are inflected by an unconscious, divine-like intelligence, we see Hegel declaring that nature is “blind” (*JPS*, 104/GW, 8: 206-207). The consequence of this is profound, even if it took Hegel some time to realize its implications. For as soon as nature is recognized as a blind power, one can no longer *a priori* deduce its metaphysical structure. The elaboration of the latter then falls exclusively to the empirical sciences because it just is whatever it is without some greater rhyme or reason that would reflect a fully

Indeed, as Hegel summarizes: “the forms of nature, therefore, cannot be brought into an absolute system.” (*PN*, vol. 3, 180-181 §370 Addition/*GW*, 24.3: 1581)

This may seem to be a variation upon a classical theme in Western metaphysics that *our* rationality, because it is discursive in nature, has limitations in attaining knowledge due to the cognitive excess of reality. That is, we can never hope to have a complete grasp of the cosmic order in all its infinite detail because we cannot rise up to a “God’s-eye” point of view. But were we capable of so elevating ourselves, we would see that what, from our human perspective, looks contingent, is, from the perspective of the mind of God or the universe taken as Substance itself, necessary. Hegel’s radical suggestion is that such an epistemic model does not capture what actually transpires in the experience of reason. The inner exploration of the latter shows us that reason is not *overwhelmed* by a reality whose full intelligibility lies beyond the reach of our intellect. Rather, the natural world just *cannot* procure for us the rational satisfaction that we seek in trying to make it fully intelligible: “But even if Reason digs into the very entrails of things and opens every vein in them so that it may gush forth to meet itself, it will not attain this joy” (*PS*, 146 §241/*GW*, 9: 138). In other words, rationally satisfying explanations are not barred because of the cognitive *excess* of reality. The opposite is the case: there is a cognitive *lack*, what Hegel calls the “impotence of nature” (*die Ohnmacht der Natur*) (*PN*, vol. 1, 215 §250/*GW*, 20: 240).

And that is the crucial lesson learned in the experience of observing reason: nature lacks the intelligibility *that we expect it to display*. In other words, the surd that resists explanation throughout the natural world is *generated by rationality itself*, not thanks to something we just “can’t see” because of our cognitive restrictions. As soon as we force things to stand in the logical space of reasons by asking them why they are the way they

rational design. As He puts it later in his *Philosophy of Nature*, this entails that any “in its [nature’s] *formation and development*, philosophical science presupposes and is conditioned by empirical science” (*PN*, vol. 1, 197 §246 Remark/*GW*, 20: 236). Considering this, I submit that Hegelian orthodoxy has it wrong. Nature is not, for Hegel, structured logically such that it is a systematic whole in which there is a transparent reason for why everything exists within it, permitting its structure to be knowable by thinking alone. The arguments of scholars such as Beiser and Stone who contend that Hegel’s defends a rationally purposive, “organic” worldview should therefore be qualified. Cf. Beiser, *Hegel*, 80–110; Alison Stone, *Petrified Intelligence: Nature in Hegel’s Philosophy* (SUNY Press, 2012).

are, the norms of clarity, distinctness, and explanatory completeness govern our discourse about them. Nevertheless, just because we have an instinct to discover the reasons that would make things fully intelligible doesn't mean that there are rationally satisfying reasons for why things are the way they are and not otherwise—just as, incidentally, while an animal may have an instinct to seek out and consume food, that doesn't mean it will always find something to feed on in a physiologically satisfactory manner or even at all.⁵⁹ We will, by our “logical nature” (*SL*, 17/*GW*, 21: 15), expect robust meaning even where there is none to be found, for as soon as we start asking questions, we, like children, ask “Why?” even when there is no actual answer. Consequently, at the precise moment we begin speculating about what nature is, it becomes a Sphinx whose riddle cannot be solved because there is no rationally satisfying solution to it. This is not, however, some ontological fault in nature that defiles it from within. Nature just *is* what it is. It is therefore *we who write contingency into it* by the very task of trying to make it fully intelligible to us.⁶⁰ As a result, we see the fifth manner that the *Phenomenology* serves as an introduction to Hegel's anthropological conception of logic: it shows us how the expectation of rationally satisfying meaning that we, as rational creatures, bring to experience carries broader metaphysical commitments vis-à-vis the intelligibility of nature. While the production and consumption of reasons makes us into creatures of thought who are condemned to wonder, there are domains in which this wondering may lead to disappointment rather than awe—and this disappointment is a crucial feature of our experience of the natural world.

The implications of these phenomenological moves deserve to be highlighted because they are wide reaching. With them, Hegel is radically distancing himself from the just mentioned classical theme in Western metaphysics that maintains that if we could see the universe through the mind of God or the entirety of the universe in one fell swoop, what *seems* to us as contingent would, *in fact*, be discerned as necessary. By showcasing how

⁵⁹ Again, Hegel himself makes the comparison between the human instinct of reason and the animal instinct of eating (*PS*, 157 §258/*GW*, 9: 147).

⁶⁰ This was already argued by Fichte: “something becomes contingent for someone precisely insofar as he inquires concerning its basis.” Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings, 1797-1800*, trans. Daniel Breazeale (Hackett Publishing, 1994), 9.

contingency is an irreducible feature of nature itself, Hegel maintains that the very experience of reason demonstrates that no such standpoint outside of the human standpoint can ever overcome the brute facticity of nature. As a result, while our rational comprehension of this physical law, biological form, or particular event in nature may never be fully rationally satisfying, this is not due to some limitation of our rational prowess, our inability to adopt a point of view on nature that would present it to us without extra-logical remainder. *Nature just is what it is*; there are no clear, distinct, or explanatorily complete reasons for it not being otherwise, access to which we are barred. The very possibility of there being, say, some kind of intellectual intuition or intellect different than ours that could, in principle, reach a truth that we cannot discursively is thereby foreclosed. This has the consequence that the universe of meaning that we produce to make sense of being is not a universe merely “for us.” There is no worry that being does, as it were, *outrun* intelligibility—quite to the contrary, it cannot keep up with the demands of intelligibility that we place upon it. This has the side-effect that there is nothing over and above the logical space of reasons that could, somehow, make our knowledge claims a potentially illusory perspective on a reality that is, by definition, beyond our grasp. In other words, Hegel’s metaphysical commitment to the facticity of nature entails an additional metaphysical commitment to the intrinsic intelligibility of being, the position that it can be known by us as what it truly is or ought to be. In this sense, Hegel’s idealism, unlike Kant’s, does not bound knowledge to the domain of appearance. Our very experience of nature, with all its contingency, can reflect its actual structure. Here it is worth quoting Hegel at length:

The love of truth, faith in the power of mind [or spirit], is the first condition in Philosophy. Man, because he is Mind [or spirit], should and must deem himself worthy of the highest; he cannot think too highly of the greatness and the power of his mind [or spirit], and, with this belief, nothing will be so difficult and hard that it will not reveal itself to him. The Being of the universe, at first hidden and concealed, has no power which can offer resistance to the search for knowledge; it has to lay itself open before the

seeker—to set before his eyes and give for his enjoyment, its riches and its depths. (*LHP I*, xxiii/W, 18: 13-14)

1.4.2 The scientific observation of the human being: the vicissitudes of naturalization

Unable to achieve rational satisfaction by observing nature, the modern scientist turns to the observation of the human being. Since what they seek is a reality that reflects the ideal of meaning set by rationality—an order of clarity, distinctness, and explanatory completeness—they now look to our empirical activities of thinking as a reality that, because intrinsically rational, should embody this ideal. Insofar as the method of scientific observation treats its object from the outside, the modern scientist in effect thus makes logic into the subject matter of cognitive psychology: its laws are inferred from the behavioural patterns of thought. However, this attempt, too, hits an impasse. By treating logical laws as psychological laws, the best that it can do is describe how we *happen* to think, which renders these very laws “something *found*, something that is *given*” (*PS*, 181 §300/*GW*, 9: 167). As such, the naturalization of logic cannot explain the universality and necessity that it has for us.⁶¹

But if no rationally satisfying explanation can be given by modern science for why we think the way we do, perhaps one can be for why we behave the way we do. We thus enter into the project of observational psychology, hoping to discover the psychological laws governing how an individual behaves in relation to their environment. Are there basic personality types that causally determine our behaviour? Or is our behaviour socially conditioned? Once again, each approach proves inadequate. Neither can successfully predict the complexity of human behaviour. On the one hand, dividing humans into natural kinds is “less interesting even than enumerating the species of insects, mosses, etc.” because individuals do not recognizably repeat forms as other products of nature do (*PS*, 183 §304/*GW*, 9: 169). On the other hand, however strong of an influence our environment may have upon us, an individual always possesses the unique freedom to stand against it, opting to behave otherwise than they have been socially conditioned.

⁶¹ As we shall see in the next chapter, Hegel accuses Aristotle and by implication most of traditional logic as ultimately being empirical in nature (see below, 2.5). This is because, for Hegel, logic overcomes this character of being “found” or “given” only insofar as we, in internally deducing why each category is necessary for thought, demonstrate that they cannot be otherwise.

Insofar as the individual has made observational psychology run amok, the next appropriate step is to make the individual themselves into the object of scientific enquiry. The new goal is to determine a correlation between a given individual's behaviour and their singular body. It is, however, only a last-ditch effort (it is, as Hegel says, reason at "its worst" [cf. *PS*, 206 §340/*GW*, 9: 189]) to find some observable material that would enable the modern scientist to discover natural laws of human behaviour: the pseudo-sciences of physiognomy and phrenology where universalizable features such as ethnicity and the shape of the skull are taken as what causes one's character. But no such biological reductionism will do. Hegel's point is that it is "silly" to expect that what we do could be explained in the same way that the lawfulness of other natural things can—and the momentous failure of physiognomy and phrenology just drives that point home (*PS*, 210 §346/*GW*, 9: 192). While an observational, indeed naturalizing approach towards the human being may shed insight on various aspects of our behaviour, its findings should be acknowledged as limited in scope. Human behaviour is not a mere causal *reaction* to a given set of natural facts. It is always already rationally oriented action and hence can only be explained in a rationally satisfying manner from within the *sui generis* logical space of reasons generated and sustained by the normative structure of "the concept." We, the readers, already know this from the inner exploration of self-consciousness, but the modern scientist themselves, convinced as they are by the success and progress of natural science to unveil the mysteries of the universe, are not yet ready to concede the point.

It is precisely this disillusionment with the explanatory potential of the observational approach towards human behaviour that leads to the next historical player in Hegel's phenomenological narrative, one depicted in literary form in *Faust*. In Goethe's tragedy, a feeling for the limits of the modern scientific revolution and its promise to radically reform our way of life comes to expression. For not only does its advocacy of reason find no rational satisfaction in nature or the human being, but it also makes untenable much of the traditions and customs that had previously defined Europe. As such, the modern scientist, despite the promise of its project, can no longer find themselves at home in their own world. As Faust famously declares at the beginning of the play:

I have, alas, studied philosophy,
Jurisprudence and medicine, too,

And, worst of all, theology
With keen endeavour, through and through—
And here I am, for all my lore,
The wretched fool I was before.⁶²

Faced with such doubt about the scientific way of life that he had been living, and the existential despair it gives rise to, Faust decides to abandon the scientific attitude altogether. And given that human behaviour is, on his model of self-comprehension, one naturally determined to seek pleasure and happiness, he now commits himself to a new, natural way of life that aims at these and nothing more (*PS*, 218 §361/*GW*, 9: 199).

This model of self-comprehension is the background for all historical players that now enter upon the phenomenological stage. As Hegel puts it, “[t]hey have the form of an immediate will or *natural drive*” such that “these natural impulses are bound up with an awareness that their goal is the true character and essential nature of self-consciousness” (*PS*, 215 §357; translation modified/*GW*, 9: 199). But Faust soon experiences the problems posed by a stance that leaves behind all attempts to understand the natural and social worlds. While he has renounced reason to indulge in his own desires, he cannot escape their objectivity. They *constrain* his life-project, becoming something that inflicts him like a blind, inescapable *fate*. This leads to the next historical player, one who recognizes that observation must again come into play, but now with an instrumental value: in order to properly secure our natural end of pleasure and happiness, we must redirect the standpoint of theory to human existence to determine (1) the laws that presumably naturally govern our pursuit of these and (2) the natural and social world and the limitations that they place on this pursuit.

This new individual now proclaims to have found the explanation for why the way of life of a Faust fails. They maintain that we should be able to follow “the law of our hearts,” that is, what our hearts tell us about what would give us pleasure and make us happy, this being construed as the natural right of each and every person. However, the

⁶² Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (Anchor Books, 1963), 93. While this is a translation of *Faust, Part One*, which appeared in 1808 and hence a year after the *Phenomenology*, the opening lines are the same as *Faust, a Fragment*, which was published in 1790.

laws of society, decided as they are by the church and the state, do not acknowledge the supremacy of that law and ultimately thwart our pursuit of pleasure and happiness. This leads to the attempt to reform the world so that it welcomes our pursuit of them and sets the stage for the natural flourishing of the human being. Nevertheless, the resistance encountered by this individual to their reform make them, like Karl Moor in Schiller's *The Robbers*, fall into what Hegel calls "the frenzy of self-conceit." Because they encounter, for one, people who fight against their reform in the name of church and state, they are forced, in virtue of the very ideas that they uphold and try to make into a reality, to conclude, in a heightened state of paranoia, that the world is ruled by the self-interest of "fanatical priests, gluttonous despots and their minions" (*PS*, 226 §377/*GW*, 9: 206) who sabotage their magnanimous plans at every step, whereby they decide that they alone act in the name of what is right. The next individual, a historical representative being the third Earl of Shaftesbury, guarantees an advance: in a world structured by vice, it is up to the individual to overcome the egoism of self-interest and, in cultivating their own naturally given virtues, create a better society. Yet such a project, too, comes to ruin on its own terms. It is unable to explain how the putatively wicked striving for personal gain somehow contributes to the welfare of humanity. As Adam Smith made clear in his *Wealth of Nations*, a work Hegel admired, capitalism works with an invisible hand.

Here a last historical player comes upon the scene, one that maintains that their own naturally inborn capacities and talents, their concrete individuality, is in line with the social world, the universal. Such a person is convinced that, in their own works, they actualize *what matters* (*die Sache selbst*) existentially for everyone such that, in anything they do, they can find pleasure and happiness while being at home in the social world: in pursuing my life project, I am thus participating in what Hegel designates as a "spiritual animal kingdom" because human behaviour always already instinctively navigates a social space engendered and sustained by naturally determined laws of behaviour. Consequently, the individual, recognizing that what distinguishes it as a biological creature is its rationality, turns once again to reason, now conceived as the rational counterpart of the life of pleasure and happiness, to use it to establish general precepts grounded in and hence inferable from

those laws of behaviour by which we can best pursue our natural ends in such a kingdom.⁶³ More precisely, at issue is the *demonstration* of those naturally determined social laws that would bring forth the perfect human specimen construed as an innately spiritual animal. But still beholden to the basic stance of reason as the impartial, detached enquiry of an external observer, this rationalistic testing of laws is thus not unlike what occurs in a physics, chemistry, or biology laboratory: it looks at human existence *from the outside* to establish which naturally grounded laws should hold universally and necessarily for beings seeking the natural ends of life.⁶⁴

However, this last historical player quickly realizes that no such demonstration can explain why any particular social law that we acknowledge as normatively binding should hold. As soon as we rationalistically test laws, such as those of property, we cannot explain why they ought to be a law whose legitimacy is, as Hegel puts it, “absolute”: both it and

⁶³ Take, for instance, Hobbes, whose doctrine of natural law is at the historical foundation of the kind of self-comprehension in the Enlightenment that Hegel here investigates: “A LAW OF NATURE, (*Les Naturalis*,) is a Precept or generall Rule, found out by Reason, by which a man is forbidden to do, that, which is destructive of his life or taketh away the means of preserving the same; and to omit, that, by which he thinketh it may be best preserved.” Thomas Hobbes, *Hobbes: Leviathan: Revised Student Edition*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 91 (14.3).

⁶⁴ In the literature, there is a widespread consensus that Hegel in his analysis of law-testing is dealing with the limitations of Kantian morality. But I contend that textual evidence for this is lacking. In dispute is whether a law can be *demonstrated* as universal and necessary, not whether a maxim of action is *universalizable*. Hegel has in mind Enlightenment conceptions of laws that naturally govern human behaviour and in accordance with which certain social laws can be known as universally and necessarily good for the natural ends of human life. Characteristic of this tradition is the idea that such laws can be deduced with logical necessity. Cf. Leibniz: “Jurisprudence itself is a science having very much to do with reasoning.” Gottfried Wilhelm Freiherr von Leibniz and Philip P. Wiener, *Leibniz: Selections*. (Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1951), 580. While we may speak of a “testing” of laws in a Kantian vein, this testing is more procedural like that of courts in which laws are proposed for legislation, rather than one in which laws are discovered in human nature and from which we infer general precepts. Insofar as all the preceding historical players believe that the human life is the pursuit of happiness and pleasure and seek laws that would effectively promote it, the testing here in question is a development of these approaches. This makes the general background of law-testing definitively unKantian. Indeed, Kant’s own procedural testing comes into attack in the next chapter, where not only are laws explicitly recognized by us as irreducibly rational, rather than natural, products, but also Kant’s whole moral philosophy appears in detail and in its proper historical context. For the alternative reading, cf. the following commentaries, to name but a few of its spokespersons: Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s “Phenomenology of Spirit,”* 315–18; Pinkard, *Hegel’s Phenomenology*, 124–34; Harris, *Hegel’s Ladder*, 1997, 1:108–25; Stern, *The Routledge Guide Book to Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, 127–33.

its opposite are logically demonstrable (257-259, §430-431/GW, 9: 233-234). We, the readers, however, now know that since we are instinctively rational creatures, if there were not, implicitly at least, good reasons for them, we would never acknowledge them in the first place. Where, then, can these reasons be found?

The deadlock of the experience of the rationalistic testing of laws intimates that any law obtains only insofar as the law *itself carries its own justification*. But justification implies a social context, the showing of something to be right to one another. A law, for Hegel, is therefore normatively binding *simply because a community takes it to be so*, a taking to be so evinced in the very language that supports its way of life. That is, rather than deriving its authority from some naturally given fact about us, the authority of a law is the product of a community's discourse about itself, the universe of meaning that it creates to make sense of itself. In this regard, we cannot explain the normativity of law *externally* from the point of view of an outside scientific observer, but only *internally* from the point of view of a way of life on itself, that is, the immanent rationality of its worldview as that which founds its way of life.

In other words, in the experience of the failure of modern science to naturalize the human being we see another fashion in which the *Phenomenology* introduces the anthropological task of Hegelian logic. It exhibits how what matters for us (*die Sache selbst*) existentially is not set in advance by any presumably natural laws that govern the goals of our lives. Instead, it is determined by those laws that *we ourselves* rationally elect and uphold in discourse without any external support of truth. In this sense, our rationality can construct universal and necessary laws that, despite having no ground in nature, are nonetheless incumbent upon the community that decides upon them. As a result, ethical naturalism or realism, if Hegel's phenomenological reconstruction is correct, can never account for the very experience of social normativity. In the transition to spirit that Hegel now performs, we thus encounter the move we have been waiting for all along: the (in)famous Hegelian move from substance to subject, swapping a classical metaphysics where an underlying ultimate reality is source of all that is true to one in which human activity, human thought, is the source of truth (*PS*, 10 §17/GW, 9: 18).

1.5 The experience of spirit: rationality and the historical self-revision of social beliefs values

The experience of law-testing has revealed that the various norms of action that an individual acknowledges as universally and necessarily valid cannot be demonstrated according to the standards of reason in a speculative mode reflecting on the metaphysical structure of nature or the human being. Nevertheless, we acknowledge their authority even in light of the failure of this kind of reflection to establish their authority. This suggests, for Hegel, the possibility of a greater, communal rationality that is always already at work in society at large, access to which is barred as long as we have a too narrow conception of reason.

The major transition to spirit—the phenomenological reconstruction of various Western communities and their history—that Hegel here enacts consists in a two-step argument. (1) Not only the laws of a community, but also its multitude of customs and traditions carry their own internal justification. Since we are instinctively rational creatures, if there were not, implicitly at least, good reasons for electing them in the first place, they never would have been instituted. It is now a matter of establishing from whence this justification comes. (2) We can only explain the possibility of this justification on the assumption that this shared, largely anonymous social context into which individuals are thrown and acculturated is more than the random outcome of contingent occurrences that just happen to determine a specific culture's worldview. As such, ethical traditionalism cannot suffice to explain the norms that structure the latter. Instead, this context must prove to be the studied product of the experiences of a culture, experiences that thus contain within them a distinctive rationality with respect to which we can explain why this or that law, custom, or tradition, rather than another, came to be as a norm of action. While a given communal way of life may never be *demonstrable* as absolutely legitimate from the perspective of abstract, historically detached reason, this does not prevent it from having found its own sociohistorical *justification* inasmuch as it arises as a lived, but rational response to what a people have undergone—their achievements and innovations just as much as their setbacks and tragedies.

This is why Hegel's word for a communal way of life, "spirit," falls under a subheading of "reason" just as much as scientific reason does. It is Hegel's term of

conceptual art that designates how our capacity for thought, discourse, or theoretical mindedness, for the production and consumption of reasons for our beliefs and actions, has a tendency to issue into shared understandings, communal worldviews, in virtue of the inborn normativity of reason itself. This implies three further points. (1) Because reason qua abstract and historically detached is unable to establish the norms of action that in fact govern our experience, reason in its sociohistorical mode represents a deeper structure of our experience, a new fundamental dimension of it that must therefore be phenomenologically investigated: the historically self-revising social practices of giving and asking for reasons, realized in the discourses of science, politics, art, religion, and philosophy and through which we, together, reflect on what to believe and which values to uphold with the resources available to us.⁶⁵ (2) Our worldviews go beyond me and you as individuals: they predate us, we inherit them from being embedded therein from our birth, and we can only ever participate in minute portions of their development. Nevertheless, because we are all rational, the fundamental beliefs and values that make them up emerge from within the social practices of giving and asking for reasons. As such, the conceptual moves behind these beliefs and values should be able to be retrospectively reconstructed by looking at how the reasons that we provided for them came to be and were revised over time as a studied product of our experience and were thus endorsed, even if these reasons occurred in our past. (3) Through such a reconstruction, we ought to see that what holds normative weight for us is a function of a community's ever-ongoing judgement about what about should constitute it as a community in light of its collective history, making its norms have a distinctive, irreducible rationality. It is precisely this that Hegel's inner exploration of the experience of hopes to prove.

But the transition from scientific to sociohistorical reason, from substance to subject, makes known another truth. It proclaims that if rationality is unable to be satisfied in observing nature and the human being, to obtain satisfaction it must shift its focus from

⁶⁵ For sake of brevity, I abstract from religion, which is also a subheading of "reason." I believe that Hegel provides the necessary (although not sufficient) conditions for a move towards "absolute knowing," the consummation of "reason," at the end of this chapter such that, for my purposes, I need not cover it. For two interpretations that show how the experience of religion leads to the discovery of the rationality operative within that dimension, see Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology*, 221–60; Harris, *Hegel's Ladder*, 1997, 2:521–707.

the domain of classical metaphysics to spirit's own historically self-revising social practices of giving and asking for reasons. Hegel's provocative claim is that it is here, and here alone, that it can hope to find an entirely self-contained, self-justifying order, albeit one no longer writ large cosmically—one spread out not over physical space and time, but instead within human communities and their historical becoming. For these communities not only decide in and through themselves the beliefs and values that tie them together (they are self-contained), but also these beliefs and values, arising as a lived but rational response to the experiences of a culture, display an intelligibility that is present nowhere else in nature. Because there is a robust reason for why *these* particular beliefs and values exist, the realm of spirit effectively overcomes the *brute* facticity that we witness in the latter (they are self-justifying). In other words, while Hegel in this chapter is concerned with an account of the social practices of giving and asking for reasons, he is nonetheless advancing a certain kind of metaphysics: one in which, to attain to the rational satisfaction we crave, we must conceive “the Absolute” not as substance, but as spirit.⁶⁶

But even if a communal way of life is a product of rationality, it has yet to prove itself to be a reality that is rationally satisfying. The *Phenomenology* thus internally explores this new dimension of experience to see whether it can provide such satisfaction. To introduce this deep structure of experience, Hegel plays on what would have been a familiar philosophical trope to him from the Romantics: seeing the birthplace of Western civilization in ancient Greece.⁶⁷ The latter can serve as a starting point for his argument simply because its city-state *prima facie* reflects a rationally self-contained and self-justifying communal way of life. We here encounter an ethical order in which everyone has a normatively stipulated place such that, when one sticks to one's given role in society

⁶⁶ Cf. Harris: “*the nearest substance is the communities we build.*” Harris, “Lecture Notes for Course on Hegel's Encyclopedia Logic,” 5.

⁶⁷ This is a theme that was introduced into German philosophy by Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*, trans. E. M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1983). He maintained that ancient Greece was a Golden Age of humanity where the fragmentation omnipresent in the divisions of modern society had not yet come to pass, showing that it was a harmonious and hence beautiful way of life. This was then taken up most principally by Novalis and Hölderlin for whom it represented a stage in humanity's historical evolution in which we were unified with nature, but eventually fell from it, thereby losing touch with a crucial aspect of who we are.

and performs its respective duties, a harmonious whole emerges: the individual, in observing certain customs and traditions and obeying certain laws, not only contributes to the general good, but the general good bestows upon their life a rich meaning since their lives are necessary for the attainment of this shared value. Consequently, the individual and their society display a rational systematicity the likes of which is not present in nature: there is a universal (a communal way of life) that, by means of an inner principle (its worldview), specifies itself into particulars (individuals with certain roles), thereby making itself into a singular universe of meaning (a people, a nation).

For Hegel, the founding gesture of the unity of ancient Greek society is a division of labor between the sexes, each being representative of a specific domain of law. While males are given the task of attending to matters of the state, females are required to attend to familial affairs, ranging from the raising of children to the burial of the dead. The duties related to each domain are experienced as universally and necessarily valid, offering no exception to those who must heed to their call insofar as both play an insurmountable part in the well-being of ancient Greek society, the former by assuring the flourishing of a communal way of life over the singular desires of individuals or groups and the latter by preparing individuals, particularly males, for participation in this life. However, when we move from the “formal outline” of the norms that internally make ancient Greek society (its self-understanding) and turn to how it historically plays itself out on its own terms (the social reality that arises on the basis of this self-understanding),⁶⁸ a problem arises when, as depicted in Sophocles’ *Antigone*, these duties find themselves poised against each other. Enemies of the *polis* do not deserve burial rites—but what happens if, like after Creon’s decree, someone demands the right to bury their brother, even if he is declared an enemy of the *polis*, as Antigone did? In following the divine law, Antigone’s action carries normative weight. Regardless, at the same moment it stands in contradiction to human law. For Creon, the situation is reversed. Who, then, is justified? The quandary is that, given the norms that determine the legitimacy of action, not only are both their respective actions sanctioned, but also, and more troublesome, each can only experience the other’s

⁶⁸ We see this move in how Hegel structures his phenomenological analysis, which goes from an abstract description of “the ethical world” (*PS*, 267/*GW*, 9: 241) to its concrete unfolding in “ethical action” (*PS*, 279/*GW*, 9: 251).

standpoint as a singularized desire with no rational justification from the standpoint of the prescribed role that they play. There is no way to negotiate between these simultaneously well-founded duties. The rationality at the foundation of the structure of ancient Greek society therefore creates an irrational moment of inconsistency that it cannot contain, rendering it rationally non-self-sufficient.

Although a product of rationality, the spirit of ancient Greece does not display the self-contained, self-justifying order that the subjects falling under it in a first moment experience it as having. Hegel's striking thesis is that the entirety of Western history and, by generalization, world history as such is a series of endeavors to find a manner to ultimately ground spirit as a rationally self-sufficient communal way of life. The rise of one such way of life to dominance after the fall of another therefore has to do with more than geographical, sociopolitical, or economic issues, even if these do play a role;⁶⁹ it has more to do with how this emergent communal way of life offers a solution to the problems experienced in its antecedent history, problems that jeopardize the very life of spirit qua an "I" that is a "We" and a "We" that is an "I" (*PS*, 110 §177/*GW*, 108), a shared universe of meaning.

Nevertheless, even if we can reconstruct the largely implicit or unconscious, communal inferences that have led spirit to adopt this or that new social configuration, as Hegel proceeds to do, what we see throughout its history is that the challenge that it faces continually re-emerges in a different guise. Despite the reflective resources that it gains through its experiences, the criteria by which it tries to create more rationally self-sufficient ways of life perpetually create irrational moments of the type just described that it cannot contain. In the Roman world that follows, the problem plaguing ancient Greece was resolved with the introduction of the legal concept of "person," a distinction between the private, but protected sphere of individual interests and the public state. Nonetheless, by being made into legal persons with their own interests distinct from those of the state, they lose a sense of belonging and contributing to a social whole, a universal greater than their individuality. This leads to the alienation of spirit, its feeling not at home in the world. In response to this alienation, a new age of culture (*Bildung*) emerges in the Medieval Ages:

⁶⁹ Cf. Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology*, 10–12.

the attempt to educate or cultivate (*bilden*) the individual into society by “the setting-aside of its natural self” (*PS*, 298 §489/*GW*, 9: 267) according to a strict code, thereby making the individual higher than what it is as a mere part of nature. But no matter how this code is formulated—for instance, the nobility of the heroic self-sacrificing service to the state vs. the ignobility of following merely self-interest—the individual is unable to tell whether they are acting out of noble or ignoble motivations. In, say, giving their counsel to their lord, it becomes open to suspicion whether they are honorably advancing the general good or dishonorably protecting their own special privileges (*PS*, 307 §506/*GW*, 9: 275).

The next crucial development in the history of West, according to Hegel, was the Enlightenment. Since particular cultural codes cannot overcome alienation, it was only rational to proclaim, in the name of universal reason, that there are universal laws by which we all ought to live. With the acknowledgement that the existing order, based on social strata and monarchic authority, is at odds with universal reason, the stage is set for the French Revolution. But during the latter, any very attempt to establish a government based on universal reason gets experienced as a dissenting singular fraction that goes against it. The Terror ensues. This historical developmental comes to its head in Kantian ethics, conceptualized by Hegel as a radical way in which a community tries to rid itself of the irrationality generated by its own social practices of giving and asking for reasons. If the decisive issue in spirit’s history has been how to guarantee that a universalizing intention is free from singular desires, Kant offers a seemingly sure-fire manner of resolving the antagonism: by occupying the formal position of an abstract I, we can easily stipulate the conditions under which an action’s universal and necessary validity can be assured, namely the potential of a maxim for universalizability. But the categorical imperative, although making an advance over prior attempts, similarly backfires. It is incapable of specifying how a moral agent, who must always act through a *particular* action, that is, from within a situation, is able to determine that their action is indeed in synch with the *universal* demands of rationality. As Hegel brutally puts it, the very language of Kantian morality is “dumb” (*PS*, 396 §653/*GW*, 9: 351): there is no recognizable someone who speaks.

One last phenomenological player steps in. Taking our singular standpoint as having a direct access to the universal, the beautiful soul proclaims that we can know when whatever we do in the here and now is right. As we move away from morality into

conscience, the immediate certainty that the *specific* duty one feels at this instant as normatively binding for oneself is what ought to be normatively binding for all. It is not divine or human law, a legal framework, a code, nor the form of our maxims, that make an action universally and necessarily valid, but what our intuition, when faced with the concreteness of a lived context and inspired by moral genius, tells us (*PS*, 396-397 §654-655/*GW*, 9: 352-353). Now the individual, as this singular individual, is perceived as the source of normative values such that what once appeared as a rational obstacle for a truly spiritual action is converted into a positive condition, as the individual gains reflective awareness of their spiritual importance as an individual for the first time.

However, in light of this unique source of moral authentication, these personal testimonies will invariably be at odds with one another. The only genuine possibility for the beautiful soul is to enter into a new battle of recognition. Hegel's strategy is to underline how, for the beautiful soul, the logical inconsistency that always destroyed spirit from within is not some kind of unforeseen glitch in its rationality in the latter's attempt to create a rationally self-sufficient communal way of life. The turning point occurs when the beautiful soul realizes the potential one-sidedness of their universal judgment, how their subjective position might have been unknowingly tainted by their singularity, and confesses to the other beautiful soul their wrongs. What is crucial is that the act of confession comes with the recognition that the other is equally constrained by the same moral limitations. To confess, the beautiful soul must therefore also be prepared to forgive because they now see, explicitly, that the difficulty of reconciling singularity and universality is part and parcel of spirit's very activity. The latter is nothing but the attempt, through rationality, to transform otherwise naturally conditioned, singular desires into universalizing intentions, to show that certain desires are rationally justified.

This is why the battle for recognition amongst the beautiful souls, and its ending in mutual forgiveness, is revelatory of the struggle of spirit itself. It points to what spirit has been doing, implicitly or unconsciously, all throughout its history. Insofar as its rationality is nothing but the act of universalizing nature, of investing it with a meaning that it otherwise does not have, it always runs the risk trespassing the criteria of its own legitimate actions, of swapping universality for singularity. In other words, there will always be difficulties posed by the norms for action that we rationally elect and uphold as constitutive

of our communal way of life, difficulties that reveal how these norms cannot be rationally self-sufficient on their own terms because they lead to situations in which these norms cannot let us distinguish between what is appropriate or inappropriate. Nonetheless, the failure of spirit's historical projects does not point to its *impotence*, perhaps one similar to the kind we see in nature, but instead to its ability *to self-correct, to grow, to evolve, and to learn from its mistakes* in a fully rational manner. Our rationality may perpetually create a moment of devastating irrationality in our social practices of giving and asking for reasons—but it also, time and time again, comes to contain it. Or, as Hegel puts it, “wounds of the Spirit heal, and leave no scars behind.” (PS, 407 §669/GW, 9: 360).

What is at stake in Hegel's inner exploration of the historical vicissitudes present in the experience of spirit's ever-changing communal ways of life is thus the phenomenological demonstration that the latter is a “*conscious, self-mediating process*” (PS, 492 §808/GW, 9: 433). It is the endeavour to show that both the inner transformations of any given community's customs, traditions, and laws and their total transubstantiation into a new way of life are penetrated through and through by a rational becoming that can be retrospectively reconstructed. As participating in this historically self-unfolding universe of meaning, our communal ways of life possess the self-containedness and self-justification that we for millennia mistakenly sought for in substance and its avatars: for here, and only here, do we encounter a rationally satisfying system inasmuch as any social order is itself a product of human rationality. To grasp why the specific customs, traditions, and laws that make up communal ways of life exist, we simply have to grasp how they, as determinate manners of universalizing, emerged as a lived, but rational response to the difficulties posed by the past customs, traditions, and laws of previous communal ways of life, which in turn arose organically from the failure of even more previous ones in a chain that logically (though perhaps not actually) could go on, forwards and backwards, forever. This self-mediating process in which our communities participate is therefore a dynamic, never-ending rational achievement by us, one through which we, in our discourse, engender and sustain a *sui generis* metaphysical domain irreducible to nature.

In this regard, we see the seventh manner that the *Phenomenology* is an introduction to Hegelian logic as anthropological. It shows us how the discourse whose normativity it

will describe is always already operative, at least implicitly or unconsciously, in the experience of our communities and the social beliefs and values that we hold dear, to such a degree that their evolution, even though dispersed in historical space and time, can only be comprehended on the rational terms that they set for themselves, presenting us with an “absolute substance” the likes of which cannot be found in nature (*PS*, 110 §177/*GW*, 9: 108).⁷⁰ In describing the basic normative structure of our rationality, we describe the logical space of reasons without which the metaphysically self-standing domain of human history could not institute itself. For in the very move from substance to subject we see that our being is, in a strong sense, the product of ourselves; that we have, by dint of our rationality, freed ourselves from nature and its laws, this being the condition of the possibility of the inauguration of wholly new, ontologically unique universe of meaning irreducible to the latter.⁷¹

1.6 The recapitulation of absolute knowing: living in the logical space of reasons

After internally exploring the fundamental dimensions of human experience and giving witness to the presence of rationality throughout them, Hegel is now in a position to recapitulate the main points of his phenomenological argument and ready the transition to his logic. The project of the *Phenomenology* is to force us to recognize that the world around us that we experience, which we typically take as a set of ineluctable mind-independent physical or social facts “just there,” is itself *a product of our process of conceptualization*, “the concept,” making rationality itself the originating factor of human experience and the world that reveals itself within it.

This has theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it entails that rather than there being directly given objects that somehow make our claims about them true by providing truth conditions for them, it is the reasons that we provide for taking things in

⁷⁰ See above 1.3.1

⁷¹ Consequently, I maintain that pragmatist readings of the *Phenomenology*, like those of Pinkard and Brandom, must be qualified. Yes: Hegel, particularly in his inner exploration of the experience of spirit, is dealing with the social practices of giving and asking for reasons and their implicitly logical structure. But Hegel is not just interested in just these. He is still a metaphysician, even if not in the classical sense—he believes that any social theory, if it is to be grounded, must express a vision of nature, spirit, and the relation between them. The *Phenomenology* already sketches such a vision.

such a light instead of another that makes for truth. Practically, it entails that both ethical naturalism and realism are false starting points. We cannot appeal to naturally conditioned basic desires as the foundation for moral values, nor can we try to inscribe them in some pre-, non-, or supra-human realm. As soon as we begin giving and asking reasons for actions, any relation we have to, say, our given nature or some Platonic realm must be assessed via our rational interests, which can always in principle go against them if our rationality decides that we should, whereby moral values are rationally constructed and not metaphysically grounded. Indeed, in this respect even if there were a God who relayed to us divine commandments, according to Hegel these commandmentss would never suffice to found morality—for if these commandments failed the scrutiny of rationality, we would be justified in rejecting them. As Hegel puts it, the *Phenomenology* therefore puts us face to face with “the knowledge of the Self’s act within itself as all essentiality and all existence” (PS, 485 §797/GW, 9: 427).⁷²

The task that remains for the *Phenomenology* is to “gather together the separate moments, each of which in principle exhibits the life of Spirit in its entirety,” into one final shape that makes explicit what is otherwise implicit in human existence as such (PS, 485 §797/GW, 9: 427). This shape is so-called “absolute knowing.” It is not “absolute” in the sense that we now have some direct cognition of the universal and necessary structure of ultimate reality, whereby we overcome the finitude of human knowing that we, at least since Kant, so strongly acknowledge.⁷³ In Hegel’s words, “nothing is *known* that is not in experience” (PS, 487 §802/GW, 9: 429). Quite to the contrary, absolute knowing is “absolute” insofar as it proclaims that we have no need for some external support of truth

⁷² In this paragraph, I expand upon Harris’ interpretation of this line: “I find nothing further to explicate in what Hegel says about ‘the knowing of the doing of the Self within itself as all essentiality and all *Dasein*.’ As soon as we read it in its *spiritual* sense it is obvious. The human community lives in the world of its own interpretation, and this decides even what counts as ‘fact’ (*Dasein*) for it.” Harris, *Hegel’s Ladder*, 1997, 2:726.

⁷³ As such, I contend that the most common reading of Hegel’s *Phenomenology* as a transcendental rehabilitation of metaphysics post-Kant is wrong for two reasons. If (1) his *Phenomenology* is an introduction to his logic, and this text is an inner exploration of the human experience of consciousness, self-consciousness, modern scientific reason, and the spirit of Western communities and their history, and (2) the logic is, as he says, what “gathers together” these shapes, then the categories that his logic describes must what makes possible *these* shapes and not the basic structure of ultimate reality.

in our cognitive projects of knowing nature or ourselves. Discursiveness and discursiveness alone—the conceptual moves made in the logical space of reasons—is all that we need to successfully know something. It is the conceptual activity of the rational agent, the “I,” but of course the “I” as it stands alongside other rational agents or other “I’s” in a community, that determines the physical and social facts with which it occupies itself as a world external to itself: “it has a *content* which it *differentiates* from itself; for it is pure negativity or the dividing of itself, it is *consciousness*” (PS, 486 §799/GW, 9: 428). While this means that, in dealing with all objectivity, we as rational agents are only ever dealing with the conceptual moves through which we together confer entitlements upon our theoretical and practical commitments, this does not turn objectivity into a mere relativism or subjectivism. For we are to clearly see that when we have good reasons for believing or acting, when we are rationally satisfied by our discourse, we have the right to assume that what our commitments describe—a state of affairs in nature or a value that we should uphold—actually exist as something independent from our discourse. Hegel sums up this position as follows: “it is only when the ‘I’ communes with itself in its otherness that the content is *comprehended*” (PS, 486 §799/GW, 9: 428).

With this insight gained, “[s]pirit has won the pure element of its existence, the concept,” Hegel’s choice term for the process of conceptualization as such (PS, 490 §805; translation modified/GW, 9: 432). In this context, we see the seventh and final fashion that the *Phenomenology* serves as the introduction to his logic: it shows us how the production and consumption of reasons penetrates into every dimension of our experience, whether it be conscious, self-conscious, scientific, or sociohistorical—theoretical or practical broadly construed—by being that which gives our experience the specific shape that it has. Once we start seeking reasons for things and our actions, our experience can never be naturally constituted: we can never be simply content with how things appear to us physiologically or how we have certain natural desires to act, but always place appearances and desires within a broader universe of meaning, which bestows upon them a depth that they otherwise would not have. The production and consumption of reasons is, as Hegel says, therefore present in our behaviour as its formative principle: “Spirit, therefore, having won the Notion, displays its existence and movement in this ether of its life and is *Science*” (PS, 491 §805/GW, 9: 432). Science—the widespread conviction that what is the case, the

natural world around us and the human world of value, is to be determined by thought and thought alone, by the logical norms for what counts as a good or bad reason to believe or act—is not a mere appearance amongst others that emerged on the scene of the human historical drama, but reveals something irreducible about who we always already are, but which took time for us to realize (*PS*, 486 §800/*GW*, 9: 428). With this, the project of the *Phenomenology* has set out what it had intended to do and comes to a close.

The *Phenomenology* is an introduction to the logic because, at its conclusion, its project can go no further. It experientially outlines, in an existential and historical register, how spirit came to the discovery of its “logical nature” (*SL*, 17/*GW*, 21: 15) by reconstructing the successes and tribulations of this path of discovery. In this regard, it has a propaedeutic and educative function: its goal is to permit us, the readers, by re-living our own history through its philosophical re-enactment, to realize that there is nothing accidental about the rational way of life that emerged with modernity. Once we raise ourselves up to this realization, the only task that remains for us in order to comprehend who we are is to formally outline our rationality on its own terms, to distil its basic normative structure. To do so, however, requires that we leave the *Phenomenology* behind: to describe the rationality at the source of human experience, we must abstract from all the existential and historical content with which we have been dealing and unearth the logical categories operative within it as its condition of possibility. As such, it is a “ladder” (*PS*, 14 §26/*GW*, 9: 23). For as a science of experience (*PS*, 21 §36/*GW*, 9: 29), there is nothing more to internally explore insofar as we have reached its ultimate presupposition, that which, while immanent in the life of human experience, is that which transcendentally governs it. Consequently, all we, the readers of the *Phenomenology*, must do is find “the resolve to engage in pure thinking and ... the freedom that abstracts from everything and grasps its pure abstraction, the simplicity of thinking” (*EL*, 125 §78 Remark/*GW*, 20: 118), the resolution that is at the very commencement of logic.

But if the *Phenomenology* is a ladder, it would be too quick to believe that it is one we can throw away as soon as we have climbed to its standpoint. As will become clearer in the next chapter, while it is only in logic that “spirit [...] thinks its essence” (*SL*, 10/*GW*, 21: 8) by thinking the “logical nature” (*SL*, 17/*GW*, 21: 15) that makes human experience possible, the categories that dictate the conceptual moves we must make when we produce

and consume reasons as we try to make sense of things and ourselves are, when divorced from the life in which they are actualized (*verwicklicht*), without meaning. To grasp rationality, we must not just see it in abstraction, but, as it were, *in media res*. But here we see Hegel's perhaps greatest innovation in terms of our understanding of logic as the description of the basic normative structure of the production and consumption of reasons foundational to our existence: it defines the universe of meaning that we instinctively create in the logical space of reasons and inhabit as rational animals, the universe of meaning that thus informs all human experiences and activities—it, in short, unpacks the existential matrix that holds the latter together.

All of this signifies that, for Hegel, rationality requires both an experiential and historical (diachronic) and logical (synchronic) treatment, the two being intimately related. Logic may describe the basic structure of everything we perceive, feel, say, and do, yet it only has significance for us in our perceptions, feelings, sayings, and doings and their vicissitudes in the course of experience. If phenomenology leads to logic, logic equally leads back into phenomenology. The point is that phenomenology captures in an experiential and historical register what logic can only capture in the medium of formal reflection. But this means as we transition forward to the logic, we must be recognize that the logic merely repeats at a higher level what the *Phenomenology* does experientially and historically. Both are treatises about what it is to be a creature that thinks by its nature, a being for whom science necessarily pervades its life, the one concentrating upon the existential and historical import, both individually and communally, of concept-mongering and the other on how this concept-mongering, again both individually and communally, must logically unfold. However, the *Phenomenology* has the distinct advantage that its science of experience shows us that rationality is more than a “game” of giving and asking for reasons. Not only is it *not* something we can opt out of; it is something *deadly serious*, something that plays a crucial role in all our joys and all our struggles, and which is at heart of not only our greatest good, but also our greatest evil. Logic, in isolation from the whole domain of human experience that it makes possible, risks losing this existential and historical traction. Put differently, we must always keep in mind that the task of logic is, for Hegel, anthropological.

Chapter 2: The Anthropological Task of Logic: Describing the Rationality of Human Experience

Through an inner exploration of the key dimensions of our experience, Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* seeks to show that the production and consumption of reasons is at the source of human experience as such. Whether it be in our consciousness of objects, our self-consciousness of who we are and the interests that guide our actions, the activity of reason in its impartial attempt to find rational satisfaction in the theories that we construct, or the social values that makes up the spirit of the communities that we participate in and their history, the reasons that we provide for what is around us and our lives are formative for how we view the natural and human worlds and act within them. With such a proof secured, Hegel wagers, we have prepared the way for a true understanding of logic as the description of the basic normative structure of the rationality that makes the content of our experience have the distinctive *form* that it does—that makes, for instance, our perceptual content, desires, moral demands, or social values *conceptual* products that stand in the logical space of reasons, rather than being, say, derivable from physiological data, biological needs, psychological states, moral facts, or cultural convention. With such a proof accomplished, we are to realize that “to be human is to think” (*der Mensch ist denkend*) (cf. *LL*, 7/*GW*, 23.2: 657) since thinking is something that animates all our behaviour. As such, the mission of logic must change focus.⁷⁴ To do logic is to no longer just learn about how we *ought* to think or talk; it is to learn about the activity of rationality that, as an “instinct” (*Instinkt*) or “drive” (*Trieb*) for meaning (see, for instance: *EL*, 6, 262 §190 Addition, 291 §225/*GW*, 20: 25 & 23.3: 943 & 20: 222; *LL*, 3, 22, 32/*GW*, 23.2: 654, 670, 679; *SL*, 697; translation modified/*GW*, 12: 199-200), is *always already* operative in experience. Consequently, logic, for Hegel, should now concern itself with our conceptual reflex and “need” or “vital necessity” (*Bedürfnis*) (cf. *EL*, 55, §21 Addition/*GW*, 23.3: 816) to see everything as justified or justifiable before it can have an impact upon us.

⁷⁴ Here I agree with Harris who says “‘absolute knowing’ ... makes him able to do logic in the first place—because it tells him what ‘logic’ is.” Harris, *Hegel's Ladder*, 1997, 2:742.

Accordingly, logic properly stated is, Hegel contends, the recovery of the activity of thinking unconsciously and consciously present at every step of our existence and thus an account of the ontologically distinctive form of life, spirit, that we possess vis-à-vis other animals. Its task is, strictly speaking, anthropological. It is thus only fitting that in his preliminary discussions of his conception of logic in the *Encyclopedia Logic* of 1830, his 1831 *Lectures on Logic*, and the *Science of Logic* of 1832, Hegel begins with the observation that the distinction of human beings is the fact that we search for meaning in our otherwise merely sensory encounter with things and in our actions, a fact that frees us, so he argues, from the sway of (our) nature by bestowing upon our experience an openness or freedom for self-determination that exists nowhere else in the physical universe. Thus, by articulating the rationality that guides this search and hence explains the fundamental shape of human experience, the study of logic is the highest form of human “self-knowledge” (*Sichwissen*) (*SL*, 17/*GW*, 21: 16) possible. We must keep in mind that, for Hegel, these discussions are meant—as he says apropos the Introduction of the *Science of Logic*—to make “the concept of logic ... more intuitable” (*SL*, 23/*GW*, 21: 27) and therefore set the stage for how we are to interpret his project.

Such a reorientation of logic, however, has profound implications for our understanding of its methodology. Since the activity of thinking that it is to recover is something that we just do as the kind of beings that we are, thinking is, first and foremost, an instinctive activity. As a result, Hegel’s logic is nothing but the explication of our otherwise merely instinctive knowledge of the norms of thinking realized everywhere in our behaviour as we, both consciously and unconsciously, give meaning to experience. Put differently, this reorientation entails that just as biology as a content of its own, namely the specific forms of life that various organisms possess, so logic too has a similar content: its content is thinking, but thinking taken as that activity makes us, as the living beings we are, ontologically distinct from others, making logic itself into a unique kind of biology—one whose subject matter is the *sui generis* human form of life.

This has further profound implications for our understanding of the goals of Hegel’s logic. Inasmuch as we display this instinctive knowledge in how we use our natural language to make and adjudicate claims, Hegel expounds logic by recourse to the basic rational norms operative in our everyday linguistic practices as a discursive and

intrinsically social practice of giving and asking for reasons. As a result, it proceeds by a systematization of the various ways we talk about things and ourselves in order to make them intelligible, indeed, as intelligible as possible. This task divides into an “Objective” and “Subjective Logic.” The former deals with categories that set the standard for what counts as an object of certain kind, those kinds of objects that we seek to discover in the instinctive creation of a universe of meaning just as, say, a dog tries to seek out certain kinds of smells in its own instinctive creation of a universe of aromas. The latter deals with the categories of the logical space of reasons that makes possible this universe, a logical space of reasons that supports human experience and the activities associated with it as described in the *Phenomenology*. As we shall see, the unique feature of Hegel’s logic is that we do not apply these categories *ad hoc* in the creation of a universe of meaning. Instead, categories interplay by *taking up* one another (“sublate,” *aufheben*), that is, by qualifying, building upon, and expanding one another in an attempt to make any given subject matter as intelligible as we can.

2.1 Rationality as the originating factor of human experience

Hegel starts his logic with a series of penetrating reflections on the role that our rationality plays in our experience in order to help us grasp just how existentially all-important the norms of thinking that it will describe are for us.⁷⁵ Following a longstanding tradition spanning from Plato to Kant, for Hegel the defining feature of what it is to be human, what separates us from all other animals, is our capacity to think (cf. *SL*, 96/*GW*, 21: 111; *EL*, 16, 29 §2/*GW*, 20: 14, 40; *LL*, 1, 6, 39/*GW*, 23.2: 653, 657, 685). But while this doctrine is “an old prejudice” (*EL*, 29 §2 Remark/*GW*, 20: 40), Hegel believes that the way it has been developed overlooks how thinking is *the originating factor* of all human experience. Whereas this tradition tends to see thought as just one mental faculty *amongst others*, like those of sensibility and desire, the activities of which work in relative independence to make up the overall content of our experience (*LL*, 6/*GW*, 23.2: 657), Hegel’s thesis is that,

⁷⁵ Nevertheless, Hegel is clear that these reflections are insufficient to ground his concept of logic. They can only give us a “general notion of it” (*SL*, 29/*GW*, 21: 32-33). In this manner, his logic presupposes that we have already reached the standpoint to which the *Phenomenology* was to lead us (*SL*, 29/*GW*, 21: 32-33).

as far as *our* experience is concerned, thought and it alone produces the entirety of its content by deciding what should and should not count as suitable content. Once thought comes into play, something can only have an *impact* upon experience, *move* us to belief or action, if we see it as justified or justifiable: “everything human is human as a result of and only as a result of thinking” (*EL*, 29 §2/*GW*, 20: 40).

This means that, in Hegel’s philosophy, our rationality qualitatively changes our relationship towards nature. For although we share with animals a natural embodiment, what Hegel names a “soul” (*Seele*), the fact that we think implies that we distance ourselves from that embodiment in experience, preventing ourselves from being immersed in it:

By the *soul* we understand a thing which is really spirit in an embodied form. Human beings and the animals have souls. Yet human beings also have spirit, but spirit assuming the form of natural life is the soul. The soul is subject to natural conditions. Spirit, however, is not in nature, but is the activity of self-abstraction from nature. (*LL*, 39; translation modified/*GW*, 23.2: 685)

This “self-abstraction from nature” entails that neither sensibility nor desire—two ways in which we are finite, embodied subjects affected by the things around us and our own biology and psychology—can, on their own account, be authoritative for our experience. That is, they can no longer simply *dictate* our behaviour, as they do, according to Hegel, in other animals, who do “not stray from the [natural] law of [their] being” (*LL*, 14; translation modified/*GW*, 23.2: 663). This is because rationality places within us a certain *expectation for meaningfulness that outstrips all natural causes for our behaviour*, a new need that that they cannot satisfy: the deliverances of the former can only alert us to certain sensory stimuli, but cannot sort out which deliverances are true and which not, while the latter can only alert us to certain inclinations, but cannot sort out which ought to be followed and which not, questions that our capacity for thinking make of utmost concern for us insofar as it is only in answering them that we know what is to be taken as significant or not for belief or action. Inasmuch as we demand reasons for the latter in order to adopt a belief or perform an action, the attitude we take towards our natural embodiment therefore becomes constitutively modified. Now our experience can *never* be a mere product of the

external or inner causes of nature, since content only arises as experientially relevant if it passes the test of rationality:

If we however contrast nature as such, as the realm of the physical, with the realm of the spiritual, then we must say that logic is the supernatural element that permeates all [man's] natural behaviour, his ways of sensing, intuiting, desiring, his needs and impulses; and it thereby makes them into something truly human, even though only formally human—makes them into representations and purposes. (*SL*, 12/*GW*, 21: 10-11)

Let's spell out this insight in more detail. Rationality brings about a qualitative change in our relationship towards nature by transforming our otherwise animal experience in three distinct ways.

(1) A qualitative change occurs within us because as soon as rationality is operative, what counts for us is no longer the simple *physiological* presence of stimuli, as may emerge from our bodies interacting with nature, but the recognition of this something as something that *truly* is or ought to be there, its *intelligible* presence to a subject interested in things and ourselves having reasons for whatever they are. In this regard, not even seeing and hearing remain untouched by our rationality, senses that initially would seem to directly bombard us with ineluctable, rich sensory data about the entities around us: “thinking soars above of any sensory object. With the onset of thinking, all mere seeing and hearing must pass away. In thinking we surrender our firm hold on all the representations of sensory objects with which we are familiar” (*LL*, 1/*GW*, 23.2: 653). Hegel's argument is that *all* sensory data can take on existential significance for us as creatures of thought only insofar as they are made to *re-exist as meaningful*,⁷⁶ that is, only insofar as we can give some kind of convincing conceptual narrative that tells us *what* or *why* they are by placing them in a universe of meaning that bestows upon them a depth they otherwise would not have experientially. But this implies that, inasmuch as we normally have trust in our bodily sensations to be revelatory of something true, these sensations can only move us to belief

⁷⁶ di Giovanni makes a similar point when he speaks of “the concept” as “the constitution of the conceptual medium that will make any reality, such as already exists or might exist, re-exist as intelligible.” di Giovanni, “Introduction,” xlix.

and action if the body itself is already making well-reasoned claims about what reality is. In other words, rationality makes theorization foundational to our behaviour because *even sensibility itself* is already a form of rationality. As such, Hegel's logic describes the categories that make possible the most rudimentary, run-of-the-mill experience of the world around us and the activities that make it up, one's putatively immediate consciousness of objects in our everyday life-world.⁷⁷

(2) Another qualitative change occurs within us because, by dint of our rationality, our bodily desires, needs, and impulses, which nature provides, can no longer directly motivate our actions. For once it is operative we are forced to always judge them in terms of whether they are *grounds to act upon*, in terms of whether or not they conform to the values that we have decided matter for us, values that themselves presuppose that they have, too, been grounded in order to matter to us at all. Otherwise, our actions would never be existentially significant for us as creatures of thought. Thanks to this, mere natural inclination no longer wields power over us: we can always take a "negative" attitude towards it if it does not fit in with our rationally chosen life projects, how we *make our lives meaningful* from within a universe of meaning.⁷⁸ In brief, rationality makes us beings of practice who decide, in and through ourselves, how we should live out our lives. In this sense, Hegel's logic accounts for the kind of rationality already at work in our self-consciousness of the desires that motivate our actions—desires that, although indeed felt at the level of the body, already, too, only spur us because they stand in the logical space of reasons.⁷⁹

(3) Yet another qualitative change occurs within us because, due to our rationality, we are not merely self-enclosed individuals who seek to give meaning to the things around

⁷⁷ See above, 1.2.1.

⁷⁸ As a result, Hegel's account of our rational freedom is in stark contradiction to that of Kant. Cf.: "One crucial difference from Kant was Hegel's rejection of Kant's claim that if we were to be free, we had to be capable of exercising a kind of non-natural causality on ourselves, a 'transcendental causality' that stood outside the natural, causal order of things and that could initiate chains of events without itself being the effect of any earlier causal chain. Hegel, by contrast, conceived of freedom not as the exercise of any form of causality at all but instead of having to do with the nature of the way in which we are capable of assuming a 'negative' stance towards our inclinations, desires, and impulses." Pinkard, *Hegel*, 473.

⁷⁹ See above 1.3.1.

us and our lives on our own. Rationality is never just a private affair, as if the reasons that we provide were simply mental entities *in our heads*. Rationality is essentially normative: the claims that we make about what to believe and how to act, if they are taken to be rational at all (justified or justifiable), *demand* consensus inasmuch as they are taken to be how *everyone* rationally ought to interpret what is around us and how we are to live our lives. But consensus is the basis of any social existence, which requires some adherence to like-minded attitudes. Or, as Hegel makes the point, spirit is an “‘I’ that is ‘We’ and ‘We’ that is ‘I’” (*PS*, 110 §177/*GW*, 108): in virtue of our instinctively driven need to provide reasons for our beliefs and actions, the process of conceptualization at the heart of the human experience, “the concept,” will tend towards an *agreement* upon what is true and ought to be; and if achieved, there will be a coincidence between our theoretical and practical commitments such that there will be an identity between me and everyone else in terms of our most fundamental beliefs about the world around us and the values that we uphold insofar as we take ourselves to be entitled to these commitments. Hegel’s daring wager is that this rational normativity, what he calls “recognition” (*Anerkennung*), underlies all cognition (*Erkennen*).

The normativity of rationality has three direct implications for the structure of human experience. (a) It explains why our experience has a linguistic dimension. Since the reasons that we provide for our beliefs and actions may be conflict, only a dialogical exchange of reasons can negotiate between them by determining which of those claims (if any) hold and are to be accepted by each party involved in the exchange as normatively binding. Put differently, because we have, according to Hegel, an instinctively driven need to think, we therefore also *have an instinctively driven need to communicate* and we thus perforce *engage in social practices of giving and asking for reasons* like the discourses of science, politics, art, religion, and philosophy with the aim of achieving rational consensus, discourses whose agreed-upon findings will then guide how we see the things around us and the customs, laws, and principles in accordance with which we act. Or, as Hegel puts it, language is the “existence of spirit” (*PS*, 395 §652/*GW*, 9: 351): language is more than a grammar and vocabulary for conveying information, but more strongly a discursive practice through which you and I establish which beliefs and values we, as a community,

ought to affirm. As such, logic, on Hegel's conception, formally outlines the basic rational normativity of language as a social practice of giving and asking for reasons.

(b) Rationality's normative dimension explains why our experience has a communitarian dimension. We do not form groups because we are gregarious animals for whom the biological success of the species is dependent upon cooperation. For Hegel, to say that spirit is an "I" that is a "We" and a "We" that is an "I" is to say that we, owing to our rationality, have an internal compulsion to articulate group "mentalities," to create *shared* understandings of the natural and human worlds: the reasons that you and I provide for our beliefs and actions, as they get rationally worked out in the social practice of giving and asking for reasons, converge towards outlooks and goals that we hold each other to, *communal worldviews* that found ways of life.

(c) The normative force of our rational claims explains why the historical dimension of experience is inescapable. Communal ways of life not only have a tendency to arise due to this conceptual process; they also have a tendency to decline as our rational assessment, instead of persuading or convincing us that our founding worldview is the best, might come to undermine it. This is why rationality makes our experience not only socially, but also historically inflected: whenever our communal ways of life generate sceptical *doubts* about themselves, they fall into existential *despair*, as Hegel remarks in the *Phenomenology*, playing upon a connection suggested between the German words *Zweifel* and *Verzweiflung*. As rational creatures, epistemic issues strike us in our heart of hearts, for they entail that we can no longer continue to endorse the picture of the world or uphold the values that gave our lives meaning, whereby, as Hegel later expresses it in the *Philosophy of Right*, "a shape of life has grown old, and it cannot be rejuvenated" (*PR*, 23/*GW*, 14.1:16). But since we demand reasons for our beliefs and actions, we cannot remain in this state of alienation—we are instinctively driven to find new a new communal worldview, a new communal way of life, that can pass the test of rationality. Hence, rationality makes us into historical beings: history is the story of the evolution of the social practices of giving and asking for reasons that issue in our communal worldviews and their concomitant ways of life; and because each chapter is a tale of reasons, the story itself should be fully rational in the sense that we can see why one way of life led to another, as if the older one contained within itself the seeds for the newer one. In short, Hegel's logic

is a logic of our sociohistorical experience, of the rationality behind the development of the scientific, political, artistic, religious, and philosophical languages that we use to come to terms about who we are as a community—the experience of spirit and its activities.⁸⁰

Taking these three points together, we see how rationality, according to Hegel, enables a “self-abstraction from nature” and thereby can give human experience the specific shape it has in distinction to that of other animals. In virtue of being rational, what regulates our behaviour, for Hege, is not our natural embodiment—the sensory data, biological needs, or psychological states that direct the lives of animals, all of which can, Hegel believes, be explained by purely naturalistic mechanisms—but instead the universe of meaning that we create, both unconsciously and consciously, in order to make things and ourselves intelligible. Hegel’s thesis is that, since we are rational, we never merely *react* to bodily stimuli coming from outside or inside, but always ask whether what we sense is *true* or whether a desire *should* be acted on. Consequently, because we can always take a rational *distance* towards the sensory data, biological needs, and psychological states that would otherwise causally determine our experience by *deliberating* about them, we decide how to view the world and act in it. As such, the distinctive feature of key dimensions of experience—say, perceptual content, the intention behind an action, or moral demands and political rights—is *freely* generated by our rationality. Thinking is, as Kant and Fichte would make the same point, “spontaneous.” Our rationality therefore ensures that experience can never be fully naturalized but is instead *sui generis*. The three ways that rationality qualitatively changes our experience, Hegel submits, are thus just part and parcel of the unique freedom that we possess as humans.

2.2 “Making it explicit”: our instinctive knowledge of the norms of thinking

Logic concerns itself with the norms of thinking in virtue of which we can determine whether our claims are justified or justifiable. But since, for Hegel, the rationality that it distils is more primordially the originating factor of all human experience, the goal of his logic is, by formally outlining these norms on their own terms, to make us recognize the

⁸⁰ See above 1.5.

rationality that is operative at every step of our life. Logic is, therefore, strictly speaking anthropological: “To bring to consciousness this *logical* nature that animates spirit, that moves and works within it, this is the task” (*SL*, 17; translation modified/*GW*, 21: 15). However, if Hegel’s logic describes the existential matrix underlying human experience and hence is that within which “spirit [...] thinks its essence” by thinking the logical nature that makes human experience possible (*SL*, 10/*GW*, 21: 8), then the question arises as to what exactly is the relationship between logic and our logical nature, namely as to how we can attain to such “self-knowledge” of the rationality that penetrates into every aspect of our life (*SL*, 17/*GW*, 21: 16).

Crucial to understanding Hegel’s methodology is the following observation: that while rationality is omnipresent in our life, we largely perform its work without realizing it. As he puts it: “Everywhere I go I bring with me my determinations of thought, and bring them forward even without being conscious of them” (*LL*, 22/ *GW*, 23.2: 670). That is, in our theoretical and practical behaviour, we simply follow its norms without needing prior reflection or training. For Hegel, this entails that the activity of thinking is something that we do *instinctively* (*LL*, 3, 22, 32/*GW*, 23.2: 654, 670, 679; *SL*, 17, 18, 19/*GW*, 21: 15-16, 16, 17). Indeed, this even permits us to refer to the norms of thinking as “drives” (*SL*, 17/*GW*, 21: 16) in that, due to our “*logical* nature” (*SL*, 17/*GW*, 21: 15), there is an *urge* within us to employ them to make representations of things and to find a purpose for our lives. Our rationality is for us, quite literally, *a reflex that arises in response to a specific biological need*.

That rationality is a form of innate behaviour that we humans perform has two consequences. (1) We have to be consciously aware of the norms of thinking in order to think just as little as we have to be consciously aware of the chemical properties of our food or the processes of the physiology of our body in order to digest (*EL*, 30 §2 Remark/*GW*, 20: 41). Thinking, like any other instinctive activity, is something that we just do as the kind of beings that we are and we do it well. (2) Hegel’s innovative thesis is that if the activity of thinking did not satisfy a primal “need” or “vital necessity” (*Bedürfnis*) (*LL*, 5/*GW*, 23.2: 656), we would have no reason to do it at all. Stuck at the level of mere sensory stimuli, base biological needs such as survival and reproduction, and psychological states, we would be content with reacting to whatever arose in the environment constituted by our

bodies to satisfy the dictates of its organic system. But in virtue of this instinctive activity, it is just as natural for us (and here Hegel means “natural” in the literal sense of the word) to strive after a comprehension of the what, how, why, and whither of things and ourselves—to pose the “big questions” concerning nature and human existence—and live out our lives in accordance with the findings of our process of conceptualization as it is for an animal to get hungry and look for food to eat (see, for instance, *PS*, 157 §258/*GW*, 9: 147). This is something demanded by our very form of life, something that we crave for our subsistence just like an animal craves sustenance. But the instinct, drive, or need of rationality is therefore a biological urge of a very unique kind. It is that element of nature that, as it were, *denaturalizes* us by separating us from the rest of nature in that this *one* instinct, drive, or need permits us to override *all others*, to rationally control how we view things and act.

To say that thinking is an instinctive activity is to say that we have an *instinctive knowledge* of logical norms, which we simply follow in our everyday behaviour. We just know how to conceptually move in the logical space of reasons, just as a tiger just knows how to hunt or a whale just how to migrate. To this extent, we are all, so to speak, born logicians inasmuch as there is what Hegel calls a “natural logic” within us (*SL*, 12, 15, 16, 18/*GW*, 21: 10, 13, 15, 16)—or, as Hegel also says, “man is implicitly rational” (*PM*, 40 §393 Addition/*GW*, 25.2: 64). The problem is that while we all in practice display an instinctive knowledge of the norms of thinking, a knowledge engrained into us by our very logical nature, “they are brought to consciousness one by one and so are variable and mutually confusing, thus affording to spirit only fragmentary and uncertain actuality. To purify these categories and in them to elevate spirit to truth and freedom, this is therefore the loftier business of logic” (*SL*, 17/*GW*, 21: 16). In this regard, for Hegel the anthropological task of logic is, to borrow a phrase from Brandom, to make explicit the implicit awareness of these norms that we have, by default, as the rational creatures that we are.⁸¹

But a qualification must be added. While thinking is just as easy for us as digesting, this does not, of course, mean that preparing a logic is an easy endeavour. On the one hand,

⁸¹ See Brandom, *Making It Explicit*.

thinking comes to us so naturally that in many cases we can be paradoxically blind to the very existence of the many norms that we follow at the exact moment that we do follow them. They, as Hegel reminds us, “remain non-objectified and unnoticed even when they enter language” (*SL*, 19/*GW*, 21: 17-18). An analogue would be how native speakers may not recognize just how grammatically and syntactically complex the norms governing even the simplest sentences of their language really are, while a second would be how animals have no idea of the rich complexity of their own innate behaviours such as, for instance, the intricate rules involved in the mating rituals that many follow. On the other hand, even if we have an instinctive knowledge of the norms of thinking, nothing prevents us from making invalid conceptual moves. Hegel’s logic is filled with examples of such misuse from the philosophical tradition. For instance, rational psychology, by referring to the soul as a “thing,” incorrectly appeals to a logical norm that makes thinkable “an immediate concrete existence, something of which we form a sensory representation” (*EL*, 73 §34 Addition/ *GW*, 23.3: 831) when we should appeal to a logical norm that makes it thinkable as an activity, which in turn causes a series of false questions to arise (e.g., “What is the seat of the soul?”). Just because we are rational by our very nature does not entail that our exercise of rationality will always be perfect. An analogue would be, once again, how native speakers, in face of their intuitions, also regularly make mistakes, while a second would be how, even though certain animals are predatory by their very nature, this does not mean that they will always succeed at getting their prey.

2.3 The deep bond between logic and language

In this manner, just as the task of a grammar, syntax, or dictionary is to make explicit the implicit knowledge native speakers possess of their language, how they without reflection follow rules to intelligently speak to one another, the task of logic is to make explicit the implicit knowledge of thinking we, as rational creatures, display whenever we perceive, desire, or socially uphold a value. But how are we to make this normally hidden, yet behaviourally all-pervasive “natural” logic completely transparent? Hegel’s response shows that there is more than an analogy to be drawn between thinking and language. He begins his works on logic by remarking that although traditional logic as a discipline has failed to attain to the level of genuine science, language signals how we should orient any

treatise on logic if it is to reach to these heights. “The forms of thought are,” as he puts it, “first set out and stored in human *language*” (*SL*, 12/*GW*, 21: 10). In other words, there is a deep bond between logic and language: to the extent that language is that through which we make and adjudicate claims, *linguistic* practice must be, when push comes to shove, fundamentally a *discursive* practice formalizable by logic. This is because, for our claims to be justified or justifiable, which they must be able to be because we are creatures that instinctively produce and consume reasons, our linguistic claims must be conceptual claims and, in virtue of this, always already stand in the logical space of reasons whenever they are uttered in a speech act. As Hegel sums up this point: “Language belongs to us as humans, and so bears the mark of thought.” (*LL*, 11/*GW*, 23.2: 661)

Next, Hegel enquires into what the intrinsic discursivity of linguistic practice means for our understanding of language as such. While language consists of a grammar, syntax, and vocabulary, it entails that language must be more than a contingent system of rules peculiar to a historical people. More primordially, it shows itself to be the medium of the rationality that pervades all things human:⁸²

In everything that the human being has interiorized, in everything that in some way or other has become for him a representation, in whatever he has made his own, there has language penetrated, and everything that he transforms into language and expresses in it contains a category, whether concealed, mixed, or well defined.
(*SL*, 12/*GW*, 21: 10)

On Hegel’s model, to talk intelligently therefore does not reduce, for instance, to employing the right tense, having the correct order of words and phrases, or using a word in accordance with convention. Language is not, after all, mere chit chat. For the assertions that it utters as to the objectivity of this or that to be *determinable* as true or false by all

⁸² Already in the Jena *First Philosophy of Spirit* of 1803-4, Hegel professes that language is the medium of thinking, asserting that “*language only is as the language of a people, and understanding and Reason likewise*” (*FPS*, 244; translation modified/*GW*, 6: 318) and that it is the “coming-to-be of the understanding and Reason” (*FPS*, 245/*GW*, 6: 318-319), a point that continues to be argued in the *Phenomenology* where it is called the “organ” of the inner (*PS*, 189 §315/*GW*, 9: 174) and, as we have seen, the “existence of spirit” (*PS*, 395 §652/*GW*, 9: 351) and again later in the *Philosophy of Spirit* where we read that “[i]t is in names that we think” (*PM*, 199 §462 Remark/*GW*, 20: 460).

rational creatures, they must, regardless of their *superficial linguistic structure*, display a *logical deep structure* that bestows upon them the universal and necessary status of a claim vis-à-vis other kinds of speech.⁸³ On the one hand, these assertions must be, deep down if not at the surface, *well-formulated judgements* whose form logically indicates the specific type of claim being made and the specific type of intelligible presence that accompanies it. On the other hand, these assertions, qua well-formulated judgements, must be able to enter, along with other such assertions, into *valid patterns of inference*, since it is only these forms that give us the appropriate reasons for taking any given type of claim as the case. Consequently, there will therefore be a self-identical logical core shared by *all* natural languages. Speaking of an individual “who has mastered a language and is also acquainted with other languages with which to compare it,” Hegel revealingly says the individual can discern such a core operative in them all: “In the medium of the language, he can recognize the expression of spirit as spirit, and this is logic.” (*SL*, 36/*GW*, 21: 41)

But, according to Hegel, while there is a deep *bond* between logic and language, there is not an *identity* between them, as would be the case if logic were a function of the contingent linguistic system of the rules of natural language. For Hegel, logic can be *read off* our linguistic practices insofar as it inflects them, yet it should not be *equated* with them. This allows us to draw out a crucial implication for the philosophy of language from Hegel’s argument for the relation between logic and language. It maintains that the difference between them is what allows for the critical distance necessary for genuine science (*Wissenschaft*), that is, universal and necessary knowledge arrived at through a rational method, to be possible. If we could not scrutinize, via the categories, historically inherited empirical concepts, the vocabulary of a language (and were instead bound to just

⁸³ The distinction between “superficial structure” and “deep structure” has been introduced into contemporary linguistics by Chomsky, who argues that, despite how certain sentences may have largely different syntactical constructs, their meaning is the the same (e.g., “Ashley loves Sam” versus “Sam is loved by Ashley”), which implies that we should explain such constructs by recourse to a common structure from which they derive. Likewise, Hegel’s endeavour is to formally outline a deep structure in virtue of which we can take linguistically different forms of expression to be functionally equivalent in terms of the conceptual content of the claims that they stake out. Were it not for these categories that inflect speech, so he wagers, natural language could not make universally and necessarily binding claims across languages, for there would be no intersubjectively valid procedure for assessing them rationally. For an account of the Subjective Logic that develops a similar interpretation, see Jim Vernon, *Hegel’s Philosophy of Language* (Continuum, 2007).

follow the social convention of their use whenever we speak), nor could we make logical judgments and inferences (and were instead beholden to the grammatical and syntactical structure of sentences), we would succumb to cultural relativism. Each language, in thereby having their own arbitrary and particular rules, would potentially not be able to intelligently talk to one another insofar as each might think in irreconcilably different manners. This was the position developed by Herder and Hamann in their so-called “metacritique” of pure reason: since it is impossible, they wagered, to *divorce* thinking from language, as Kant’s transcendental logic had done, the grammar, syntax, and vocabulary of language are what *dictates* how we think.⁸⁴ As a result, to know how we do think, we should systematize the diversity of the radically different grammars, syntaxes, and vocabularies of world languages, many of which have little in common besides family resemblances—a project that Schlegel and Humboldt would eventually undertake—rather than fetishizing logic.

It is precisely against this “proto-Wittgensteinian” position that Hegel’s opening remarks wage war. Indeed, how could we come to any intersubjectively valid explanation of what is true and what is right if each language has its own concepts and ways of making judgments and inferences, such that it may be impossible to negotiate between explanations given the structural diversity of languages? Only if *all* linguistic practice participates in *one* underlying discursive practice—only if we all have *parallel* fundamental concepts, are capable of formulating *matching* claims, and accept the *same* kinds of reasons as reasons in virtue of our “*logical* nature” (*SL*, 17/*GW*, 21: 15) (or, in Hegel’s terms, only if we share an *identical* set of categories)—is any such negotiation possible. Inasmuch, however, as some kind of “transcultural” rationality (science, *Wissenschaft*) does exist, as Hegel believes the *Phenomenology* has shown at any rate, the irreducible difference between logic and language is its condition of possibility. In other words, Hegel’s logic is a unique and overlooked contribution to the history of the philosophy of language.⁸⁵ Logic may be

⁸⁴ For a translation of texts in the metacritique debate, see Jere Paul Surber, trans., *Metacritique: The Linguistic Assault on German Idealism* (Humanity Books, 2001).

⁸⁵ In this regard, I disagree with the standard interpretation that Hegel has no systematically developed philosophy of language. For an overview of this literature, see Vernon, *Hegel’s Philosophy of Language*, 17–31. This oversight, as I see it, comes from one-sidedly focusing language as it is portrayed in Hegel’s *Philosophy of Spirit*. True: the only account he gives of language is scattered through a few paragraphs in this work (see *PM*, 194–202 §459–464/*GW*, 20: 453–463 & *W*, 271–283). However, given the context of these paragraphs, this account is

exclusively concerned with a description of the norms of thinking. Nevertheless, such a thematic focus only at first glance separates logic from the question of language in Hegel's case. Since, as he maintains, in everything that we have made into a representation we see the presence of language and in everything said in language there is a category, logical norms inflect language such that, in the presence of language, we can always see the presence of logical norms as its deep structure.

To explain how we have an instinctive knowledge of logical norms, Hegel therefore does not need to appeal to any special faculty of knowledge (e.g., some kind of intellectual intuition, as Fichte argued was required to authenticate the steps of his transcendental logic). To the extent that these norms inflect our language use, we, as logicians, need only make explicit what is implicit in what we simply do in linguistic practice without any prior reflection, similar to how a linguist, in writing the grammar of a language, only requires recourse to native speakers' use of language. Hegel's thesis is that we are, as linguistic beings, logicians from the start. In this regard, his logic anticipates a move that would be made over a century later in the so-called "linguistic turn" of analytic philosophy in figures such as Sellars, whose position was later further developed by Brandom.⁸⁶ For Sellars, logical norms are rules that we follow due to the *logical syntax of our linguistic practice*. This pragmatist conception of logic has, in a manner that resonates with Hegel's anthropological conception, a distinct advantage: it does not need to posit objective logical laws or principles out there in the universe that we somehow have the "spooky," non-empirical capacity to directly apprehend, but can instead give a full explanation of logic by merely resorting to our practical know-how of the rational patterns or rules of linguistic practice.

But there is an important difference between Hegel and Sellars that is worth noting because it places a limit on all pragmatist readings of Hegel. In Sellars, we still need to

exclusively a psychology of the cognitive, empirical processes through which language as the medium of thinking becomes possible. That is, it is a theory of the role of language, as Hegel himself puts it, "in the system of the activity of intelligence" (*PM*, 194 §458 Remark/*GW*, 20: 452). But the understanding of language that Hegel articulates in his works on logic entails that the most apt description of language would be a logical, not psychological, account.

⁸⁶ For a very succinct summary of this turn, see Paul Redding, *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 59–69.

give an account of how we could have become rule-following creatures. To this end, he envisages a new *psychology* of rule-regulated behaviour according to which the causal efficacy of rules arises from “the role of rewards and punishments in shaping behaviour,”⁸⁷ which enables him to propose an innovative naturalist explanation for the emergence of rational normativity through socialization. Hegel, on the other hand, argues for a new *biology* of rationally instinctive behaviour that bypasses the need of any additional psychological mechanism to explain its emergence. Because our nature is logical from the get-go, it makes as much sense to ask how we come to follow logical norms as it does to ask how a bat becomes competent in echolocation—to speak anachronistically, this instinctive knowledge is just written into the organism’s genes. For rationality to be an instinct is for it to be an innate pattern of behaviour that does not need to be learned (even if it, as a seed, needs the right environmental conditions to blossom). This is why, as Hegel continuously repeats, we do not require logic as a discipline to know how to think. Consequently, while according to Hegel the *hint* for how we are to build a proper science of logic as a “natural logic”⁸⁸ comes from what we simply do in linguistic practice, rationality itself is not reducible to the latter. For rationality is not just a linguistic practice, but is quite literally part of our biological bodies, something that arises from them in the same manner that a bat’s capacity for echolocation does. Put differently, whereas for the pragmatists we think the way we do *because of the logical syntax of our linguistic practice*, for Hegel our linguistic practice has the logical syntax that it does *because of the way we instinctively think*. In more Hegelian terms, language is a function of “the concept” rather than “the concept” being a function of language.

2.4 The divisions of Hegel’s logic: the “objective” and “subjective” categories

However, to grasp the uniqueness of Hegel’s conception of the bond between logic and language, we must first grasp his understanding of the logical norms that logic describes. For Hegel, logic is much more than a study of the formal consistency of rational thought. By making explicit our implicit awareness of the norms of thinking that instinctively

⁸⁷ Wilfrid Sellars, “Language, Rules, Behavior,” in *Pure Pragmatics and Possible Worlds: The Early Essays of Wilfrid Sellars* (Ridgeview Pub. Co., 1980), 140n3.

⁸⁸ See above 2.3.

structure our experience, Hegel's logic has two interrelated goals. The first is to account for how these norms enable us to make *things* and *ourselves* intelligible and the second to account for how they set up the *logical space of reasons* in which alone claims are made and adjudicated—how, in other words, a universe of meaning is created. This is why Hegel's logic is divided into two parts: the so-called Objective and Subjective Logics. The first is named “objective” because it describes the standards that must be met by any given content in order for this content to be *taken as objective* by unearthing the basic categories of thinking through which we are bound to give meaning to experience. The second is named “subjective” because it describes the *distinctively human, subjective* interest in reality having a reason for being whatever it is objectively. As such, the Subjective Logic works by unearthing the basic categories of the logical space of reasons that generate and sustain this interest and which underlie the innate patterns of behaviour that we perform in order to satisfy it.

As we shall see, Hegel's logic is therefore original in two fashions. In the first place, it does not expose itself to the critique of formalism: instead of codifying the mere forms of how *we* think, it seeks to demonstrate how thinking itself, by instinctively navigating the objective and subjective categories, *issues in objectivity*. In each case, what is in the forefront is the *intentionality* of thinking, its object-directedness—how we, in thinking *about* things and ourselves, become certain that something reflects an objective state of affairs and hence become certain that our thinking is a normatively appropriate response to the facts of the natural and human worlds. In the second place, the logical space of reasons is more than how we should think or talk whenever validity is at stake and more than the logical syntax of our linguistic practice—it is, more strongly and primordially, the *sui generis human space* within which all our experiences and activities are realized from the very beginning. Let's take each division of Hegel's logic in turn.

2.4.1 Objective Logic: defining the universe of meaning that supports human experience

Hegel's Objective Logic operates at three levels at once: the first concerning the nature of the objective categories as our fundamental concepts of objects in general; the second concerning these categories as norms for discourse; and the third concerning the existential result of the valid discursive application of these categories.

Hegel's argument for the inauguration of a new type of "Objective" Logic is akin to Kant's argument for a new type of "transcendental" logic. The contention is that the only way that we can explain the condition of possibility of the objectivity of knowledge is under the assumption that we *bring* certain basic categories *to* experience, that is, certain fundamental "concepts of objects in general" (B128). Because we bring such concepts to experience, the criteria for establishing objectivity is internal to experience: instead of being derived from experience by means of reflection and abstraction *a posteriori*, these concepts are the *a priori* standards against which the intelligibility of experience is measured (the so-called "Copernican revolution" of transcendental idealism). As such, these fundamental concepts do not define empirical objects, but rather the ideal schematizations of various kinds of objects, which, by formally outlining the most central features that must be spotted for something to be considered an object of a certain kind, enable us to recognize real-life examples of these objects whenever these features are in fact found. As such, they tell us the minimal parameters that our experience must meet for *anything whatsoever* we factually encounter in it to be taken as objective; and insofar as these concepts of what counts as an object are universally and universally shared by us as rational creatures, any valid application of them secures intersubjectively valid knowledge.

Accordingly, the first level at which Hegel's Objective Logic operates is to identify and define these categories, a task undertaken by the Doctrine of Being and the Doctrine of Essence. The former formally outlines the ideal schematizations of various kinds of objects ranging from immediately present objective qualities that come and cease to be in a rhapsodic play to objects whose formal unity permits us to penetrate through the play of qualities in the here and now of experience and discover a quantifiable rule that holds such a play together. The latter formally outlines the ideal schematizations of various kinds of objects whose nature contains all aspects of their becoming by means of a principle intrinsic to them. To list some salient examples: "being," "nothing," "becoming," "quality," "existence," "finitude," "pure quantity," "continuous magnitude," "discrete magnitude," "number," "measure," "the essential," "ground," "law," "possibility," "contingency," "necessity," "substance," "cause and effect," and "reciprocity." Put

differently, the objective categories constitute the formal outline of the blueprints for the universe of meaning that we are instinctively driven to create in experience.⁸⁹

This brings us to the second level at which Hegel's Objective Logic operates. The Objective Logic identifies and defines the categories that define the fundamental concepts of objects in general that we bring to experience. However, since the medium of thinking is language, the categories give us logical norms, realizable in those kinds of speech acts that give meaning, for what counts as a certain kind of intelligible presence, what Hegel calls a "thought-determination" (*Denkbestimmung*). This is because these categories have a *norm-setting function*: they set up *a priori* norms of meaning, general predicates that things and ourselves can manifest once they or we are conceptualized from the standpoint of a particular discourse for which these predicates supply the basic normative structure,⁹⁰ predicates in light of which we are bound to instinctively interpret things and ourselves by ascertaining the degree to which things and ourselves satisfy the fulfilling conditions for seeing realized the instantiation of the intelligible presence that the categories define. By having their own set of logical norms, any given type of such a speech act is, for Hegel, therefore *non-arbitrary*, that is, *universally and necessarily binding if these fulfilling conditions have been met*. Consequently, any speech act that appeals to an objective category is always already (at least the beginning of) a discourse we can intersubjectively have about a subject matter, a highly technical way of talking about something that has norms for the critical development of the subject matters that are best suited to it, norms

⁸⁹ This, I believe, is a dimension of Hegel's logic missed by the non-metaphysical readings. The Objective Logic is not just, say, a *reconstruction* of the major determinations of the real found by the discourses of experience, science, and philosophy (Hartmann), a theory of *explanation* (Bole III and Stevens), an account of the *rules* by which we use concepts (Stekeler-Weithofer), or what have you. Cf. Hartmann, "Hegel: A Non-Metaphysical View"; Thomas Bole III and John Mark Stevens, "Why Hegel at All?," *Philosophical Topics* 13, no. 2 (1985): 113–122; Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels analytische Philosophie: die Wissenschaft der Logik als kritische Theorie der Bedeutung* (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1992). While the objective categories do reflect the activity of thinking—they govern the discourses that we embark upon, the explanations we give, how we use concepts, and so on—the main thrust of Hegel's Objective Logic is that this activity is "directed" *outside* towards discovery of objects as defined by these categories, rather than being merely "self-centred" (only stipulating the internal structure of discourse, the adequacy of explanation, the propriety of rules, etc.).

⁹⁰ For a useful discussion of the categories as predicates, see di Giovanni, "Introduction," xxxv–xxxvi.

that enable anyone to participate in this discourse, recognize the intelligibility of its subject matter, and rationally assess it.⁹¹

By identifying and defining the objective categories, the Doctrine of Being and the Doctrine of Essence are thus also identifying and defining types of discourse about certain kinds of objects. In short, they systematize all the various ways that we instinctively talk about things and ourselves by distilling universal and necessary norms of meaning operative in them. Broadly speaking, the former immanently analyzes the basic normative structure of those discourses by which we can talk about the qualitative aspects of objects that come to be and pass away, the quantitative unity that abides by itself in and through such a becoming, and how we can combine qualitative and quantitative talk, while the latter immanently analyzes the basic normative structure of those discourses by which we can, in talking, distinguish between (1) the coming to be and passing away of objects and (2) the inner principle of those objects that, albeit distinct from their becoming, explains them. To put this in more in Hegelian terms, the Objective Logic formally outlines all the ways we can conceptually determine (*bestimmen*) a subject matter (*ein Gegenstand*) as what is or ought to be truly there, thereby making it into something intelligible (*ein Objekt*), ranging from how something can be construed immediately as this or that (in their *Unmittelbarkeit*) to how something can be construed in terms of what mediates this immediacy (by establishing the latter as a *vermittelte Unmittelbarkeit*, by extrapolating a process of *Vermittlung*).⁹² Hegel's Objective Logic is therefore a *meta-language* about the all ways in which we can intersubjectively use language to give meaning to things and ourselves, to establish shared understandings of the natural and human worlds and hence ways of life, a *meta-discourse* about all the types of discourse that we may engage in in order to instinctively create an experiential universe of meaning by following the blueprints for the construction of said universe.⁹³

⁹¹ Consequently, by using the word "category" Hegel is not referring to some kind of "classification" of metaphysical forms, as he is typically interpreted. Instead, in drawing attention to the meaning of the ancient Greek *kategorein*, "to say something," he is alluding to how *any* type of speech in which we make a claim must be normatively structured. Cf. Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer, "Hegel's Logic as a Theory of Meaning," *Philosophical Investigations* 19, no. 4 (1996): 292.

⁹² On this important distinction, which is a central thematic of Hegel's logic and more of which will be said below, see di Giovanni, "Introduction," xxxvi.

⁹³ The same point about Hegel's logic being a theory of discourse is made in di Giovanni, xxxv.

The Objective Logic is, therefore, at once an account of the ideal schematizations of various kinds of objects and an account of the types of discourse normatively structured by such objects. But this implies that there is a third level at which the Objective Logic operates. For the categories that it identifies and defines do more than just set the logical norms that govern speech acts that give meaning to what we encounter. Since any valid real-life use of a given norm commits or entitles the speaker who appeals to it to the kind of intelligible presence for whose recognition that it supplies the norm, a commitment or entitlement that would thereby also extend to all possible speakers, the Objective Logic also concerns itself with the existential result of the valid discursive application of the categories, namely the impact they can have upon our experience by issuing in the empirical discovery of a self-standing object of a certain type as it formally outlines. For we do not *merely create* a universe of meaning in accordance with the blueprints at our disposal—we *also inhabit* this universe in that any object, once recognized, will structure our experience: what we take as facts of the natural and human worlds will change how we behave towards things and one another.

For example, if I say “This leaf is green” (*EL*, 31 §3/*GW*, 20: 42), which appeals, amongst others, to the category of “quality,” I am making a claim as to what something objectively is. I pick out something as the same temporally persistent something and then specify a particular content of this persistence. In so making a claim, based on how I think otherwise rhapsodic episodes of sensory input satisfy the norm for what counts as an objectively present “quality,” I recognize and demand that others recognize this something (this green leaf) as actually existing, thereby (and only thereby) making it an element of experience with existential traction over me and you, an object that affects how we see the world around us and may act towards it and one another as something we are to take as objectively real. To take another example, if I say “The house is toppled by water” (*LL*, 2/*GW*, 23.2: 654), which appeals, again amongst others, to the categories of “cause and effect,” I take two temporally disparate events and link them together such that I claim that one (the toppling of the house) would not have come to be without the other (the water of, say, a recent flood). In so making a claim, based on how I think these two events satisfy the norm for what counts as an objectively present “cause” and “effect” respectively, I recognize and demand that others also recognize that the immediately given shambles of

this house, which they too pick out as objectively present, only becomes more fully objectively present as whatever it is by referring it to a particular occurrence that preceded and produced it. As such, this objective state of affairs becomes a shared point of reference in our doings.

2.4.2 Subjective Logic: unearthing the rational interests and innate patterns of behaviour that make up the logical space of reasons

For Hegel, to identify and define the objective categories according to which we instinctively create the universe of meaning that we inhabit is merely one part of the logical story of how such a universe comes to be. We must, in addition, give an account of how such a universe is engendered and sustained from within the logical space of reasons. However, Hegel's argument is not just that we can only actually take something as *objective* if it is justified or justifiable according to logical norms, namely if our claims assume the form of well-formulated judgments and these judgments are backed up by valid patterns of inference in the effort of conceptualization. More interestingly, he also maintains that were it not for a distinctively human, *subjective* interest in giving reasons that explain things and ourselves that orients our experience from the beginning, we would never navigate the logical space of reasons.

The general idea is as follows. Just as the universe of animal life, in virtue of which otherwise senseless nature is made to re-exist as, say, what is edible and inedible, safe and hostile, and appropriate or inappropriate mates, is created according to the biological interests specific to animal existence such as self-preservation, mastering the environment, and survival of the species, so too our universe of meaning, in virtue of which, as well, senseless nature is made to re-exist as what it objectively is or ought to be, is created according to the biological interest in making things and ourselves intelligible and as intelligible as possible specific to human existence. And just as other animals pursue their interests by following certain instincts, that is, innate patterns of behaviour—wolves' have an instinct to hunt in groups, to grow or shed their coats at the change of the season, and to take care of their young—so, too, do we ourselves, in order to pursue our interest in intelligibility, follow certain instincts or innate patterns of behaviour: the activities of conceiving, judging, and inferring as that alone through which the intelligibility that we

are interested in is secured. Put differently, since all “[a]ctivity always proceeds from *need*” (*LL*, 5/*GW*, 23.2: 656), our interest in intelligibility entails that this interest is a unique “need” or “vital necessity” (*Bedürfnis*) that we possess:

But human beings are not content with mere familiarity, with the mere sensory phenomenon. Rather, they want to get behind it, they want to know [*wissen*] what it is, they want to comprehend it. [...] The sensory is something singular, ephemeral; by thinking it over, we become acquainted with what abides in it. Nature shows us an infinite amount of individual shapes and phenomena. We have a need to introduce unity into this manifoldness. (*EL*, 55 §21 Addition; translation modified/*GW*, 23.3: 816; cf. also the rest of the paragraph)

And because of this need, there is therefore within us a specific instinct or drive that we follow to satisfy it, which what Hegel variously calls a “drive of truth” (*SL*, 697; translation modified/*GW*, 12: 200), a “cognitive drive” (*LL*, 3/*GW*, 23.2: 654), an “instinct of thinking” (*LL*, 3/*GW*, 23.2: 654), an “instinct of reason” (*EL*, 262 §190 Addition/*GW*, 23.3: 943), “the inner drive of a rational insight” (*EL*, 6/*GW*, 20: 25), and “the drive of knowledge to truth, *cognition as such*” (*EL*, 291 §225; translation modified/*GW*, 20: 222). In broad terms, this means that “[a]s human beings, we start out in poverty and wish to enrich ourselves with the whole content of the world, with a drive to win for ourselves all the abundance that can be found in the world itself” (*LL*, 3/*GW*, 23.2: 654), for this is the only way that we can “procure for reason’s urges [*Drange*] the satisfaction it deserves” (*EL*, 26/*GW*, 20: 31). Consequently, since the categories themselves are such instincts or drives (*SL*, 17/*GW*, 21: 16) that correspond to this specific need that we possess as rational creatures, in identifying and defining the basic subjective categories that constitute the logical space of reasons, we are in effect exploring the ontologically distinctive life-world that supports human experience: the instinctively driven activities that characterize it and their inborn telos. Accordingly, Hegel’s Subjective Logic, also entitled the Doctrine of the Concept, therefore has two goals: the first to unpack the ideal of meaning that we instinctively seek in experience; and the second to unpack the types of judgments and inferences through which this pursuit instinctively takes place.

But the fact that rationality is, for Hegel, species-specific comes with a crucial qualification. There is an important similarity to be underscored between the meaning-generating activities of us, creatures endued with “spirit,” and other animals. Animals, like us, are not mere automatons. They do create and inhabit something homologous to our own universe of meaning. In orienting themselves in their environment, they are internally compelled to make brute nature re-exist in terms of subjective biological interests that instinctively drive them and we are, in this regard, no different: we too orient ourselves in our environment in terms of our subjective biological interest in knowing the world. Animals are, as Hegel revealing puts it, therefore “idealists” of a particular type: “Animal appetite is the idealism of objectivity, whereby this objectivity loses its alien character” (*PN*, vol. 3, 144 §359 Addition/*GW*, 24.3:1552). Nevertheless, even if Hegel hereby makes logic a uniquely human biological phenomenon, this should not lead us, so he wagers, to uphold that the knowledge that we so strongly desire as a vital necessity must therefore be *merely* the perspective of our ontologically unique form of life, as is the case for other animals. To proto-conceptually “divide” up otherwise brute nature in terms of what is edible and inedible, safe and hostile, and appropriate or inappropriate mates as animals do is, indeed, to interpret it in a pejoratively subjective manner. For it is interpreted in light of purely practical concerns with which reality must fit, so that these “distinctions” reveal nothing about the world “in itself,” but only about how animals respond to it in their own way by pursuing their needs.

But Hegel’s conception of the logical space of reasons alleges to demonstrate how *our* rationality is that through which things and ourselves can be known as what they *actually* are or ought to be. There are two reasons for this. The first has to do with the fact that there is something unique about being a *human* animal, that is, a member of the species *Homo sapiens*: we are living creatures who are not just subjectively interested in survival and reproduction, as other animals are, but ones who embark, by their very nature, in the search for wisdom or objective truth. Because we are instinctively driven to *think*, we are instinctively driven to rise above mere physiological sensation and natural desire by making them an *object of thought*. For in thinking anything at all, we must elevate ourselves to the status of a *general thinker* whose primary concern is to determine whether the object of our thought successfully captures what universally and necessarily is or ought to be. But

what determines the success (or failure) of thought is the degree to which it succeeds (or fails) to make sense of what we otherwise just find in experience *on its own terms* and not, say, whether it is useful for this or that need or purpose. Theory overrides praxis. To think, one must, after all, abstract from oneself in all one's singularity and lose oneself in the content at hand. As such, as soon as we take our rational comprehension of something to reveal the truth, *the object* that is known through thinking becomes self-validating from within the logical space of reasons and structures the entire domain of human experience, superseding what we physiologically sense and desire.

Consequently, once we critically distance ourselves from how our body delivers us with certain external and internal stimuli and assume the detached, impartial standpoint of speculative reason, we open up a space from within which being can manifest itself and normatively command us. In this regard, while our rationality is indeed a species-specific interest, that very interest is what unexpectedly *enables us to transcend what we are as merely living creatures* in that our foremost orientation is “object-” and not “subject-oriented.” This is because, in instinctively making claims about things and ourselves and justifying these claims in discourse, we are always beholden to the objects themselves as they present themselves to us in the logical space of reasons. In this manner, while Hegel's logic is anthropological in that it deals with the particular biological form of life that defines us as humans, it is anthropological in a unique sense. It implies that we humans occupy a special place in the cosmos: since we are rational and are internally compelled towards wisdom, towards the truth, the distinctively human space of reasons that it formally outlines is the only space in which being shows itself or, in other words, can be discovered on its own terms. Put in Heideggerian terms, “spirit” is, for Hegel, the only being who is concerned to ask the question of the meaning of being and his logic, in describing our instinctive or biological form of life, describes the innate patterns of thinking that support that question as the central question that guides and informs human experience.

The second reason concerns the fact that, for Hegel, there is no possible standpoint outside of the logical space of reasons that could ever falsify what is known by the systematic deployment of the categories in the activities of conceiving, judging, and inferring. To the extent that the categories provide ideal schematizations of various kinds of objects, those central features that must be spotted if we are to recognize real-life

examples of these objects, they open up a space through which objects are free to reveal themselves as whatever they happen to be by conforming or not conforming to them. But when they do conform to the norms of meaning set by these categories and we have good reasons to believe so, we are justified in taking ourselves to be dealing with objects as so defined. There are no grounds to assume that this intelligible presence is a mere subjective construal of what is or ought to be or a mere product of categories that merely reflect how we carve up experience.

Here the central concept is Hegel's thesis concerning "the impotence of nature," as the *Phenomenology* already testified to.⁹⁴ What we uncover through our attempt to make things and ourselves intelligible is the fact that there is an irreducible element of brute facticity in the world, something we can never fully explain in a rationally satisfying manner. At some level, nature and its products just are whatever they are because they are so and not otherwise (for instance, there is no greater rhyme or reason behind why gravity has the value of 9.8 m/s^2 on Earth than the fact it does). But to assume, as does classical metaphysics, that had we some superior intellect or could have a "God's-eye" perspective on the universe, we would see a metaphysical rationale that, because of the makeup of our mind, escapes us, is a non-starter. Rationally satisfying explanations are not barred because of the cognitive *excess* of reality to our rational capacities; rather, there is a cognitive *lack*, for there are no clear, distinct, and explanatorily complete reasons for why they are so and not otherwise. No other point of view could overcome this facticity; this is just how nature is. Consequently, this entails that being itself is intrinsically intelligible. It does not, as it were, outrun intelligibility. In this sense, our access to being is not the only access *we* have; it is, according to Hegel at least, the *only one* possible: "There is only one reason, since even the divine reason is simply reason, and human reason is what is divine in human beings." (*LHP II*, 244/V, 6: 287)

As such, the meaning that we generate reflects, in principle, the structure of the objects and not just the activities of meaning-generating themselves: "objective thought occurs where the content of the thought is the very matter at hand itself—it means that this matter is objective on its own account" (*LL*, 15/GW, 23.2: 664). This is why, for Hegel, his

⁹⁴ See above 1.4.1.

logic, while anthropological in nature, is also a theory of truth. Put differently, Hegel maintains that there is no implication that the universe of meaning we create and inhabit by navigating the logical space of reasons is merely “for us.” As he makes the point by bemoaning the sorry state of the philosophy of his times, “Pilate’s question [‘What is truth?'] then carries the meaning [...] that the goal of discovering the truth is, as everyone knows, something that has been given up, long since set aside with a shrug; that the unattainableness of truth is recognized also by philosophers and professional logicians,” but his logic will “attempt,” as he puts it, “once more [...] to rise up to that goal” (*SL*, 508/*GW*, 12: 6). As such, although Hegel is post-Kantian, he is no postmodernist like Nietzsche who contends that the categories of human rationality are merely a contingent feature of how our animal nature carves up being—a carving up that suits us perhaps well, but which also falsifies being insofar as being transcends all categories.⁹⁵ Nor is he, for that matter, a postmodernist like the social constructivist, who maintains that all knowledge reduces to the cultural universe of meaning of our society, foreclosing any way of approaching objectivity. Hegel’s position is that, as a human animal equipped with thought and language user, we do not just employ rationality and language as a tool to make our

⁹⁵ It is worth quoting Nietzsche here at length in order to draw out the stark contrast between his position and that of Hegel. Cf.: “By these standards, the human being is an architectural genius who is far superior to the bee; the latter builds with wax which she gathers from nature, whereas the human being builds with the far more delicate material of concepts which he must first manufacture from himself. In this he is to be much admired—but just not for his impulse to truth, to the pure cognition of things. If someone hides something behind a bush, looks for it in the same place and then finds it there, his seeking and finding is nothing to boast about; but this is exactly how things are as far as the seeking and finding of ‘truth’ within the territory of reason is concerned. If I create the definition of a mammal and then, having inspected a camel, declare, ‘Behold, a mammal,’ then a truth has certainly been brought to light, but it is of limited value, by which I mean that it is anthropomorphic through and through and contains not a single point which could be said to be ‘true in itself,’ really and in a generally valid sense, regardless of mankind. Anyone who researches for truths of that kind is basically only seeking the metamorphosis of the world in human beings.” Friedrich Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense,” in *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, ed. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs, trans. Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 147–48. Nietzsche is led to such a position because he contends that concept formation is by definition an illusory process insofar as we, in proposing any concept, are in fact taking two instances that are by definition irreducibly singular and hence non-equivalent, as equivalent, whereby being itself can never be successfully made intelligible. However, if we, with Hegel, deny that being outruns intelligibility and is in itself intrinsically intelligible, there is no reason to uphold that truth is “anthropomorphic.”

survival and reproduction easier, nor are we stuck in a world of our own making. We use them to get at the truth such that our universe of meaning can uncover what is or ought to be in and through itself.

With this stipulation concerning the logical space of reasons as space wherein robust objectivity can be had, we can now return to a discussion of the contents of Hegel's Subjective Logic as an account of the instinctively driven activities that characterize the human being (conceiving, judging, and inferring) and their inborn telos. In a first moment, Hegel's Subjective Logic unearths what we instinctively attempt to achieve in making things and ourselves intelligible, what would alone satisfy our subjective interest in reality having a reason for being whatever it is or ought to be and which therefore impels human experience forward: the basic structure of a rationally satisfying explanation. In identifying and defining the reciprocal interrelation between the subjective categories of "universality," "particularity," and "singularity" to be produced by the process of conceptualization by systematically deploying the categories identified and defined by the Objective Logic, Hegel's Subjective Logic thus formally outlines the *ideal of meaning* that is normatively operative in that process as such: a universal concept that, by means of an inner principle, enables us to exhaustively specify all the particular concepts that fall under it, whereby a clear, distinct, and explanatorily complete singular universe of meaning would be created in which there is a rhyme and reason for everything within it.

With this ideal of meaning formally outlined, in a second moment Hegel's Subjective Logic rethinks the role of traditional logic as an account of the types of well-formulated judgments and the valid patterns of inference. In a fashion similar to how Kant has recourse to the table of judgments as a "clue" to deducing the categories or our fundamental concepts of objects in general (B128), Hegel here uses traditional logic as a point of departure from which we can unearth all the possible ways that the subjective categories of "universality," "particularity," and "singularity" are put into relation with one another in the instinctive task of creating a universe of meaning that would rationally satisfy our subjective interest in reality having a reason for being whatever it objectively is or ought to be.

In his theory of judgment, Hegel highlights how the specific logical form of each type of judgment enables the undertaking of a *doxastic commitment* in our discursive

practice to a specific kind of conceptual relation existing in the universe of meaning, ranging from “judgments of existence” (his reworking of qualitative judgments) to “judgments of the concept” (his reworking of modal judgments). In the former, when we claim, for instance, “the rose is red” (a type of positive perceptual judgment), we undertake a commitment to their being an inferential link between the singular concept “rose” and the qualitative universal concept “redness” (a rose is a kind of thing that can be red, while red is a kind of thing that can inhere in or be instantiated by roses). In the latter, when we claim “Socrates is good” (a type of evaluative assertoric judgment), we undertake a commitment to their being an inferential link between the singular concept “Socrates” and the universal genus “human being” (Socrates conforms to our concept of a person).

In a similar vein, Hegel’s theory of inference highlights how the specific logical form of each pattern of inference enables us to *confer entitlement* upon a specific type of judgment and its respective doxastic commitment in our discursive practice, ranging from “syllogisms of existence” (his reworking of deductive syllogisms) to “syllogisms of necessity” (his reworking of categorical, hypothetical, and disjunctive syllogisms). The former, by demonstrating how a stipulated relation between a singular and universal qualitative concept is justified by the qualitative relation between other conceptual determinations, by how our claims about perceptual facts back one another up, gives us a reason for upholding judgments of existence or perceptual judgments as objective. The latter, by demonstrating how a stipulated relation between a singular concept and a universal genus is justified by a necessary conceptual relation between a genus and its species, by our claims about the nature of the genus itself, gives us, too, a reason for upholding various higher-order judgments as objective.

With the transition to the Subjective Logic, we may now say, with Hegel, that we have begun “*the exposition of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and of a finite spirit*” (SL, 29/GW, 21: 34), provided that we add the stipulation that we are to understand this exposition as the unveiling of the basic normative structure of the instinctive rationality that makes possible the universe of meaning that we create in order

to make sense of what is around us and our lives.⁹⁶ This is why, for Hegel, logic “coincides” with metaphysics:

The distinction between thinking and its objects falls by the wayside, for we now have objective thoughts, i.e., thoughts which themselves are the matter at hand. One *thinks* the matter, one does not think *about* it, but we are lodged within it, in the matter itself. Objective thoughts are thoughts which constitute the content itself, they are what is substantial. Logic is thus content, and with that it coincides with metaphysics. (*LL*, 15/*GW*, 23.2: 664)

Hegel’s argument is based on a relatively simple philosophical intuition: there can be no separation between logic and metaphysics because the *only* access that we have to what is or ought to be the case is by navigating through the logical space of reasons that justifies our claims to what is or ought to be the case. For instance, we only know that the otherwise meaningless blotches of light in the night sky are luminous spheroids of plasma in virtue of the discourse of science, just as much as we only know that there are non-negotiable values in accordance with which we should live in virtue of the discourses of politics, art, religion, and philosophy. Discursiveness, and discursiveness alone, establishes objectivity. As Hegel says, the truth of necessity is freedom: the universe around us, which we take as a set of ineluctable mind-independent facts about the natural and human worlds, is itself a product of our conceptualization and is, as such, always revisable by conceptualization if it should prove no longer rationally satisfying.⁹⁷

This is why, for Hegel, “[e]verything is a *concept* [*Begriff*]” (*EL*, 254 §181 Remark/*GW*, 20: 192/cf. *LL*, 173/*GW*, 23.2: 773), “*all things are a judgment*” (*EL*, 243 §167/*GW*, 20: 183; cf. *LL*, 183/ *GW*, 23.2: 778) and “*everything is a syllogism*” (*EL*, 254

⁹⁶ As Harris says: “Hegel understands ‘Creation’ as the continuous process of *our human interpretation of the world* natural and spiritual.” Harris, *Hegel’s Ladder*, 1997, 2:713.

⁹⁷ I take this claim from both Harris and Stekeler-Weithofer. For Harris, due to our rationality, “[t]he human community lives in the world of its own interpretation, and this decides even what counts as ‘fact’ (*Dasein*) for it.” Harris, 2:726. According to Stekeler-Weithofer, “[e]very discourse about necessity, say even that about an ethical duty, is conceptually constituted in the framework of a system of knowledge and/or judgement, in short: in the framework of a ‘theory.’” See Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels analytische Philosophie*, 328–29.

§181 Remark/*GW*, 20: 192). We only have a right to assume that something actually exists independent of our discursive practices—the practices of conceptualizing something by undertaking doxastic commitments to beliefs about it in judgment and conferring entitlement upon these commitments in inference—because the production and consumption of reasons *rationaly forces us* to adopt such an ontological stance towards its objectivity. Consequently, when we are dealing with objects putatively out there, we are always dealing with the implicitly or explicitly articulated reasons in virtue of which we take them as independent. In this fashion, the production and consumption of reasons is simultaneously idealistic and realistic: the *production* is, strictly speaking, idealistic (it involves the logical space of reasons through which *we* discursively determine the truth of our claims), while the *consumption* of reasons is, strictly speaking, realistic (when we discursively determine that our claims are persuasive or convincing, the rational satisfaction that thereby emerges in us entails that we take them *as capturing what is or ought to be the case*). That this is a variation upon a Kantian transcendental theme, Hegel himself makes clear in a letter to Niethammer, dated October 23, 1812: “According to my view, metaphysics in any case falls entirely within logic. Here I can cite Kant as my precedent and authority. His critique reduces metaphysics as it has existed until now to a consideration of the understanding and reason.” (*Letters*, 277/*GW*, 10.2: 825)

In formally outlining the logical space of reasons so understood, Hegel’s Subjective Logic is therefore the completion of the distillation of the rationality instinctively operative throughout human experience as its condition of possibility. In this sense, it is not unlike contemporary phenomenology. By bracketing our natural attitude about objects, our spontaneous belief that they are just there in experience readymade, phenomenology seeks to describe those activities that underline what appears, in everyday life, as straightforwardly existing, because they provide the deep structure of experience. For instance, Husserl describes how the putatively fully formed objects of conscious experience arise out of pre-predicative, pre-figuring forms of perception,⁹⁸ while Heidegger how they are initially disclosed from within our shared being-in-the-world, our

⁹⁸ See Edmund Husserl, *Experience and Judgment: Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic*, trans. James S. Churchill and Karl Ameriks (Northwestern University Press, 1975).

irreducibly practical engagement with things and one another through which alone they are first made significant.⁹⁹ Objects with factually present, discernable features are made possible by this prior, more primary domain of experience.

Hegel presents an interesting alternative. On his account, it is not that objects are originarily parts of a pre-cognitive domain of experience. His major thesis is that we are just unaware, in our average everyday existence, of how experience always already stands within the logical space of reasons that we instinctively navigate to make objects have the meaning that they in fact have to us, even in its most ostensibly simplest forms. If I perceive something with a particular quality, this perception only appears as existentially relevant insofar as my body has already inferred that certain sensory data reveal what is true. Similarly, when I, in my doings, just know when a tool, such as Heidegger's hammer, is good for a task, this is because I have inferred that it corresponds to what the tool by nature is for without explicitly realizing it. In each case, therefore, my experience is structured by categories ranging from "quality" to "substance" and those governing an equally wide range of judgments and syllogisms: *at the level of experience*, therefore, there is nothing more primary than the instinctive activities of cognition that are the categories. As such, objects are only *immediately given* to our consciousness with the irresistibility that they command over us because our rationality constructs, unconsciously *behind our backs*, a complex inferential machinery that produces these experiences themselves by placing what are otherwise mere stimuli into a universe of meaning, thereby rendering this conceptual process part of the pre-history of experience that only logic can uncover.

In this regard, in describing "the concept" Hegel's logic stands in the heritage of Kant's transcendental idealism as further developed by Fichte's *Science of Knowledge*, which attempts to show how our experience of the natural and human worlds is made possible by the unconscious activity of the subject, which itself expands on Kant's position that the constitution of experience via the categories is a "blind" activity (A78/B103). Famously, according to Fichte the unconscious activity of the subject makes the latter into an "absolute I" insofar as its activity cannot be reduced to a product of nature: by following

⁹⁹ See, for instance, §§15-16 of Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962).

the norms of meaning set by the categories, it is the subject that freely or spontaneously decides what truly is or ought to be in its experience. Nevertheless, one of the unique directions that Hegel takes his own brand of transcendental idealism goes beyond how he “naturalizes” the unconscious activity of the subject by making this activity part and parcel of the instincts and drives of the human body. There is, for Hegel, no “absolute I” at the origin of experience because the only “absolute,” in Fichte’s sense of the word, is the rational community of subjects. This has to do with the essentially normative nature of rationality on Hegel’s account, the idea that recognition is fundamental to all cognition, which prohibits any one subject from applying the categories in a vacuum. Since whenever *I* make a claim about what things and ourselves truly are or ought to be, I *demand your* consensus and vice versa, which claim is taken as capturing the objective state of affairs and hence taken as normatively binding will depend upon which claim (if any) survives the test of the rational community of such subjects posing these demands upon one another. Put differently, since my entitlements to my doxastic commitments can only be adjudicated from within a discursive practice that is intrinsically social, the activity of the subject, its navigation of the logical space of reasons, is only realizable as a communal game of giving and asking for reasons. The importance of the latter for establishing our entitlements is, indeed, evinced in the central role played by the discourses of politics, science, art, religion and philosophy in determining the true and the good (discourses that we take part in usually without even explicitly being conscious of doing so). In making the categories of the Subjective Logic that underline the rationality of our language instincts and drives, Hegel’s point is therefore twofold. First, whenever we become aware of something in experience by validly deploying the categories, I or you are not simply instinctively applying a complex inferential machinery in a norm-governed fashion on our own; we are also already instinctively participating in an intersubjective discourse with others, whether we notice it or not, as sustained by these categories. Second, the logical space of reasons as a communal practice of giving and asking for reasons is the ultimate foundation of truth, for the subject, by definition, finds itself in a dialogical exchange of reasons with other subjects. As such, to say that rationality is the originating factor of our experience of nature, ourselves, and others, is to say, in Hegel’s eyes, that the rational community, as brought forth through our

instinctive use of thinking and language, is the horizon in which said experience is made possible.

2.5 The movement of Hegel's logic

The question is how to elaborate the so-called “objective” norms (those categories that set the standards for the valid application of our fundamental concepts of objects in general) and “subjective” norms (those categories that constitute the logical space of reasons that we navigate in order to make claims with these fundamental concepts and adjudicate them) of thinking scientifically. We could just tally these norms as we come across them. But such a list, even if complete, would not be rationally satisfying for two interrelated reasons. First, it would deny logic the status of a science because it would fail to prove why these norms and no others are universal and necessary for us as rational creatures. Without a proof of this, logic has, for Hegel, “roughly the form of empirical science” (*SL*, 32/*GW*, 21: 37): the best we can say is that these laws are the ones that *happen* to govern our thinking, ones that we can observe, infer, and classify as those operative in it. This is a fate to which Hegel believes classical logic and its Kantian transformation into transcendental logic have fallen (cf. *PS*, 142-143 §235/*GW*, 9: 134-135; *LL*, 3-4/*GW*, 23.2: 655; *SL*, 32/*GW*, 21: 37) If, however, the universality and necessity of these laws are to be vouchsafed, we must be able to prove, from within thinking itself, that these laws are required for thinking in general. In contemporary parlance, we may say that Hegel accuses logic as a discipline of lacking a completeness proof, a lesson he learned from Fichte, who was the first to demand a “genetic deduction” of the categories. Such a task should not be beyond its reach: “If thinking is to be capable of proving anything, if logic must demand that *proofs* be given, and if it wants to teach how to give proofs, then it should be capable above all of proving the content most proper to it and seeing its necessity” (*EL*, 86 §42 Remark/*GW*, 20: 80).

Second, a complete list of logical norms could not demonstrate how they are “held together in organic unity” (*SL*, 27/*GW*, 21: 32). Hegel's criticism is that since thinking is the instinctive activity of creating a universe of meaning, it is *intrinsically dynamic*. Inasmuch as it is that which seeks to conceptually comprehend (*begreifen*) a subject matter (*Gegenstand*) by making it into something intelligible (*ein Objekt*), a task that requires us

to be able to constantly say more and more of its objective content in order to make it as intelligible as possible, it does not suffice to identify and define its norms one by one. This would only obfuscate how its norms *come to support one another* in this activity. For *no* concept, *no* judgement, and *no* inference stands on its own; they always, in principle at least, refer to other concepts, judgements, and inferences in a complex manner because meaning is always capable of, to continue the organic metaphor, *growing*. Put in Hegelese, there is always an inborn conceptual movement (Bewegung) in discourse, a progression from the abstract to the concrete.

But in order for meaning to grow in a rationally comprehensible and assessable manner, two requirements must be met. (1) The conceptual process by which meaning grows must have norms that tell discourse when it should unfold meaning further, that is, that tells it when a certain objective content is not fully intelligible, which puts a semantic impetus in us to look for more determinate expressions of meaning. (2) This unfolding itself must occur through steps that are themselves norm-governed if that unfolding is to be, on the one hand, rationally consistent and, on the other hand, acknowledgeable as a valid advance by all rational agents. Hegel's logic tracks such norms as those behind the growth of meaning. As he likes to underline, any thought-determination (*Denkbestimmung*) making possible the intelligent apprehension of a subject matter is, insofar as it is determined (*bestimmt*) to possess this or that objective content, equally destined (here playing on another meaning of *bestimmt*) to lead to new thought-determinations to the extent that the previous thought-determination exhibits a logical indeterminacy that is made determinate by the new one, each following the norms set by rationality, so that the logical indeterminacies of any given thought-determination are only overcome as thinking thinks over its content in a norm-governed fashion. Any logic that cannot capture this dynamicity—that cannot capture how the conceptual moves whereby discourse may progressively develop its subject matter have logical standards of their own—does not, according to Hegel, deserve the name of logic. Hegel's thesis is that it is only by showing how the norms of thinking are required to sustain and generate this dynamicity that we can prove them, since under that condition their universal and necessary legitimacy as norms of thinking will have been justified.

In order to capture the normativity at the heart of the dynamicity of thinking, Hegel maintains that logic requires a new method with three phases. (1) After the identification of an initial set of categories, it defines this set by reflecting on the determinacy it offers. Other sets of categories are then identified and defined (2) by reflecting on how its objective content still remains relatively indeterminate on its own terms, which requires the introduction of another set of categories to demarcate this indeterminacy, and (3) then by reflecting upon how other another set works by making determinate what was still previously indeterminate,¹⁰⁰ a set that itself gives rise to its own indeterminacies and hence requires the intervention of other sets if the objects that they make intelligible are to become more intelligible. From this, we can then proceed to exhaustively identify and define all the sets of categories available to us in a way that shows how they intricately interplay, in a norm-governed fashion, in the activity of giving meaning, inasmuch as this reflection is to be continued until we formally outline all the conceptual conditions that must be met in order for the determinacy of something to be without any extra-logical remainder. In Hegel's vocabulary, the method of this reflection occurs by means of a three-step rhythm (cf. *SL*, 737-750/*GW*, 12: 238-251; *EL*, 125-133 §79-82/*GW*, 20: 118-120): immediacy (an initial logical object), negation (the logical problems it poses, what Hegel often calls "contradiction," a certain kind of tension or ambiguity), and negation of negation (the intervention of a new logical object that resolves said problem by making the previous a moment of itself), which itself results in a new immediacy in a process that repeats until we achieve an immediacy that is fully mediated in and through itself.

Hegel's proposal is that, to get the project of a "dynamic" logic off the ground, we must begin logic with the most elementary category that a subject matter must realize in order be recognized as objective, the simplest type of discourse we can embark upon in order to make something re-exist as meaningful. We begin with this first category, "being," because without an initial recognition that something *is* truly there, that it possesses a substantiality or permanence independent of us, discourse cannot even get started

¹⁰⁰ I here follow two interpreters who likewise cash out the method of Hegel's logic in terms of a reflective process. See Brinkmann, *Idealism Without Limits*, 243; di Giovanni, "Introduction," xxxv. As Hegel says, "[t]he process of *thinking them over* that *finds* deeper determinations for them is the logical thinking by means of which these determinations produce themselves, not in a contingent, but in a necessary manner" (*EL*, 139-140 §87 Remark/*GW*, 20: 124).

conceptually determining *what* or *why* something is or ought to be. The following, in brief, is the conceptual movement charted by the Objective Logic. We begin with the introduction of the categories of “quality” because “being” can be first determined in the here and now of experience as *this* and then *that*, namely as a play of qualities that come and cease to be. The logical problem that arises for discourse is how these qualities can be held together, how a meaningful whole can be constructed out of them, for qualitative talk by itself is unable to.¹⁰¹ It can only point out “this!” or “that!” Here Hegel’s logic seeks to show how this is only possible insofar as we bring categories into play that permit us, in our talk about things, to shift our conceptual emphasis from *what* something is to the *unity* that it retains throughout its qualitative becoming, as when we start determining something in terms of a uniformity that gives various qualities a form in which they become unified, a form that is greater than the qualities whose play it supports. Such a shift allows qualitative talk to overcome its fragmentation, but also opens up the logical possibility of determining the subject matter at hand in terms other than those the categories of “quality,” namely in terms of those of “quantity” and “measure.” The logical problem that now arises is that while these formal norms may help us comprehend *how* an object is what it is, the quantitative limits it cannot cross without becoming something different, it does not help us comprehend *why* it has the specific configurations that it does display at any particular point of its own becoming nor *why* certain quantitative changes result in something different.¹⁰² According to Hegel’s logic, this is only possible insofar as we bring into play the categories of “essence,” which permit us, in our talk about something, to once again shift our conceptual emphasis, but now from *what* something is or its *formal* structure to the inner principle that explains both *by explaining the details of an object’s becoming*. Only in light of such an expansive interpretative framework capable of piecing everything together into a grand narrative can the true meaning of the various objects made recognizable by our qualitative, quantitative, or qualitatively-quantitatively mixed talk come fully to light.

¹⁰¹ I take this succinct summary of the logical problem from di Giovanni, “Introduction,” xxxix.

¹⁰² See G. R. G. Mure, *A Study of Hegel’s Logic* (Clarendon Press, 1967), 79.

In other words, as we proceed from category to category in Hegel's Objective Logic, we not only see how various types of qualitative, quantitative, qualitatively-quantitatively mixed, and explanatory discourses make things and ourselves meaningful, but also how certain logical problems of meaning inherent to the categories that govern these discourses would incite us to supersede them through the introduction of new categories and their respective discourses as that which are capable of resolving these problems. As such, the movement of objective categories constitutes an *idealized* dramatization of the conceptual moves we make in our discourse *about* objects of certain basic kinds. In it, we logicians are supposed to give witness to how an initial object discovered in the here and now of experience—a “this!” or “that!”—can become more and more intelligible through the introduction of new sets of categories according to a particular logical sequence. The project of the Objective Logic is therefore to formally outline how these categories, rather than being items we can bring into play *ad hoc*, have their valid application in how they *take up* (“sublate,” *aufheben*) previous ones, thereby qualifying, building upon, and expanding one another in a norm-governed fashion that is binding for all rational agents.

Nevertheless, an exhaustive account of the categories at our disposal for making a subject matter into something intelligible does not tell us *why* or *how* we are instinctively driven to create the universe of meaning that they define. Consequently, at the completion of the Objective Logic we must switch logical registers from the norms of meaning that dictate what we *recognize* as objective to the norms that dictate our subjective interest in objectivity and those innate patterns of behaviour that govern the conceptual process through which *said recognition occurs* in the logical space of reasons. The difference between the Objective and Subjective Logic is therefore one of logical perspective on the dynamicity of thinking. Whereas the Objective Logic ideally dramatizes how *things* and *ourselves* become more intelligible by showing us how more concrete categories progressively develop more abstract categories, the Subjective Logic ideally dramatizes how discourse *on its own* supports the organic growth of meaning by progressively developing *itself* in the attempt to attain the ideal of meaning that internally compels it: a universal concept that explains, by its inner principle, all the particular concepts that fall under it, thereby making it into a singular, self-contained and self-justifying universe of

meaning. This universe being what counts as full-fledged objectivity and that which is sought in the activity of giving meaning, Hegel now rethinks judgments and inferences as that through which such a universe comes to be by stipulating and backing up certain conceptual relations between “universality,” “particularity,” and “singularity” in a norm-governed way.

In a nutshell, this is the movement. In a first moment, we see that we do not bring into play judgments *ad hoc*, but instead how differing types of judgments set the stage for more complex judgments in a norm-governed fashion. In the endeavour to create a universe of meaning, we must first begin with the introduction of “judgments of existence” that, by stipulating a conceptual relation between a singular subject and a sensory universal determination, commit us to a *perceptual* fact. But insofar as a perceptual fact is something potentially contingent and arbitrary, such a judgment can only be made more fully intelligible insofar as it becomes the topic of “judgments of reflection” that, by making claims to how sensory universal determinations extend across various singular subjects, can stipulate a conceptual relation between a class of singular subjects and said universal. They thereby commit us to *observed* matters of fact that capture something more substantial in the subject matter in question, permitting more rational satisfaction. However, since such a reflection is extrapolated from experience, nothing guarantees that such an observation will not be undone by further experience. To make such a judgment more intelligible, we must therefore, by the introduction of “judgments of necessity,” use the groundwork supplied by the previous judgments to construct theoretical claims in virtue of which a singular subject, because of its very genus, must possess a certain universal determination, whereby the findings of observation have their place in an explanatory framework that contains them in advance. On the basis of these judgments, which commit us to essential *facts of the matter*, we are then licensed to make “judgments of the concept,” that is, evaluative claims about whether singular things succeed or fail to fully realize their nature. In a second moment, we see how, while judgments inform one another in a norm-governed fashion, insofar as they only articulate *commitments* to certain kinds of facts (perceptual, empirical, essential, evaluative) about the natural and human worlds, they do not, by themselves, explain why these commitments have a normative pull upon us. For their claims to accomplish such, we must be *entitled* to them. As Hegel puts it, “syllogism

is [...] the *essential ground of everything true*" (EL, 254 §181 Remark/GW, 20: 192). Consequently, in the logical sequence of the patterns of inference that Hegel names "syllogisms of existence," "reflection," and "necessity," we are to give witness to (1) the kinds of reasons (those based on perceptual, empirical, and essential facts) that we must be able to provide in order for a certain type of judgment to be taken as true as well as the kinds of reasons that we can provide in order to put a certain type of judgment into question and (2) how these kinds of reason-giving activities reinforce into another such that, through the progressive development of the practice of giving and asking for reasons, a self-contained, self-justifying universe of meaning can be created. In formally outlining the categories of the logical space of reasons, Hegel's Subjective Logic describes how they, too, formally qualify, build upon, and expand one another.

This is the so-called movement of Hegel's logic. Consequently, Hegel's logic charts how meaning should grow if discourse is to guarantee a maximum degree of rational consistency in its unfolding, the basic normativity with the help of which all particular real-life discourses are assessed instinctively and are to be assessed self-consciously. We thereby see three interrelated logical features of discourse in general. (1) We see how, in any given type of discourse, certain additional acts of giving meaning are permissible while others are excluded in its progressive development. If we take "This leaf is green," we should not jump into looking for a causal explanation for why this leaf is green. We do not even have enough information to suggest any strong connection between the subject and its predicate so that any such conceptual move would risk being self-undermining. In order for this move to be fully rationally consistent, we must be prepared to make further moves that supply the background that makes this move have logical traction, namely to first determine that the greenness of the leaf is part of its qualitative becoming, and then to determine that both the leaf and its greenness are graspable in terms of formal rules, which should incite an investigation into the causes of this phenomenon and mandate this investigation into the nature of the leaf. Only through such a conceptual process does explanatory talk become a fully rationally consistent conceptual move. (2) We see how the various categories that we apply rely on what has been laid down by previously applied categories in a norm-governed fashion. For "The house is toppled by water" to have a rational hold on us, a whole nexus of categories, realized in different types of discourse,

must be at play behind our backs. After all, a casual explanation can only be meaningful if it provides the “why” of a series of already established determinations, determinations that it gives a more intelligible depth. (3) We see how categories only issue in objectivity to the extent that they are systematically deployed in the logical space of reasons by judgments and inferences, but such that judgments and inferences do not stand alone, but support one another according to a strict rational procedure. By way of illustration, for the positive judgment of existence “the rose is red” to be more fully intelligible, we must also minimally judge, through the introduction of a negative judgment of existence, that the “rose is not red” (but also other qualities), which makes the second judgment dependent upon the first but also its more concrete expression. Similarly, for the assertoric judgment of the concept “Socrates is good” to be intelligible at all, it must already refer to a judgment about human nature against which Socrates is being measured, such that, in addition, all the (perceptual and observational) judgments through which that (theoretical) judgment came to be are presupposed. The same model of organic growth is seen in the conceptual movement of syllogism from syllogisms of existence through those of reflection to those of necessity that Hegel’s logic describes. Hegel’s argument is that for the justification of an initial claim about a conceptual relation existing between a singular subject and a universal (“the human being is rational”) to be made more rationally satisfying, we must advance from giving arguments based on perceptual facts in the here and now of experience towards arguments that draw upon observation and ultimately towards arguments that make the case that such a conceptual relation exists by necessity due to the very nature of the subject in question—whereby, in this conceptual movement, each new type of syllogism advance qualifies, builds upon, and its logical precedent. Taking these three-above mentioned features together, we see that, while we in real life just talk about things qualitatively, quantitatively, by mixing both qualitative and quantitatively modes of speech, or in an explanatory register, and go about this as if their respective claims and the reasons that we provide for them are self-standing and to be assessed accordingly, such claims can only be rationally binding inasmuch as various types of discourse come to reinforce one another in a norm-governed fashion, instinctively and/or self-consciously, in the activity of giving meaning—inasmuch as they progressively develop one another in a complex manner, the complexity

of which we take for granted when we say anything at all, but the basic normative structure of which Hegel's logic seeks to unearth.¹⁰³

In the conceptual movement tracked by Hegel's logic, we thus encounter Hegel's unique conception of category application. It is not—as it is on the standard representationalist model and indeed still is in Kant's transcendental idealism in which the understanding works on raw data delivered by sensibility—a matter of applying categories *to* some given, extraneous material onto which they thereby impose an external order. To talk of applying categories to some non-conceptual, intuitively available content is, for Hegel, as absurd as talking of applying the rules of grammar to sensory stimuli. In speaking a language, we must follow its rules in order to make meaningful utterances, for it is these rules and these alone that determine what is a valid or invalid application of them. If I say, for instance, “It was raining,” you know (amongst other things) that, because the verb was correctly conjugated in the continuous past, this utterance depicts a situation in which rain occurred over a period of time but has stopped; that it has no meaning in the present (“It is raining”); that it makes no claims about the future (“It will rain”); and that it does not express a subjunctive mood (“If it had been raining”). As such, you also know that to use any of these verb conjugations to refer to the original would be an incorrect application of the rule you ought to follow when speaking intelligibly about such a state of affairs. All of this is based on the rules set by English grammar. The validity or invalidity of linguistic rule application is therefore not determined by whether these rules match a pre-given

¹⁰³ As Hegel says apropos quality: “The transition from quality to quantity indicated in the preceding section is not to be found in our ordinary consciousness. The latter takes quality and quantity to be a pair of self-standing determinations existing side by side and it is accordingly said that things are not only qualitatively but *also* quantitatively determined. Where these determinations come from and how they relate to each other, these questions are not raised here. But quantity is nothing other than quality sublated, and it is the dialectic of quality studied here by virtue of which this sublation comes to pass. At first, we had *being* and becoming resulted as its truth. This formed the transition to existence whose truth we saw to be alteration. Alteration, in turn, showed itself in its result to be being-for-itself that was exempt from the relation to an other and from its transition into it. And, finally, being-for-itself, in both sides of its process, of repulsion and attraction proved to be the sublating of itself, and thus of quality in general. [...] Accordingly, we consider things first from the viewpoint of their quality, and the latter we take to be the determinacy that is identical with the being of the thing. As we proceed next to considering quantity, it offers us at once the representation of an indifferent, external determinacy in the sense that, even if a thing's quantity changes and it becomes greater or smaller, it still remains what it is.” (*EL*, 156 §98 Addition 2; translation corrected/*GW*, 23.3: 872-873).

reality; it is determined by their basic structure as rules. To apply the rules of grammar in speech is to simply work with an order intrinsic to a natural language and it is the nature of such an order, operative in everyday speech, that a science of grammar abstracts so that it stands on its own. By the same token, when we apply categories in discourse, we are bound to work with an order intrinsic to discourse itself, an order that logic brings out by abstracting it from real-life discourse. In the inner conceptual movement of discourse, the validity or invalidity of category application is consequently not determined by how categories come to bear on some domain of pre-conceptual data; it is determined by the norms, inherent to discourse itself, for what constitutes a valid and invalid advance in the progressive development of meaning. Put differently, in the activity of category application we, on Hegel's account, *never exit discourse*: discourse itself, through its own normativity, adjudicates what is meaningful and not meaningful, just as the rules of language do in their fashion.

Moreover, by tracking the conceptual movement or order already intrinsic to discourse, the method of Hegel's logic proves to be *systematic*. The reason for this is that each new set of categories only emerges in virtue of a reflection upon a previous set. In every case, we see how if discourse is to progressively develop its subject matter in a rationally consistent manner certain conceptual moves are required of it. As a result, we demonstrate that each newly emerged set can only be validly appealed to if it qualifies, builds upon, and expands a determinacy already validly laid down by the previous one. As such, its norm implies the norm of the previous.¹⁰⁴ However, for us to be able to recognize such a discursive situation as one in which this, and only this, set can be validly appealed to in the task of giving meaning, equally entails that the previous set that creates this discursive situation must also imply the newly emerged set just as much as the newly emerged implies the previous: one by immanently pointing to the set needed to make its content more intelligible, internally indicating the subsequent conceptual moves to be undertaken to resolve the logical problem it faces; the other by immanently pointing to the set whose content it gives further depth by making it a moment of its more concrete form,

¹⁰⁴ For an interpretation of the movement of the categories in their deduction as one of logical implication, see John W. Burbidge, "The First Chapter of Hegel's Larger Logic," *The Owl of Minerva* 21, no. 2 (1990): 178–79.

internally indicating the kinds of prior conceptual moves that permit it to effectively intervene. Since each set implies others in a forward- and backward-moving chain of mutual implication, a self-contained, self-justifying differential system of categories thereby emerges. In this regard, the movement of Hegel's logic is, as a result, not only systematic but also a *deduction* (*Deduktion*) in a sense in that we are lead from one set to another (in the etymological sense of *de-ducere*) in an incontrovertible manner by their very nature. This is because the basic normativity of these categories themselves moves logic from one to the other. It is to the extent that (1) the categories making up this system—what Hegel calls “a system of pure reason” (*SL*, 29/*GW*, 21: 34)—are exhaustively derived, that (2) this system, in its exhaustive derivation, successfully shows how thinking can maintain rational consistency in its progressive development of meaning, and that (3) this system has all the categorial resources that it requires to reach full-fledged objectivity in that development that the categories of this system are proven or not, namely, that a completeness proof of logic has been performed or not.

In this way, we encounter three interconnected points concerning the method of Hegel's logic. (1) We see that each set of categories, by defining a specific type of intelligibility that a subject matter can exhibit, enacts *in the medium of formal reflection* a specific type of discourse of which we are capable *in real-life contexts*. It does this, however, in abstraction from the content that experience would give it. (2) In the movement from one set to another, we therefore also move, but once again in the medium of formal reflection, from one type of discourse to another, ideally dramatizing how the unintelligibility that would plague one kind of real-life discourse could only be resolved if it proves capable of being absorbed as a moment of a more concrete discourse that would have the categorial resources at its disposal to conceptualize what would be, in the first, still impervious to conceptualization. In this regard, Hegel's logic establishes the *limits* of the various discourses that spirit can embark on, the degree of transparency that we can expect to find in them, by investigating the very categories that govern them. (3) Although each set of categories, and by implication their corresponding discourse, are in each case immanently analyzed, what emerges through this movement is, in fact, the *total* conditions of intelligibility that are *always already* at work alongside *any* given category. For to recognize how one set would, on its own, render a subject matter relatively unintelligible

not only implies that an additional set, which offers the norm for a more concrete intelligibility, is tacitly at play. It also implies that all sets are necessarily present in any particular instance of discourse insofar as this additional set likewise presupposes others. The forward-moving advance of the categories is, consequently, a retrogressive grounding (*SL*, 49, 750/*GW*, 21: 57, 12: 251).

To put the matter differently, the “system of pure reason” (*SL*, 29/*GW*, 21: 34) that Hegel’s logic describes is present in *every* facet of human experience *without remainder* because any discourse, no matter how simple or complex it may be, tacitly refers to this system as a whole even when it only makes expressive use of one small part thereof. That is, to make anything intelligible at all by appealing to even the simplest norms is to already appeal to all norms insofar as, whenever we make anything intelligible, we are not only concerned with recognizing a certain kind of object, but also in making that object as intelligible as possible such that, whenever we make an elementary conceptual move in discourse, we are already, instinctively at least, considering what other kinds of conceptual moves we would have to try to make in order to achieve a rationally satisfying intelligibility. This is similar to how, in a game of chess, when we move a pawn at the beginning we are already, even if only tacitly, working towards the endgame, which requires that we know the rules governing the other pieces, since otherwise we cannot even be said to be playing the game. As such, we cannot be said to navigate the logical space of reasons unless we have *beforehand* mastered all the norms that govern all possible valid conceptual moves we can make, just as we cannot be said, to continue the example, to play chess unless we *already* know the rules that constitute the set of all possible valid moves.

2.6 Hegel on the logical space of reasons: phenomenological and ontological implications

By presenting the movement of Hegel’s logic in this way, I hope to have demystified what Hegel means by “dialectics.” Dialectics is just his chosen method for presenting the dynamicity of thinking, that is, how it can organically grow. As a result, as we logically move from category to category, we see how we always assess the claims that we make in terms of how they appeal to other claims and ultimately participate in a chain of other claims, where each link qualifies, builds upon, and expands previous ones. It is the logical

structure of this chain and the conceptual moves that make it up that establishes the weakness or robustness of the claim itself.

This leads to an original model of the logical space of reasons. While Hegel's language of the "pure space" of thinking is metaphorical, that should not distract us from the issue at hand. When we conceptualize something, the kind of presence that it possesses for us radically changes. No longer physiologically present as physiological stimuli directly given to the body, it now takes on an intelligible presence in that we know or at least are convinced that we know what or why it is. Similarly, an action is not a mere occurrence, a mere reaction to some biological or psychological cause; as something carrying a purpose, we will perform it or not depending on whether we know or at least are convinced that we know that the purpose that it intends should be realized—and even an action that is wrong or downright evil presupposes such a distinction being what should and should not be realized, insofar as it is the deliberate going against the norm that has been set. But to know something (being or believing to be justified that something is or ought to be the case) means being able to tell a rationally binding story about a given state of affairs to which others are to be held (having the capacity to justify that it is or ought to be the case). As such, for any claim that is made, we must in principle know which other types of claims can and cannot come into play to give it the support that it needs to be justified or gain in justification and, more broadly, what kinds of judgements and inferences have to be at hand if it is to possess such a rational force over me, you, and everyone else or which must come into play if this force over us is to organically grow. Just as, say, physical space provides the dimensions and laws of motion that make it possible for physical things to move in certain ways and impossible for others in that space, so, too, the logical space of reasons provides the norms that dictate how we should move in its "mental," "intellectual," or as Hegel would prefer to call it "spiritual" space (three possible translations of adjective "*geistig*"), which conceptual moves are permissible and which are not.

But if the norms of thinking generate and sustain a logical space of meaning, it must be added that, for Hegel, within this space not all particular spaces are equal. Depending on where something stands in that space, its rational force over us will be stronger or weaker. This is because as something moves in this logical space according to the claims that we make, these claims, by qualifying, building upon, and expanding previous ones,

make the intelligibility of a subject matter increase and hence, with it, its rational force over us. Logical space is like a space curved by conceptual gravity, where the greater the mass of meaning, the semantic body of determinacy, that is validly accumulated, the greater is its pull upon us.

This entails that Hegel's logic is quite unlike most logics. In identifying and defining the norms of thinking and in moving from one norm to another, it endeavours to capture not only the dynamicity of thinking, but also how there are varying grades of intelligibility in the objects that stand in the logical space of reasons. To put this point phenomenologically rather than logically, Hegel's logic seeks to explain why our different types of discourse evoke within us different degrees of *conviction*—why, for instance, we are more inclined to believe a scientific explanation than a mere statement based on an individual's testimony of the senses even when both claims are well reasoned. A syllogism of existence, while it may show the truth of a perceptual fact, just does not give us enough information about the object at hand for us to be as rationally satisfied as we are with a syllogism of reflection, which shows us the truth of a fact that goes beyond the mere here and now of experience. By describing the movement of the categories, Hegel's logic is thereby able to chart the continuum of intelligibility of which discourse is capable in that we move from discourses that are more relatively poor in conceptual content to ones that are relatively richer in conceptual content, slowly letting, in the idealized conceptual process that it dramatizes, a fully-formed universe of meaning grow before our logical eyes. In each case, it demarcates the limits of a type of discourse, what remains unintelligible from its standpoint, limits that can only be overcome by introducing a new type of discourse—one that, because it can talk of something in a more conceptually artful manner thanks to the norms that govern it, is capable of making determinate what was still indeterminate in the previous, thus bringing it to a higher degree of intelligibility or justification, which will affect the degree of conviction we can, in our actual lives, exhibit towards a certain kind of discourse. Hegel's logic investigates these limits.

However, this entails that Hegel's logic is quite unlike other logics in an additional way. While the movement from category to category is strictly logical in nature insofar as it describes the basic normativity governing the valid conceptual moves that discourse can make, this logical movement nevertheless has profound ontological implications for us as

rational creatures. As beings for whom things and actions only take on existential traction insofar as we know or are convinced to know, respectively, what or why things are and that we should act in a certain way, we cannot be content with claims that are not fully rational in that they run into logical problems. Consequently, we are impelled to progressively develop our discourses as much as possible. As such, Hegel's account of the basic normativity of the logical space of reasons, his demonstration of how installed within even the simplest discourse, the claim that something *is*, there is a "drive" for further, more complex determination (*EL*, 139 §87 Remark/*GW*, 20: 124), shows us why we—both individually and historically insofar as we, as individuals, inherit the claims of the past, the discourses that our community has developed and into which we are socialized—have a need to always qualify, build upon, and expand our understanding of the natural and human worlds in a progressive or organic fashion, to make our universe of meaning as rationally satisfying as possible. This is Hegel's logical proof for construing both human history (whose development, for Hegel, is structured by the evolution of our communal worldviews and the communal ways of life that they make possible) and the history of philosophy (philosophy itself being just a product of a community or way of life that reflects upon itself) as a rational, self-unfolding system. To the extent that both are products of us as rational creatures, they, too, stand in the logical space of reasons and therefore should organically grow as we are impelled to make discourses as meaningful as possible.

That we are impelled to move forward in the logical space of reasons towards greater and greater intelligibility entails that when we, in Hegel's logic, move from category to category, we are exploring the rational instinct or drive that is our biological distinction. In ideally dramatizing discourse, it shows us, in more down-to-earth terms, why we, as rational creatures, are discontent with unclarity, indistinctiveness, and the abstract and thus strive for greater clarity, distinctiveness, and concreteness. For when we, by way of illustration, see something indistinguishable in the distance; when we find a conversation ambiguous; when we discover that a scientific model leaves portions of a phenomena in mystery; when we come to believe that the values that make up our sociopolitical landscape are in internal tension with one another; or when it now seems to us that the artistic, religious, or philosophical justifications of our ways of life have started to feel stale—in all such cases, and many others, we cannot stand by, but are impelled by

an internal compulsion, often instinctive and unconscious, to go investigate further with our eyes; to bring in finer distinctions when we notice a confused face; to revise our models; to opt for new values; or to push the historical products of spirit in radically new directions. We always search for more adequate conceptual language to make the things around us and ourselves as intelligible as possible to us. In Hegelian parlance, there is an inborn “negativity” in our comportment, a critical, self-reflective attitude that forces us to constantly hold the claims that we make up to the utmost standard of rational rigour, whether it be in our very perception, our conversations, or our more technical discourses. And Hegel’s logic describes the instinctive categories that correspond to the specific need for rational satisfaction that is the originating factor of such distinctively human experience.

Put differently, as beings biologically “thrown” into thinking, to borrow a Heideggerian turn of phrase, as the defining feature of who we are, we always seek to know why things around us appear the way they do or who we are. We are forced, thanks to our rational instinct or drive, to say more and more about our experience until it comes into full intelligibility, for as soon as our experience has begun we are already trying to build an interpretation of the natural and human worlds. Even a neonate, therefore, in scanning objects and people, is already creating a universe of meaning and not just reacting blindly to stimuli. For Hegel, there is therefore nothing accidental or contingent about the quest for meaning in human existence. We never become interested in accumulating random bits of knowledge, having political opinions, or deciding to be scientists, artists, religious devotees, or philosophers simply due to some arbitrary personal choice or cultural influences. We *all* ask questions that force us to broach these themes, even if only marginally in a self-conscious fashion in the course of our lives, insofar as we are all instinctively driven to have some comprehension of the what, how, why, and whither of things and ourselves

2.7 Understanding Hegel’s deduction: logic and experience

There is, in this manner, nothing mysterious about the so-called “dialectical deduction” of the categories in Hegel’s logic. It begins with the observation that we are rational creatures that instinctively create a universe of meaning because of a distinctively human interest in

meaning. However, to instinctively create such a universe signifies that we must, at the level of an innate behaviour, just know what does and does not count as rationally satisfying within that universe, what supports our claims and what threatens them, similar to how an ant just knows what is and is not a solid underground tunnel. By appealing to this instinctive knowledge through which we assess the intelligibility of experience, his deduction just makes explicit the implicit awareness of the norms of thinking that we all exhibit throughout our lives.

All this has two interrelated implications, according to Hegel, for how we are to conceive logic. On the one hand, it entails that that logic, as the making explicit of the implicit awareness that we have of the norms of thinking, norms that we instinctively follow in our human life, *presupposes* that life in all its rich, manifold experiential “shapes” (*Gestalten*).¹⁰⁵ Methodologically, this implies that his logic presupposes the *Phenomenology*, namely its proof that “the concept” (*SL*, 29/*GW*, 21: 33) is the “element” of human existence (*PS*, 490 §805/*GW*, 9: 432). When we transition from phenomenology to logic, we transition from the demonstration that rationality has been at work in human experience *all along* to the description of the basic normative structure of the rationality that is now recognized as *the existential matrix* of these shapes. Only this proof gives us a true understanding of logic and its anthropological mission. On the other hand, it entails that, in order to describe the basic normative structure of our life, Hegel’s logic must *abstract* from the life that this normative structure in fact governs, but without which it would be nothing. We must, as it were, hold the realm of human experience that our rationality freely and spontaneously creates at a distance if we are to distil its essence.

This abstractive gesture has a drastic consequence for the reach of Hegel’s logic. The norms whose implicit awareness in us that it makes explicit cannot, because they make up the basic biological form of rational life that we instinctively lead, be separated from the realm of experience in which this life is actually led. So, while Hegel’s logic *only* concerns itself with the norms of thinking—as any work in logic should do, whose major goal is to grasp the *form* rather than the *empirical content* of thought—it recognizes that there is something misleading about doing so. The point of Hegel’s logic is that the truth

¹⁰⁵ Cf. chapters 12 and 13 of Harris, *Hegel’s Ladder*, 1997.

of rationality lies in its *actualization* (*Verwicklung*) in our experience, so that thinking, when taken in abstraction from that actualization as it indeed must be in logic, *is deprived of its effective reality*. It is, as Hegel famously says, “the realm of shadows” (*SL*, 37/*GW*, 21: 42). Consequently, insofar as rationality is the “simple life pulse” of experience (*SL*, 17/*GW*, 21: 15),¹⁰⁶ it only has consequence in that experience and the universe of meaning that breathes life into it; and, to continue the metaphor, logic is, ultimately, the “dead bones of a skeleton” (*SL*, 12/*GW*, 21: 10; cf. *SL*, 32/*GW*, 21: 37), a mere glimpse into the vivacity of the human life-world that it makes possible, namely “spirit which is [the] vital concrete unity [of the logical forms of thinking]” (*SL*, 27/*GW*, 21: 32). To gain knowledge of this unity, we can only turn to the latter, that is, to the historical drama of rationality searching for meaning in individuals and their communities. As Hegel already said in the conclusion of the *Phenomenology*, “to each abstract moment of Science corresponds a shape of manifest Spirit as such. Just as Spirit in its existence is not richer than Science, so too it is not poorer either in content. To know the pure concepts of Science in this form of shapes of consciousness constitutes the side of their reality.” (*PS*, 491 §805; translation modified/*GW*, 9: 432)

We can illustrate this idea by means of an example taken from non-logical normative practices. A detailed study of the legal code of a country and its history may give us knowledge of the communally recognized values in virtue of which legal decisions are reached. Nevertheless, knowledge of these norms cannot tell us anything about how juridical proceedings and the administration of law in fact unfold, nor their impact on people and society, even though their very purpose is to be the existential matrix of these practices as that which uphold justice. The very point of studying law is to see how it comes to bear upon particular cases in a way that cannot be deduced from the generality of law and, indeed, how it changes over time. To fully comprehend law, we must see it actualized in legal life with all its vicissitudes. Similarly, the rationality formally outlined by logic only becomes more than a mere skeleton insofar as we see it is fleshed out in our conscious, self-conscious, scientific, and sociohistorical experience as participating in an evolving

¹⁰⁶ For a similar point, drawn from a discussion of logical method, which is itself the purest articulation of the basic normative structure of rationality, see di Giovanni, “Introduction,” liii.

universe of meaning, the potentially never-ending drama of our thinking quest to understand nature, our place in it, and ourselves—this experience and this quest being what it makes in the first place possible in all its twists and turns.

This, of course, is not to deny the worthiness of logic as an investigation into our “logical nature” (*SL*, 17/*GW*, 21: 15). But philosophically, it serves to remind us how, in studying logic, there should always be, as it were, a going back and forth from the basic normative structure of the rationality that it describes and the meaning-driven experience of which it is the existential matrix, just as much as, in the study of experience and its rich, manifold shapes, there should always be recourse to logic.¹⁰⁷ The two are so intimately intertwined that neither is to be taken in isolation if logic and experience are to come into their own. Moreover, existentially, this going back and forth guarantees logic is not just a theoretical exploration of our essence. While we may have no need for logic as a discipline in order to be the kind of creatures of thought that we are, the more aware we are of these norms, the more effectively we can follow them in our experience, the more rational our behaviour becomes—the more we become *actually* what we are *implicitly* (*SL*, 17/*GW*, 21: 15-16):

The object of our study in these lectures is to gain knowledge of thinking, to know what we as thinking beings are. A human being is *spirit*, and to come to know what lies therein is our highest achievement. Whatever a human being is, we are truly human only insofar as we know who we are. (*LL*, 6/*GW*, 23.2: 657)

By theoretically describing the rationality of human experience, the anthropological task of Hegel’s logic is, therefore, also practical. With it, we can begin to live the rational form of biological life that is our own and whose essence it distils to the fullest, for here and here alone can that life come to a self-conscious intelligence of its inborn nature and act in complete accord with it. As such, Hegel’s logic is a work of education or cultivation (*Bildung*), of enlightenment. It seeks to bring us to rational maturity, forming us so as to participate in our rational odyssey the best we can. Put differently, it is a work of Western

¹⁰⁷ For an argument that advances the same thesis, but from the standpoint of the *Phenomenology*, see di Giovanni, “How Necessary Is the Phenomenology for Hegel’s Logic.”

wisdom—and, like any true work of wisdom, its import exists not principally in a set of doctrines, but in how it is lived. As we now transition into Hegel's discussion of logic properly stated, we have to keep this in mind.

Chapter 3: Objective Logic: Defining Our Experiential Universe of Meaning

In the Objective Logic, Hegel deduces all the categories—the fundamental concepts of objects in general—that we *bring to* experience in order to make it intelligible. These categories have two major dimensions. On the one hand, they define the ideal schematizations of the various kinds of objects that we may recognize experientially, ranging in degree of complexity from “being,” “nothing,” and “becoming” to “reciprocity.” Respectively, these categories establish what counts as a simple object that is just *there* in the here and how of experience, a mere “this!” or “that!” in a rhapsodic play of such qualitative unities, and what counts as an intricate object comprising substances that conspire together to produce a self-sufficient *system* of which they are a mere moment. In this sense, Hegel’s Objective Logic is the formal outline of the blueprints of a *universe of meaning*, a universe populated with diverse kinds of entities (qualities, quantities, and essences) and which we, in creating, inhabit. Put differently, it distills the basic *structure of human experience*: how we in our average everyday existence live in an intelligible world of things and ourselves with qualities and which stand under formal rules and relate to one another in as substances caught in causal nexuses.

On the other, the categories generate and sustain the universe of meaning by being used in language. This implies that human experience displays an intimate bond with the latter: since to be consciously aware of something is, for Hegel, to be aware of what it is, *experiential* content is always already *conceptually articulated* content, the most rudimentary articulations of which are provided by the categories. In this regard, in defining the ideal schematizations of the objects that we can recognize experientially, Hegel’s Objective Logic is a theory of discourse in two interconnected ways. (1) It lays down the fulfilling conditions that must be met for anything whatsoever to be taken as an instantiation of the kind of object that any given set of categories define, thereby setting the *a priori* norms of meaning that structure particular types of discourse (those about qualities, quantities, and essences). (2) In conceptually moving from one set of categories to another, it seeks to demonstrate how certain sets of categories lay down the fulfilling conditions for the valid employment of other, more complex categories. To speak broadly,

in the conceptual movement of the categories of “being” to those of “essence,” we discern how it is only once a subject matter has been initially determined as a qualitative “this” or “that” that we can legitimately start to determine it through the introduction of quantities, which themselves pave the way for legitimately determining why something essentially is the way it is. Insofar as the categories *take up* (“sublate,” *aufheben*), that is, qualify, build upon, and expand one another, to introduce a certain category too quickly or too late in discourse would constitute a conceptually invalid move in the progressive development of our conscious awareness of something in the universe of meaning that we create and inhabit. In other words, the Objective Logic is an account of how human experience is made possible by the fundamental concepts of language and how they are dynamically employed in relation to one another.

While Hegel’s formal outline of the universe of meaning is solely logical, we have to recall that logic is, for him, strictly speaking anthropological (and not just a transcendental idealism or philosophy of mind and language). The categories that it describes are those categories that we possess in virtue of being rational animals: creatures that use their unique natural capacity of “spirit” (thought, discourse, or theoretical mindedness) to navigate our environment, just as dogs navigate their own through their equally unique natural capacity of smell. The categories are, as Hegel continuously reiterates, instincts or drives implanted in us and, like all instincts or drives, are innate patterns of behaviour (i.e., those that make up thinking) that direct our behaviour towards a goal (the recognition of objects), demand satisfaction (the production of intelligibility), and, when their satisfaction cannot be attained, are a source of tension (existentially necessitating the production of new intelligibilities). Consequently, in the conceptual movement of the categories we, as logicians, also give witness to the rational interests that structure our behaviour as life-forms who need to produce and consume reasons just as others need to eat, drink, and copulate: the kinds of intelligible presences we are always on the lookout for in the natural and human worlds to make sense of them via an inborn conceptual reflex; why certain intelligible presences are rationally unsatisfying and impel us to dig deeper in our search for meaning; and ultimately what kind of intelligible presence would present us with the most rationally satisfying account of the things around us and

ourselves. In short, the universe of meaning that the Objective Logic formally outlines is what supports distinctively human experience and the activities associated with it.

It is worth noting at the outset that Hegel's Objective Logic possesses, in addition, another speculative side. It undertakes three metaphysical commitments on the basis of transcendental considerations. (1) The opening movement from the categories of "being" and "nothing" to those of "becoming" maintains, contra Parmenides, Spinoza, and the young Schelling, that being *is in becoming*. (2) The Doctrine of Essence battles against any *two-world metaphysics*. (3) The transition from the Objective to the Subjective Logic argues for *radical human freedom*, which entails an anti-Spinozist vision of our relation to nature.

3.1 The categories of being, nothing, and becoming: the logical Big Bang of experience

The guiding thought of Hegel's "absolute" idealism, the doctrine that we never *exit* discourse (that there is no external support of truth, namely, some readymade material that somehow makes our claims about things and ourselves true), is that there is nothing in our conscious experience that is pre-conceptually given, whether the latter be raw sensations or some other type of intuitively delivered data (Platonic, ethical, religious, or what have you). Because *conscious* experience consists in the *awareness* of something, something is only significantly present to us inasmuch as its content is always already conceptually articulated: "Because we are thinking beings, thinking is in everything" (*LL*, 5; my translation/*GW*, 23.2: 656). As Kant had argued, "intuitions without concepts are blind" (A51/B75). As a result, even if we *physiologically* react to sensory stimuli, such a reaction is never sufficient for an *experience* of it—experience, or at least distinctively human conscious experience—begins for Hegel with the work of conceptualization.

This is because, on Hegel's account, to be aware is to know, even if only instinctively, what something is. But for it to be intelligible as whatever it is, we must thereby introduce conceptual distinctions, which themselves come in two types: material incompatibilities and material inferential consequences. By way of illustration, already when we *see* snow falling from our window on a wintry morning, we are *directly* aware that it is not rain, sleet, or hail, even though these are all types of precipitation, and also

that it is cold and likely icy outside. *Whenever* we experience anything at all, we are thus already oriented within such a nexus of conceptual distinctions, which interrelate in a system. For us humans, sentience is, according to Hegel, thus overwritten by sapience: our experience is made possible by the conceptual distinctions that make things and ourselves intelligible. His Objective Logic is therefore concerned with elaborating the basic conceptually articulated *forms* of the various kinds of fundamental objects that make up the *content* of our experience, the most elementary conceptual distinctions (what he calls “categories” and “thought-determinations”) that we can logically draw: what exactly we are aware of when we recognize something to be a “quality,” “quantity,” or “essence” of a certain type by defining what it means for something to be a such and such. It does so by establishing how any given set of categories, the formal outline of an object in general, has the intelligible structure it has insofar as it relates conceptually to other categories, whereby, in recognizing its existential instantiation, we also recognize all those relations that constitute it.

In this fashion, Hegel begins the Objective Logic by reflecting on what must be the most primitive conceptual distinction we can draw in order to be aware of something in experience. According to him, this is a distinction that claims that something straightforwardly *is* whatever it is immediately in the here and now of experience, an experiential content formally outlined by the category of “being.” This entails that the most elementary type of discourse we can embark upon for something to be made to re-exist as meaningful is one in which, confronted with the otherwise subjective array of sensory data that we are being bombarded with, something directly present in this array is objectively picked out. As Hegel argues: “If we take the simplest of sensory judgments—for example, the rose is red—what lies before consciousness is[, so it would seem,] totally sensory. Yet the *is* in this judgment is already something of a different and non-sensory nature. There is nothing sensory about *being*, it is already something quite different.” (*LL*, 2/*GW*, 23.2: 654) The reason for this is that “being” gives voice to a universal characteristic that belongs just as much to *this* object as *other* objects, a structure that makes it objective rather than pejoratively subjective, and on the basis of which alone other determinations can be adduced in it (such as, in Hegel’s example, this rose being red). This constitutes the *first* step for thinking in that the mere recognition that something is, is too poor (in Hegelese,

too “abstract”) to need to depend upon others to advance its claim. It defines the *absolute minimum* that we must acknowledge for something to be an object.¹⁰⁸ It is, as Hegel says, “presuppositionless.” That is, any other types of conceptual distinction that we could draw, like those governed by the categories of “quality,” “quantity,” or “essence,” would be too rich (too “concrete”) to be the logical *beginning* of discourse: their introduction is only legitimate insofar as they qualify, build upon, and expand the distinctions laid down by previous categories, so that these categories and the discourses that they make possible all require prior conceptual mediation to perform their semantic function; they presuppose too much to be that which gets the activity of giving meaning off the ground.

However, to *merely* recognize that something is, is to recognize *nothing determinate* about it at all (*SL*, 59/*GW*, 21: 69). For anything that is an object *is* something, after all, but such a determination fails to tell us anything *about* what it is, *what* exactly distinguishes it from all other things, inasmuch as there is a sense in which everything objectively present is. As such, the discourse of “being” is conceptually indistinguishable from the discourse of “nothing,” the type of discourse that we embark upon whenever we wish to determine something as “complete emptiness, complete absence of determination and content” (*SL*, 59/*GW*, 21: 69). In other words, while the acknowledgement that something is may be the logical *beginning* of discourse, the logical problem that discourse runs into is how to successfully differentiate a contentful determination of a subject matter (“being”) from an empty one (“nothing”): what is at stake are the most rudimentary conditions of possibility of cognitively significant content in terms of our discourse about and hence experience of things and ourselves.¹⁰⁹

Hegel’s point is that the unity of “being” and “nothing” does not bring the process of conceptualization to a halt, but instead is that which sets it in motion. Put differently, there is no logical inconsistency in the simultaneous application of these categories to understand what something is. The reason for this is that the putatively contradictory

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-Examination*, 153.

¹⁰⁹ See the interesting reading proposed by Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels analytische Philosophie*, 107ff. On his account, “being” and “nothing” represent the general structure of assertion (*Sein* as the class of all predicative judgements of the type “S is...”) and denial (*Nichtsein* as the class of all predicative judgement of the type “S is not...”) and Hegel’s task is to unearth the logical criteria that supply their truth conditions.

predication is what calls discourse to *say more* about the thing in question in order to stave off the possible contradiction.¹¹⁰ Presumably, our initial experiential encounter with an object would be one without any further determination other than the fact that it shows itself as being something that commands our existential attention. If we could not, however poorly, first be aware that something *is* and if there were not something rationally unsatisfying about being aware of *mere* being, then we would not have any semantic impetus to *go on* to determine it more richly *as such-and-such an object*. The originally problematic unity of “being” and “nothing” is consequently the “drive” for further determination (*EL*, 139 §87 Remark/*GW*, 20: 124), the inner compulsion to more adequately define what we mean (*die bloße Meinung*) when we are aware of something in experience for the first time (*EL*, 141 §88/*GW*, 20: 125; cf. *LL*, 90-91/*GW*, 23.2: 722).¹¹¹ As a result, this discursive “misfiring” programmatically sketches the conceptual movement of Hegel’s logic, the intrinsically dynamic nature of thinking that it seeks to capture: while a given set of categories may not be, on its own, rationally satisfying, other sets can, insofar as they creatively take up a theme broached up the previous, resolve the logical problems of relative unintelligibility that upset our quest for meaning and lead to greater and greater rational satisfaction.

If all the content of human experience is conceptually articulated, then the logical beginning of *discourse* is also the logical beginning of our *experience* of something, its “Big Bang,” as it were. Since this object is still too vague to be something of which we are determinately aware, it is therefore a question of what kinds of additional conceptual distinctions must be drawn for us to be more fully recognizant of it as an object of experience. Hegel’s argument is that it is only to the extent that “being” and “nothing” are conceived of as moments of “becoming” that they can be given discursively specifiable content. For without this broader ontogenetic context, we cannot be aware of what exactly makes an object stand out as a particular, determinate instance of “being”: while everything *is*, it is only by *coming* or *ceasing to be* whatever it is—by keeping, gaining and/or losing

¹¹⁰ di Giovanni, “Introduction,” xxxviii.

¹¹¹ Hegel also makes the same point later in the Objective Logic apropos another set of categories: “it is in the drive [of reason] for such abstractions to disappear (*LL*, 155; my translation/*GW*, 23.2: 762)

determinations while retaining an identity—that it *meaningfully* distinguishes itself from other things.¹¹² To return to a shape internally explored in the *Phenomenology*, Hegel is here describing both why the farmer’s wife’s experience of sense-certainty, her conviction in the immediate givenness of her livestock on her farm, had to fail and what implicitly supported that conviction all along: nothing is simply there in experience; things and ourselves can only be made significantly present insofar as the shifting nature of objects are held together in language.¹¹³

As the first *self-contained* category,¹¹⁴ “becoming” is therefore the most basic norm of meaning capable of establishing a discourse in which we can make effective conceptual distinctions. In short, it is the very groundwork for the formula of the rationality¹¹⁵ of experience since it is only by appeal to it that our experience can be concretely *about* something. As such, as we conceptually move through the categories of “quality,” “quantity, and “essence,” the task of Hegel’s Objective Logic will be to make explicit the various kinds of unity implicitly involved in the category of “becoming” by deducing all the manners that we can be aware of “being” as falling apart, holding itself together, or fully containing itself in its becoming in the various types of discourses that can weave its moments into one conceptual narrative. As Hegel says: “All further logical determinations besides *becoming* itself (existence, quality, and in general all the concepts of philosophy) are therefore examples of this unity.” (*SL*, 62/*GW*, 21: 72; cf. *LL*, 93/*GW*, 723-724)

However, with its transcendental prioritization of the category of “becoming” over “being,” Hegel’s logic also advances a metaphysical commitment. It takes a stand against what is, for Hegel, the major strand of Western metaphysics that begins with Parmenides, finds its consummate expression in Spinoza,¹¹⁶ and whose contemporary representative

¹¹² Cf. di Giovanni, “Introduction,” xxxviii.

¹¹³ See above 1.2.1.

¹¹⁴ As Hegel puts it in an oral addition: “Becoming is the first concrete thought and thus the first concept, whereas being and nothing are empty abstractions” (*EL*, 143 §88 Addition/*GW*, 23.3: 863). That “becoming” is, in many ways, thus the *genuine* beginning of Hegel’s logic has been contended by various interpreters. Cf. Mure, *A Study of Hegel’s Logic*, 39; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel’s Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies* (Yale University Press, 1982), 88ff.

¹¹⁵ Mure says something similar when he speaks of “becoming” as the “*minimale rationale*.” Mure, *A Study of Hegel’s Logic*, 34.

¹¹⁶ That Spinoza was regarded as *the* representative of the major strand of Western metaphysics has historical reasons. In 1785, Jacobi caused an intellectual stir by claiming that Spinoza did what

was Schelling's identity philosophy. According to all these figures, ultimate reality is *monolithic being*, something that just statically is whatever it is fully determined from eternity and in relation to which the realm of becoming, the very domain of human experience, is a mere appearance whose flux falsifies its otherwise complete order. In such a metaphysics, becoming is the source of all epistemic mishaps: because we have a limited perspective on the universe, we have a tendency to take as contingent events what is, from a "God's-eye point of view," only Oneness or a perfectly necessary series that we, if could have access to the whole of reality, would be able, in principle, to logically derive, thereby securing knowledge of the most robust kind imaginable. Hegel's here presents two counterarguments. (1) If being were identical to an unchanging One comprising all, the substance that is everything, or the totality of the universe, it would have *no* cognitively significant, determinate content. It would be, as he puts it apropos the Schellingian Absolute, "the night in which [...] all cows were black" (*PS*, 9 §16/*GW*, 9: 17). "Being" can only be meaningfully predicated of something in becoming. (2) There is nothing irrational about becoming: "It might be replied that becoming cannot be grasped conceptually [...]. There is no difficulty here" (*LL*, 89/*GW*, 23.2: 721). Consequently, inasmuch as his logic provides an epistemology compatible with becoming, it shows us transcendently that, unless we take being *as constitutively in becoming*, the possibility of knowledge of any conceptually determinate is rendered impossible.¹¹⁷

3.2 The categories of quality: the structure of sensory experience

The logical problem that now presents itself is which conceptual distinctions must be drawn to make our experience of "becoming" more fully intelligible. This work is done by the introduction of the categories of "quality," for something caught in change is first determinable as something that shows itself as a "this," yet at the exact moment that it

no other philosopher in our tradition dared to do: to push reason and its requirement that everything has a cause to its limits, no matter how difficult these conclusions might existentially be—even the denial of individual freedom and, with it, nihilism (a term he coined). This made him the most consistent Enlightenment philosopher who challenged the very assumptions of reason and its potential for reform humanity, two points that all the post-Kantian idealists would agree on. See *The Doctrine of Spinoza*, in Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, ed. and trans. George di Giovanni (McGill-Queen's Press, 1995).

¹¹⁷ I paraphrase di Giovanni, "Introduction," liii. Findlay reads Hegel in an analogous fashion. See Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-Examination*, 158.

emerges as a “this” directly turns into a “that,” giving rise to a rhapsodic play that continues potentially *ad infinitum*, but within which each “this” or “that” constitutes an experientially irreducible and distinctive unity. As such, the categories of “quality” govern those discourses through which we phenomenally *pick out* conceptually atomic, but ephemeral units of content directly there in the flux of experience. The introduction of any other discourse, like that of “quantity” or “essence,” would be a conceptually invalid move because the fulfilling conditions for their introduction have not been met: since these operate by formalizing or explaining the essential principles that underline or produce a given play of qualities, such operations can only be effective if something is first conceptually determined according to the “thises” and “thats” that make up “what” it is. Put differently, the categories of “quality” tell us the standards that must be met for the valid application of various kinds of primitive concepts that are *descriptive* in nature.¹¹⁸

Picking out points of qualitative unity is, Hegel’s logic here proclaims, therefore the most basic type of self-contained discourse available to us, the most elementary way of talking about “becoming.” In the first instance, to conceptually determine something qualitatively is to determine it as this immediately present “what” (like when we make use of the descriptive concept “line” to pick out one drawn in the sand). This, Hegel says, is all we mean when we talk about something’s “existence” (its *Dasein*), its “quality” or “reality”: such categories set the *a priori* norms in virtue of which we can recognize, in the here and now of experience, any “simple” unity “whose meaning for now proves to be this: to have *become*” (*EL*, 146 §89 Addition/*GW*, 23.3: 864). Such a qualitative unity is simple for two reasons, which unpack two significations of immediacy at this stage in Hegel’s logic. (1) Insofar as for something to exist is for it to be a unity that has ontogenetically emerged in becoming as *this* “what,” its being is *immediately identical* with it. Consequently, were the set of characteristics that make up its determinacy to alter at all, this unity would cease to be (were the tide to erase a portion of the line in the sand, it would no longer be *that* line). (2) For something to exist means for it *to be there* (*da-sein*) as immediately pinpointable. Consequently, any such unity just happens to be found with its

¹¹⁸ Taylor also interprets the categories of “being” as formally outlining the basic normative structure of our descriptive concepts. See Taylor, *Hegel*, 233.

distinctive set of characteristics, whereby it displays an insurmountable facticity that is an affront to our rational interests in account-giving or conceptual mediation.

In this regard, the categories of “quality” describe the structure of the most rudimentary type of conscious experience available to us, our *sensory* experience in which we are confronted with “this!” or “that!”, by analyzing the basic normative structure of the objects that govern those discourses through which we pick out qualities or *gestalts* of them. As a result, any *physiological* meaning “quality” might have is accidental to its *logical* elaboration as a set of categories that define objects in general that we can recognize in experience in discourse:¹¹⁹ they formally outline the elementary conceptual distinctions that we must draw in order to be aware of something as a simple unity and as such include unities that go beyond the mere *qualia* produced by sense organs. This, in turn, leads to a more enhanced conception of sensory experience as operating along the lines established by these categories. By way of illustration, these categories provide the logical syntax for discourses of natural science in which we identify certain “simple types of matter, e.g. oxygen, nitrogen, etc.” and for the discourses of psychology in which we observe character traits (cf. *EL*, 146 §90 Addition/ *GW*, 23.3: 865). In the former, the simple types of nature are immediately picked out in experience insofar as they are detected in a laboratory: we single out this or that element and what each is. In the latter, we detect distinctive character traits (loving, assertive, etc.), largely as they come and go in our experience of a person.

Nevertheless, the categories at hand are logically scant because the task of discursively picking out qualities or *gestalts* of qualities in experience runs into a two-fold logical problem. On the one hand, “[o]n account of this simplicity, there is nothing further to say about quality as such” (*SL*, 85/*GW*, 21: 98). By *merely* picking out standalone simple unities, these discourses are not very cognitively informative: we can only list ephemeral unities. On the other, in picking them out we also *isolate* them from a broader ontogenetic context of other unities that have come to be or ceased to be that is presupposed.

To make such simple objects more fully intelligible, we must therefore bring into play a new type of discourse that, in picking out *one* quality or *gestalt* of qualities, simultaneously situates it in reference to *others* from which it is distinct. In more Hegelian

¹¹⁹ Cf. di Giovanni, “Introduction,” xxxvii.

terms, to be aware of “what” something qualitatively *is* (its “reality”), we must also, implicitly at least, be aware of “what” it is *not* (its “negation”) if we are to be more adequately aware of what “being” so determined means. Or, as Hegel explains the matter, recasting a Spinozist metaphysical insight into a semantic register, “all determination is negation” (*SL*, 87/*GW*, 21: 101). This can only be accomplished by the introduction of the self-referential categories of “something” and “other” and their further determinations (as “being-in-itself” and “being-for-other,” and ultimately “limit”). For what we mean by “something” is precisely something that exists amidst a background of other things that it is not, either as something that excludes other things, has its own distinctiveness but shares some features with other things, or has qualitative limits it cannot transgress without becoming something else. Here, “something” is not picked out and defined on its own; its very meaning contains, in how we are aware of what it is, a network of distinctions and references to other things and their being and vice versa in an elaborate system that is navigated whenever such awareness occurs.

In other words, Hegel is describing the process of rudimentary concept formation. As an example, we may think of what it would have been like for the first humans to acquire colour concepts. In the first instance, they would have had to pick out, say, *this* “red” and *that* “blue.” It is only in the second instance that they would have been able to start drawing connections between them as materially incompatible or as having as a material inferential consequence of both being a colour. Of course, by the time our conscious experience starts we have already absorbed a conceptual system that itself stands at the end of a long history, whereby the vast majority of our everyday and scientific descriptive concepts already have such complex internal relations between one another. Nevertheless, Hegel’s *Objective Logic* is describing the kinds of conceptual moves that discourse must make in order to validly develop such connections between concepts, connections that we take for granted in the intelligible structure that our experience displays.

Accordingly, the conceptual movement of the beginning categories of “quality” unearth how the use of our descriptive concepts becomes more and more cognitively informative to the degree that they can perform more and more and differing kinds of *contrastive functions*. And as these functions increase in size and complexity, when we recognize an object as determined by them our experience also increases in depth as our

awareness, now oriented within a nexus of conceptual distinctions, becomes ever more sophisticated thanks to what these concepts materially imply: how an object being whatever it is means it cannot be something else, how it is unique but similar to others, and the kinds of qualitative determinations that it may gain or lose without becoming something different.¹²⁰ Let's expand upon Hegel's example of a meadow (*EL*, 147-148 §92 Addition/*GW*, 23.3: 866). If our discourse is developed enough to count as under the jurisdiction of the norms of meaning currently at play, in saying of something that it conforms to what we mean by "meadow," we do not merely pick out something as directly there in the here and now, but, in picking it out as "this!" or "that!", the content of our experience is already articulated by a vast network of conceptual relations. That is, in being aware of the meadow in such a manner, we are aware that it is not like other things (that it is not a forest, a pond, etc.). But we are furthermore aware of the limits within which it would remain a meadow (e.g., if a fence was constructed around it or new flowers sprouted on it) and outside of which it would become something else (if, say, numerous trees grew in it, it would be a forest, while if tremendous amounts of water were added to it, it might become a pond). The upshot of Hegel's analysis is therefore that the most commonplace discourses of sensation where we *pick out* stuff in experience are always already *conceptually artful* discourses, ones that only differ from more obviously abstractive and reflective discourses, like those of "quantity" or "essence," in terms of the degree of the conceptual art, the types of conceptual distinctions, that can come into play. In the various divisions of Hegel's Objective Logic and in the movement from one category to another therein, we are thus dealing with a *continuum*, rather than *kinds*, of intelligibility.¹²¹

As a result, we see how, for Hegel, already at the level of sensory experience we create and inhabit a conceptually articulated universe of meaning. His analysis of the categories of "quality" therefore has an important philosophical consequence: since these categories are how we pick out various sensory objects in experience, they indicate how

¹²⁰ Brandom is therefore quite correct in saying that this is one of Hegel's chief conceptual achievements. See Robert B. Brandom, "Some Pragmatist Themes in Hegel's Idealism: Negotiation and Administration in Hegel's Account of the Structure and Content of Conceptual Norms," *European Journal of Philosophy* 7, no. 2 (1999): 174.

¹²¹ Cf. di Giovanni, "Introduction," xxxvii.

our sensory discrimination is radically set apart from that of animals.¹²² Both humans and animals classify their environment (animals, after all, divide up the world into what is edible and inedible, safe and hostile, a good vs. bad contender for a mate, etc.). But while animals may seem to recognize *x* by accordingly changing their behaviour in every case of sensorily encountering it, they do not, like us, in sensing also navigate a web of truth-functional beliefs about it. Whereas animals display a *reliable differential response* in their behaviour, we, in our conscious experience of sensory objects, implicitly *understand* what we are responding to *as* whatever we take it to be—and it is this understanding that dictates our behaviour itself. In the terms of the *Phenomenology*, the understanding is the deep structure of sense-certainty and perception.¹²³ And this implies that there is a normative dimension built into our sensory experience of the world: animals simply do what they do under certain conditions such that there is nothing right or wrong about their regular, patterned behaviour—they are just instinctively driven to act in response to certain stimuli; we, on the other hand, are instinctively driven, as rational creatures, to hold ourselves and others responsible in discourse to the valid application of our concepts, the rudiments of which are set by the categories, and thus to getting the most truth-apt “sensation” that we can.

Although conceptually determining something qualitatively generates and sustains a universe of meaning, there is nonetheless a logical problem with the universe of meaning as so far defined: there is no guaranteed stability in the objects that populate it. Since all we can do is make *descriptive* claims as to “what” something immediately is—the most complex of which consists in demarcating a qualitative “limit” that it cannot transgress without becoming something else—there is no reason why any given description, when taken on its own, should continue to obtain for any extended period of time. In order to make sense of the incessant shifting nature of its object, the fact that such an object may have “the germ of this transgression in their in-itselfness” (*SL*, 101/*GW*, 21: 116), discourse must thus introduce the category of “finitude”: for something to exist as a qualitative unity is for it to be whatever it is as long as its distinctive characteristics persist in becoming, but

¹²² Here I draw on Brandom’s insightful discussion of the difference between how the human and animal classification of their environment. See, for instance, Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 86–87.

¹²³ See above 1.2.

nothing prevents this thing from perishing.¹²⁴ Given what has been said about “what” something is, in other words, nothing said implies that its “being,” as a play of qualities, could not change at any moment into something else.

This, in turn, reveals a new logical problem. When something transgresses its qualitative limit and becomes something else, the qualitative limit of this something else must be conceptually determined. Since these descriptive concepts, too, only capture “what” something qualitatively is, the process repeats *ad nauseam*. This leaves our recognition of objects in experience not only *shaky* because they might unexpectedly pass from truth to falsehood as these objects come and cease to be, but also leaves our experience *fragmented* because discourse cannot piece all these “whats” that might appear and disappear together into a grander, more coherent conceptual narrative. The precise issue at hand is thus how a play of qualities can be *held together*, how a fuller discourse can be constructed out of them,¹²⁵ one that permits the recognition of greater stability in the becoming of a given subject matter.

To make this play of qualities in which objects are born and die more intelligible, discourse must introduce the category of “infinity,” which formally outlines a new kind of object that we can recognize in experience: something that, even if the distinctive characteristics that make it up *completely* change, nonetheless remains itself inasmuch as there is an *underlying* core unity that persists in a stipulated play of qualities. With this new category, the conceptual emphasis of our discourse radically shifts. In recognizing objects based on their qualities (say, *this* red, *that* meadow), our experience of these objects suffers from instability. However, we can now conceptually determine how something, no matter how its qualities may change, retains its unity. This “infinity” may be “bad” in the sense that it makes intelligible an *indefinite* series of qualitative determinations that run into and fall apart from one another (how the concept “plot of land” allows something to remain being a plot of land even as it transforms from a meadow to a grove, marsh, a construction site, and so on potentially *ad infinitum* as long as it remains land) or “true” in the sense that it makes intelligible a *specified* series of qualitative determinations that run into and fall

¹²⁴ A similar argument is given by Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, 193.

¹²⁵ I take this succinct summary of the logical problem from di Giovanni, “Introduction,” xxxix.

apart from one another (how the concept “red,” when taken as a phenomenal spectrum, allows us to say of something that it remains red as long as it changes within the terms precisely defined by that spectrum).

However, this shift also implies that the object that we recognize is no longer something *picked out*. Instead, it is *extrapolated* from a series of qualitative determinations. In this fashion, the new norm of meaning set by the category of “infinity” is, for Hegel, therefore to be equated with idealism as such (*SL*, 124/*GW*, 21: 142-143). As something that underlines a whole series of qualitative determinations, it can never be given at once. Nonetheless, inasmuch as it is that which makes sense of what is immediately there, giving it a depth that it otherwise would not have, we must say that *both* said unity *and* its moments are held together by theoretical construct, what Hegel calls an “idealization” or “something idealized” (*das Ideelle*). And since no philosophy has ever been content with the finite, but has searched for the principles that explain it—principles that are not *found* in the here and now of experience, but are *products* of thought that make us aware of something that more truly exists than “this!” or “that!” in front of us—Hegel thus argues that, in this minimalist sense, “[e]very philosophy is essentially idealism or at least has idealism for its principle” (*SL*, 124/*GW*, 21: 142).

Once discourse shifts its conceptual emphasis from “what” something is to its underlying core unity, the conceptual move to a higher level of formal reflection is required in order to make such an object more fully intelligible. For now that we have conceptually determined an object to the point that it exhibits an indefinite or specified series of qualitative determinations, the logical status of all such conceptual distinctions concerning qualitative unities are rendered secondary inasmuch as, no matter whatever it may be as a “what,” it remains itself. Such a unity can be more adequately defined by the introduction of the categories of “being-for-itself” and its further determinations (as a “one” and “many” that can be made to stand in relations of “attraction” and “repulsion”), thereby construing the unity at hand as a *continuous* domain made up of *discrete* elements that run into and fall apart from one another. For instance, while the concept “physical body” may make intelligible an indefinite series of objects, we can still break down these objects into arrangements of “atoms,” just as much as we can construct elementary classes out of this domain such as that of natural vs. artificial physical objects. With this new conceptual

move, however, the conceptual move to the categories of “quantity” has already been laid down in that the more adequate definition of a continuous domain made up of discrete elements is one in which such arrangements and classes are explicitly formalized. In short, in the concluding movement of the categories of “quality,” Hegel’s Objective Logic seeks to show how, even if much of our average everyday discourse is qualitative in nature, not only is the more determinate expression of its content ultimately quantitative or formal,¹²⁶ but also that there is an instinct or drive in discourse and hence experience itself to lead us to formalize objects discovered in the here and now in order to make them as intelligible as they can.

3.3 The categories of quantity: the formal structure of everyday and scientific experience

Let’s expand on this latest transition. This new play of discrete *parts* in a continuous *whole* requires the introduction of the categories of “quantity” to be made more fully intelligible. In this sense, there is no absolute distinction between the discourses of “quality” and “quantity”: not only does the former provide the conceptual presuppositions of the latter, but the latter also intervenes in the former to make its underlying core identity more determinate. What the discourse of “quantity” adds to that of “quality”—how it qualifies, builds upon, and expands it—are the *formal rules* that it supplies for interpreting this play. There is—in principle at least (*idealiter*), but not necessarily actually (*realiter*)—no limit to how many parts can be envisaged in a whole, nor are there any restriction as to whether the parts should be, as it were, coarser or finer.¹²⁷ Nevertheless, what matters in “quantity” is the recognition of a formal rule by which these parts are understood in terms of a whole that both precedes and collects together their play as discrete elements of a continuous domain in a play that it defines. Its progressive development is established by the degree to which the formal rule, rather than being subject to *arbitrary manipulation*, instead *fully stipulates* the range of determinations that fall under it in that the play of parts in a whole that it dictates, in their internal reference to one another in that whole, controls itself in advance.

¹²⁶ Cf. di Giovanni, xxxix.

¹²⁷ In the rest of this paragraph, I paraphrase di Giovanni, xxxix–xl.

The most elementary way to conceptually determine an object quantitatively is by the introduction of the category of “pure quantity,” which defines a continuous whole into which discrete parts that can be then qualitatively picked out according to a formal rule. However, inasmuch as the formal rule of “pure quantity” conceptually emphasizes the unity of such a continuum, it is *indifferent* to how it is split up: any attempt to break down the whole into a play of parts is *logically secondary* and hence *accidental* to its domain, making for endless manners of doing so.¹²⁸ Take Hegel’s example of space (*EL*, 157 §99 Remark/*GW*, 20: 136; *SL*, 156/*GW*, 21: 178). Any specification of space assumes space as a general domain. But whether its segments are taken as bigger or smaller is inconsequential: there is nothing in this domain that requires us to construe its continuity in terms of these discrete parts rather than others.

Initially, therefore, the formal rule that defines the range of determinations in the object that it denotes can only provide a continuum into which possible distinctions can enter, making them arbitrary.¹²⁹ To resolve this logical problem, discourse must set in motion conceptual distinctions through which the continuous and discrete moments of a quantified object are no longer asunder, but instead internally refer to one other. The most rudimentary way that this may be accomplished is by the introduction of the self-referential categories of “continuous” and “discrete magnitude.” Think of the concept “colour” as designating, rather than a phenomenal spectrum, said spectrum qua broken down via a formal rule in which both dimensions overlap.¹³⁰ In one connotation, “colour” makes intelligible the visible spectrum of colourfulness. Yet such a whole is only recognized as a continuous magnitude insofar as its *discrete* parts run into one another. In another connotation, “colour” makes intelligible the basic distinct colours that we can see (violet, blue, cyan, green, yellow, orange, and red). Nevertheless, these parts are only recognized as discrete magnitudes to the extent that they divide the visible spectrum of colorfulness

¹²⁸ I take this point from Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels analytische Philosophie*, 155–56.

¹²⁹ In Hegel’s words: “Pure quantity has as yet no limit nor is it as quantum yet. And even inasmuch as it becomes quantum, it is not restricted by limit but consists rather precisely in not being restricted by limit, in having the being-for-itself as a sublated moment in itself. That discreteness is a moment in it can be expressed by saying that quantity is in it the ubiquitous *real possibility* of the one” (*SL*, 155/*GW*, 21: 177).

¹³⁰ Once again, I owe this point to Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels analytische Philosophie*, 157.

into disjunctive parts of equal size that fall apart from within the *continuous* whole of that spectrum. In short, “continuous” and “discrete magnitude” formally outline the same whole except from different conceptual perspectives: one from that of unity and another from that of difference, but whereby each perspective implies the other.

In this manner, to bring into play “discrete magnitude” is to define a “quantum,” a *specified* unit by means of which “continuous magnitude” is composed of “quanta” that continue into one another. This presents a logical problem. By so speaking of “quanta,” we can only refer to an *indeterminate* plurality of parts, which makes any calculation that we might perform on its basis inexact, even if definitive. In order to make “quantum” more fully intelligible, we must therefore introduce the category of “number,” for what makes any given natural number the number that it is (say, 2 rather than 3) is that it is a collection of such specified units ($[x, x]$ versus $[x, x, x]$), what Hegel calls an “amount” of discrete terms that nonetheless, as continuous with each other, make up a “unity.”¹³¹ According to Hegel, the mathematical operations of arithmetic are to be derived from how such “quanta” can be logically manipulated: adding is putting together different “amounts” to make a new “unity”; multiplication occurs when the different “amounts” being put together to make a new “unity” are the same; and squaring is a special instance of multiplication that happens when the “amount” being multiplied is equal to the “unity.” Subtraction, division, and the square root are the inverse of these three operations. Hegel hereby believes that one of the most important achievements of his logic is that it shows how all these operations are not “contingent ways of treating numbers” (*EL*, 161 §102 Remark/*GW*, 20: 137), but necessarily follow from the basic normative structure of “number” itself.

With these new conceptual moves, Hegel advances two separate theses, one concerning the presuppositions of the use of mathematical operations in experience and the other concerning the nature of mathematics. The first has to do with acts we just do instinctively such as ask and answer questions of the sort “How many x are there?” While we, in average everyday existence, take ourselves to simply pick out and count one by one

¹³¹ As Houlgate and Harris point out, the idea of number as an amount of units is of Greek origin. See Stephen Houlgate, “Hegel on the Category of Quantity,” *Hegel Bulletin* 35, no. 1 (May 2014): 22, <https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2014.2>; Harris, “Lecture Notes for Course on Hegel’s Encyclopedia Logic,” 44.

immediately given objects, Hegel argues that we can only do so where a robust level of formalization has already entered into the structure of experience: to count something requires that we have already conceptually determined a continuous domain via a formal rule that breaks it down into discrete elements. By way of illustration, if our formalized system of “matter” as divided into different types (inanimate vs. animate with a plethora of sub-divisions) did not inform our experience, we could not be aware of their being two cats in the room.

The second is bolder. Hegel is attempting to derive the foundations of mathematics from logic, just as later Frege as well as Whitehead and Russell would also try with admittedly starkly different conceptions of logic. As he progresses through the categories of “quantity,” Hegel will go on to deduce ordinal numbers, ratios, irrational numbers, and even calculus by deducing all the possible relations between “quanta.” But to say that mathematics has its source in logic is, for Hegel, to also say that our natural language, inflected by definition by the categories formally outlined by logic,¹³² is intrinsically mathematical in nature. While it may not work with the full-blown repertoire of formulas and theorems that we see in mathematics as a discipline, the conceptual moves that we make in everyday speech will always have a tendency to make use of its basic operations. Put differently, mathematics constitutes an irreducible structure of our experience—one that we fail to recognize because of how much we instinctively deploy it to make sense of things and ourselves.

After “number” has been introduced, a new conceptual move is licensed that permits us to conceptually determine “quantity” in a new way: through the categories of “intensive magnitude” or “degree” and “extensive magnitude.” Such a formal rule consists in taking some arbitrarily selected, but specific quantum as a standard with which we can measure objects based on a correlation between what is being measured and what serves as the scale of measurement. As such, these categories lay down the groundwork for ordinal numbers: the meaning of “intensive magnitude” is no longer determined by an “amount” and “unity,” but instead by where it stands in the scale of measurement that these categories define. The idea is that, once we take a defined quantum as a base unit, we can use it to

¹³² See above 2.3.

calculate things such as temperature with exactness (*EL*, 163-164 §103 Addition/*GW*, 23.3: 876-878). Consider a household mercury thermometer, which is based on the observation that metals behave in a precise manner in response to heat and cold. We can thereby set a standard such as Celsius: 0 marks where the mercury is in the glass tube at the freezing point of water and 100 where it is at its boiling point. While hotness and coldness are first-person, qualitative experiences, they are here made susceptible to exact calculation by appealing to the discovered correlation. Consequently, thanks to this scale an otherwise subjective phenomenon becomes precisely definable by appeal to an agreed-upon, objective standard for its measurement. That we adopt one standard (Celsius) over another (Fahrenheit) is, of course, arbitrary; but this does not matter because the play of parts that is the basis of the scale is not open to arbitrary manipulation.

At this logical conjuncture, Hegel brings into play the categories of quantitative “infinity.” The basic normative structure of “intensive magnitude” or “degree” is such that any given number is determined by where it stands in an ordinal series, whereby it acquires its meaning only in reference to the degrees that proceed and precede it. As Hegel says, it has its determinacy “*outside of itself*” (*EL*, 164 §104/*GW*, 20: 139). But since there is nothing in the category of “number” that would permit us to logically close this series at either end, it entails an indeterminable “quantitative progress” and “regress”: to speak of a number is to always already appeal to the *infinite* series of numbers, for we could only intelligently speak of one if we have an iterative rule for producing such a series.

However, this quantitative “infinity” is “bad” in the sense that the whole constituted by such an infinite series of iterative parts is quantitatively *indefinite*. Nevertheless, implicit in “number” is another set of mathematical operations that we are licensed to bring into play. For we can conceptually determine any given number by putting numbers in relation to (*im Verhältnis zu*) one another, thereby determining “number” by itself (*EL*, 167 §105 Addition/*GW*, 23.3: 881). This yields the mathematical “ratios” (*Verhältnisse*): “direct ratio,” $y/x=k$, “inverse ratio,” $xy=k$, and “the ratio of powers,” $x^y=k$. With these conceptual moves, a quantitative “infinity” that is “true” arises. Whereas the former fails to provide a formal rule whereby the play of parts that makes up its infinite series could form a definitive whole, the mathematical “ratios” are unique in that they describe a play of parts in which the terms that make up that play, by internally referring to one another through

mathematical operations, *fully* stipulate the whole of that play.¹³³ Despite the fact that there are infinite values for y and x such that we could never hope to exhaustively enumerative all the possible terms in such a series, any increase or decrease in y will specify a predictable value in x or vice versa as stipulated by their limit k such that the *entire* possible range of determinations that its terms may exhibit are already in principle contained within the equation, making the infinite series quantitatively *definite*.¹³⁴ According to Hegel, the veritable mathematical infinite is therefore not a number greater or lesser than any assignable number. Rather, it is found in how the simplicity and elegance of formulas make fully intelligible an infinite series.¹³⁵ This, in turn, uncovers the logical presuppositions of irrational numbers. Hegel's point is that while the latter cannot be expressed by a simple fraction nor can their precise numerical value be written down, there is nothing quantitatively indefinite about them at all. The formula for, say, pi, Euler's Number, and the Golden Ratio themselves contain, by dint of variables that stand in an exactly defined relation to one another, the infinite series that results whenever we do try to calculate what they are.¹³⁶

With the introduction of quantitatively "true infinity," best illustrated by calculus as that which overcomes the "bad infinity" of infinitesimals and of which Hegel's Objective Logic takes itself to supply the conditions of possibility, the object now being formally outlined has a radically new degree of self-containment, an enhanced "quality," as Hegel puts it. Indeed, Hegel thereby turns mathematics into a science of such *formal relations* rather than a science of *quantity*.¹³⁷ In such formal relations, the play of parts

¹³³ di Giovanni, "Introduction," xl.

¹³⁴ di Giovanni, xlii.

¹³⁵ Pinkard, *Hegel*, 346–47.

¹³⁶ As Hegel puts it: "We may further remark that the fact that there are infinite series that cannot be summed is an external and accidental circumstance in so far as the form of series as such is concerned. Such series contain a higher kind of infinity than do those that can be summed – namely, they contain incommensurability, or the impossibility of displaying as a quantum, even if in the form of a fraction, the quantitative ratio that they contain; it is their form as series which as such entails the determination of the bad infinity present in the series which admits of being summed." (211–212, 21: 246)

¹³⁷ Indeed, Hegel believes that his logical account of the foundations of mathematics gives him resources to resolve problems in the philosophy of mathematics of his time, most significantly how to understand infinitesimals (cf. *SL*, 204–222/*GW*, 21: 236–259). For construing mathematics as a science of quantity leads to a problem: because infinitesimals are not *definitively* quantifiable, it

comprising the whole is no longer susceptible to arbitrary manipulation—their formula forecloses such a possibility in that its terms must relate to one another in the exact way described.¹³⁸ We might, for instance, bring into play a “direct ratio,” as when we measure something’s speed as distance over time ($v = \frac{d}{t}$), an “inverse ratio” as when we measure something’s distance as speed multiplied by time ($d = vt$), a “ratio of powers,” as when we measure something’s acceleration as distance over time squared ($v = \frac{d}{t^2}$), or the “true infinite,” as when we measure something’s instantaneous acceleration as the limit of average acceleration at a given moment in time ($v = \frac{dy}{dx}$). Hegel’s logical point is that the introduction of such formulas in discourse presents us with an important advance in the intelligible structure of experience: the achievement of a robust degree of objectivity. In the first place, since these formal rules are invariant across all possible situations they describe, their results are *reliable*.¹³⁹ Once we, say, calculate the speed of Mars’ rotation around the sun, anyone can, with the same resources at hand, come to the same results as us. In the second place, we can appeal to such formal rules to make *predictions* about how objects will behave in certain situations, even if these are cases with no experiential

made it difficult to understand how its calculations could lead to *definite* results. This problem is perhaps best illustrated by Wolff’s attempt to dismiss it as significant in mathematics, which Hegel mocks: we need to worry about how incredibly small, indefinite numbers make for a precise calculation as much as we need to worry about whether a gust of wind, because it blows off a grain of sand, makes a surveyor’s calculations any less accurate (*SL*, 220/*GW*, 21: 256).

By rendering mathematics into a science of formal relations, Hegel bypasses the issue posed by infinitesimals to its traditional conception as a science of quantities: while dx and dy *cannot* be numerically defined, their ratio dy/dx *can* be because the formula fully stipulates all possible determinations of the play of parts that constitute its whole, even if we cannot exhaustively list all its increments and decrements. As such, we can calculate the slope of a line that touches a curve at any arbitrarily selected point by passing through two points infinitesimally close to the curve. This is worth mentioning given the widespread misconception that Hegel’s philosophy of mathematics is useless, even historically speaking. For example, Russell claims that this is a major deterrent against taking Hegel seriously, contending that Hegel ignored important contemporary developments in that field and even argued for the existence of infinitesimals. Neither is true. Not only is mathematics a major theme throughout Hegel’s philosophical career, but he also taught it while he was the rector of the Nuremberg Gymnasium. For a discussion of Russell’s views on Hegel’s philosophy of mathematics, see Terry Pinkard, *Hegel’s Dialectic: The Explanation of Possibility* (Temple University Press, 1988), 41. For two noteworthy accounts of how Hegel uses his discussion of “quantity” to intervene in the philosophy of mathematics of his time, see Pinkard, 45–52; di Giovanni, “Introduction,” xli–xl.ii.

¹³⁸ di Giovanni, “Introduction,” xl.

¹³⁹ Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels analytische Philosophie*, 193.

precedent. If we know the acceleration of free falling bodies on earth, we can predict how long it would take any object to fall from any given height to the ground. In the third place, this makes possible a *truly shared* universe of meaning, a *common* experience of the world, for disagreement will only arise where we have wrongly chosen the values that enter into the equation or have made a human error in calculation.¹⁴⁰ When we make a claim about the instantaneous acceleration of a plane as it takes off at t_1 , the exact meaning of this claim is clear and distinct to everyone who hears it. It does not matter how differently we may have qualitatively experienced its speed at that moment: the calculation will always trump the latter. In other words, these formulas provide an *ideal matrix of change and alteration*. Yet this is exactly what the mathematical models of the natural sciences aim to do and, accordingly, Hegel now introduces the categories of “measure” in order to unearth the basic normative structure of this type of discourse, describing in detail the most elementary conceptual distinctions that it should make in order to make its formulas more and more intelligible.¹⁴¹

In other words, the net result of the categories of “quantity” has been to make good upon the logical insight proleptically anticipated by the very conceptual movement from those of “quality” to that of “quantity”: namely, how even if most of our average everyday talk is qualitative in nature, the “truth” of that talk, its more determinate expression, is quantitative. In a way counterintuitive to natural consciousness, the discourses of the senses are shown to be fully intelligible only if the qualitative unities that we pick out in experience can be construed as mere moments of more concrete formal unities. As such, Hegel’s philosophical strategy is to emphasize that we can only intelligently speak of qualitative determinations—that is, come to some rational consensus about “what” something is—insofar as our ordinary language either implicitly appeals to such standards or takes them as in principle discoverable. We see this, he believes, in how various discourses are often tacitly structured by the categories of “measure” even if “none of this yields either laws of measures or typical forms of it” (*SL*, 287/*GW*, 21: 328). A salient example is retributive justice (*SL*, 284-85/*GW*, 21: 325-326): punishment is to be

¹⁴⁰ Stekeler-Weithofer, 196.

¹⁴¹ For a detailed discussion, see John W. Burbidge, *Real Process: How Logic and Chemistry Combine in Hegel’s Philosophy of Nature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 27–73.

determined in proportion to the crime committed. While we may not be able always to provide an exact formula of the kind that describes natural phenomena, what matters is that the moment we start speaking we *expect* things and ourselves to be definable according to such formal rules and therefore *attempt* to find them. There is, in brief, always an implied quantitative layering to human experience.

3.4 The categories of essence: the theory-laden structure of experience

The upper-level categories of “quantities” provide the norms of meaning through which we, in discourse, can make the play of qualitative determinations in an object intelligible according to a formula that internally controls the becoming of these determinations. This enables an object to command an evidence over us that it otherwise would not display: because these formulas are reliable and permit us to make predictions, they make for a shared universe of meaning, a common experience—in short, a worldview that knows no exception because it is taken to capture a deep-seated truth of the matter to which we are all beholden. Nevertheless, a logical problem remains. While these categories do enable us to conceptually determine the possible range of qualitative determinations in an object, such formulas are unable to predict how certain quantitative changes can issue into new qualitative determinations that demand formula of their own, giving rise to a potentially endless bad infinity of formulas. For instance, while we may be able to exactly formalize the physical traits of liquid water, nothing in this formalization tells us, in advance of what is encountered in experience, that liquid water will become ice at 0 degrees or gaseous at 100 degrees, thereby gaining new physical traits. Any discourse of this type, as a result, would be relatively opaque, for the object, *by just happening to be determined by these formulas rather than others*, would display an ineluctable facticity. Put differently, while we may understand the *formal structure* of an object, we cannot understand *why* it has the specific configurations that it does at any particular point of its own becoming.¹⁴²

It is a question of what categories must be at our disposal for an object to be more fully intelligible as a play of qualities and quantities. In the categories of “essence” that are now introduced, Hegel describes how we can become aware of the various phases of this

¹⁴² As Mure helpfully explains the transition, we can comprehend *how* the object is what it is, but not *why*. Mure, *A Study of Hegel's Logic*, 79

play as the appearances of an essence that internally controls them from beginning to end, whereby an object is formally outlined whose various determinations no longer fall apart in becoming, but are absorbed by an inner principle. To return to the above example, to make water more intelligible, discourse cannot rest at the level of *picking out* its various traits nor of formally *modelling* its different states—it must *explain* why it necessarily appears as a liquid, gas, or solid in certain environments with these specific formalizable physical properties *because of* its unique chemical structure as H_2O . Hegel’s point is that, through such an explanatory discourse through which we define the very nature of a thing, we do not encounter an essence that grounds such determinations in some transcendent essence “behind” or “beyond” them as, say, in Platonism according to which an otherworldly form structures matter, *adding* content to it that it otherwise would not have. Instead, we encounter an essence that only realizes itself in and through these determinations, becoming itself by structuring them *immanently*. H_2O , for instance, is not an essence external to or ontologically distinct from how it appears: it is precisely the determinations that it contains and it is ultimately nothing but these determinations in their controlled flux. In this fashion, the categories of “essence” qualify, build upon, and expand the previous types of discourse. They provide them with a new depth in which alone the qualitative and quantitative makeup of something, how it is first *immediately given* in the here and now of experience and then formalized by means of *immediately given* rules, becomes truly concrete by extrapolating the process of *mediation* that gives rise to both senses of immediacy because the very definition of “essence” is such that it is identical to them as different moments of its dynamic, complex unity.

The logical insight guiding this conceptual move is that if immediacy is to be fully mediated, a conceptual distinction must be drawn between *a principle of determination* and *the series of determinations that it regulates* wherein both must prove to refer to one another without extra-logical remainder such that the object should leave no question concerning its becoming unanswered. On the one hand, a principle of determination can only be a full-fledged principle if it proves to be that which is responsible for the *entire* movement of determinations of an object. On the other, these determinations must simultaneously show, in their own inner dynamic, that they only come and cease to be by means of a principle that they assume, thereby regulating *themselves* to the status of mere

products of said principle. Indeterminacy as it now arises is measured by the degree to which an explanatory principle of determination, as formally outlined by a category, can explain the series of determinations that it ostensibly directs.

The conceptual movement charted by the categories of “essence” therefore maps, as Hegel says, the basic normative structure of what happens:

when we reflect on a subject matter or (as one would also say) *think it over*. For what matters here is not the subject matter in its immediacy; we want instead to know it as mediated. Indeed, according to the common construal of the task or purpose of philosophy, it is supposed to come to know the essence of things and that simply means that things are not supposed to be left in their immediacy but instead demonstrated to be mediated or justified by something else. The immediate being of things is represented here, as it were, as a crust or as a curtain behind which the essence is hidden. (*EL*, 174 §112 Addition; translation modified/*GW*, 23.3: 887)

However, since the categories are instincts or drives implanted in us, making them not just logical norms but also innate patterns of human behaviour, the categories of “essence” explain why we are, as rational creatures, instinctively driven to ask *big questions* about the things around us and our own lives—why, as Hegel puts it, “a human being as a thinking being is a born metaphysician” (*EL*, 155 §98 Addition 1/ *GW*, 23.3: 871). To play on Sellars’ language, Hegel’s Objective Logic now describes how the distinction between the manifest and the scientific image (our day-to-day consciousness of things and ourselves and our theoretical-explanatory constructions of them) *is written into the very structure of human experience*, rather than being some historical accident or achievement. Insofar as we are bound to measure the intelligibility of experience against the norms of meaning set by these categories, we always *presume* that what appears to us in experience is never the final word¹⁴³ and, more strongly, have a *primal need* or *vital necessity* (*Bedürfnis*) to

¹⁴³ I take this point from John W. Burbidge, *The Logic of Hegel’s “Logic”: An Introduction* (Broadview Press, 2006), 64.

penetrate appearances by discovering their origins in a more essential reality (cf. *EL*, 55 §21 Addition/*GW*, 23.3: 816).¹⁴⁴ Consequently, these categories tell us why we are never rationally satisfied with the here and now of experience, but have a rational interest in explanations of the natural and human worlds as that which go beyond said here and now, the basis of whose conceptual discovery is now furnished and, with this basis, the normativity of the discourses of science, politics, art, religion, and philosophy as those that unpack these worlds. To quote Hegel: “This (the most difficult) part of logic contains pre-eminently the categories of metaphysics and the sciences in general” (*EL*, 177 §114 Remark/*GW*, 20: 145). As such, by making metaphysics and the sciences instincts or drives that we have in virtue of the categories of “essence” that we bring to experience, in his analysis of these categories Hegel is describing the instincts or drives that made speculative reason, as internally explored in the *Phenomenology*,¹⁴⁵ a deep structure of experience.

In the first instance, the most elementary way to conceptually determine something essentially is to distinguish between “the inessential” and “the essential”: to conceive of the immediate being of something, an experiential play of qualities and quantities, as lacking any *self-standing* ontological value, but instead as *dependent* upon an underlying reality that constitutes it and which it masks. The logical problem that discourse here runs into is that since, thanks to the categories in operation, “the essential” is what counts as ultimate and “the inessential” is how this underlying reality is experienced, the latter is more adequately definable as the “*surface* appearance” of a *deeper* “essence” (its “shine,” *Schein*). Due to this, it is always potentially illusory in that it is possible that “surface appearance” is just a *semblance* (another possible translation of *Schein*), that is, how an essence *seems* to us due to our limited experiential perspective. As Hegel remarks, such a way of talking is at the heart of skepticism and certain brands of idealism like that of the Kantian variety: what motivates these philosophical positions is the idea that we can never be sure that how the world looks to us is how it actually is (*SL*, 342-343/*GW*, 11: 246-247).

In order to make such an object more fully intelligible, conceptual distinctions must intervene that enable a differentiation between the two possible meanings of the “surface

¹⁴⁴ See above 2.4.2.

¹⁴⁵ See above 1.4.1.

appearance” of “essence” qua *Schein*: the *positive* “shine” vs. the *negative* “semblance” of the latter. The next conceptual move consists in the realization that “essence” is only genuinely recognizable as a deeper, underlying reality if that reality proves to be that which *structures* the dynamism of its surface appearance. By the same token, “shine” is only genuinely recognizable as the surface appearance of this deeper, underlying reality if the dynamism of this surface appearance *displays* the reality that structures it. In short, both are only recognizable as what they are when the one “reflects” the other, to introduce the category that now enters upon the discursive scene: in isolation from a surface appearance whose change and alteration it controls, a deeper, underlying reality not only has no content, but cannot be said to be intelligibly present. In this respect, while “essence” is construed as that which makes possible our experience of how it appears, this experience is now shown to be not disconnected from it, but instead that which can, as it were, perspectively exhibit it bit by bit if we conceptually determine it properly. By way of illustration, although the moon as a planetary body orbiting the earth is “beyond” our experience, even though it underlines our experience of its waxing and waning, the former is only known as an underlying, deeper reality insofar as it provides the matrix through which all of its appearances make sense precisely as appearances of it.¹⁴⁶

This constitutes Hegel’s unique transcendental argument against skepticism about our access to essential reality. Such a philosophical position, he wagers, only arises from a failure to properly consider the conditions of possibility of a cognitively significant recognition of essence. His point is that there is no need to postulate some fixed term *behind*, *beneath*, or *beyond* appearance: essence, as that which makes intelligible the flux of appearance, is the movement of appearance itself (in Hegel’s words, it is “the movement of nothing through nothing back to itself” [*SL*, 387/*GW*, 11: 292]). Consequently, the categories at our disposal already supply the conceptual requirements for meaningfully distinguishing between a true vs. illusory appearance, one that captures the world and one that falsifies it.

Via the category of “reflection,” “essence” can now be said to shine through its multifarious surface appearances, whereby the latter gains in ontological significance: it is

¹⁴⁶ This point and example comes from Harris, “Lecture Notes for Course on Hegel’s *Encyclopedia Logic*,” 55–56.

no longer a superficial *show*, but *mirrors* a deeper reality. However, a logical problem springs up. Any such talk of “essence” must implicitly assume that it remains constant throughout its surface appearances. To make the object at hand more fully intelligible, the next conceptual move to be undertaken, Hegel argues, is to introduce the twin categories of “identity” and “difference” and their further determinations. On the one hand, an essence must be recognizable in experience as that which is *identical* in *different* expressions of itself, the latter constituting superficial variations of its essential core. On the other, the *identification* of an essence only acquires cognitive significance by *distinguishing* it from the identity of other essences. Take, for instance, the act of recognizing an old friend. To do so, I must be able to identify them, despite how they display different personality traits in varied contexts and their physical appearance has changed over the years, as the same psychological and biological individual that underlies all these alternative forms. However, for this recognition to be cognitively significant when I identify them, I must also, implicitly if not explicitly, know how they differ from other friends, members of the community, living creatures, robots, and so on.

Consequently, to conceptually determine a self-identical essence is, perforce, to imply an entire world of such objects from which it differs. As such, the conceptual relations between these objects must come into purview. In the first instance, “difference” can only have the meaning of a mere “diversity”: we find before us a number of indifferent entities, each self-identical in their own right, and all discourse can do is compare them to one another, discovering how they are “like” and “unlike.” These latter categories, Hegel maintains, are at the foundation of various modern scientific achievements including comparative anatomy and linguistics (*EL*, 181 §117 Addition/GW, 23.3: 891). Nevertheless, “it should also be particularly emphasized that mere comparing still cannot ultimately satisfy the scientific need and that results of the previously mentioned sort are to be considered merely as (to be sure, indispensable) preliminary labours for the sort of knowing that truly comprehends matters.” (*EL*, 181 §117 Addition/GW, 23.3: 892) That is, while discourse must begin by drawing similarities and dissimilarities between objects, which can lead to trivial distinctions such as that between a pen and a camel (*EL*, 182 §118 Addition/GW, 23.3: 892), it is only by using such a comparison as a basis that it can come upon relations of “identity” and “difference” between objects that capture something

ontologically fundamental about them, for it is only by recourse to the latter that significant relations of similarity and dissimilarity, such as that between a pen and a pencil or a camel and a llama, can be made explicit.

A conceptual distinction between trivial and ontologically fundamental relations of “identity” and “difference” is made possible, Hegel contends, through the introduction of the categories of “opposition” and then “contradiction”: “thoughtful reason sharpens, as it were, the blunt difference of diverse terms, the mere manifold of representation, to essential distinction, to opposition.” (*SL*, 384/*GW*, 11: 288) Credit, for instance, is not just *unlike* debt—it is *opposed* to it by its very nature. It is only insofar as these kinds of oppositions are recognized in experience that truly salient information about the relations between essences is made intelligible, for these distinctions give voice to what it means to be such an object locked in becoming: for credit to exist, it must retain its identity *against* the debt with which it is not only materially incompatible, but into which it could turn. Additionally, such a distinction can acquire the further meaning of “contradiction.” An animal, say, is not merely *opposed* to its environment: they stand in a bidirectional relation of *conflict* insofar as both functionally have it out against one another—an animal persists only as long as it wins the fight of survival over its environment that constantly seeks to undo it just as much as it seeks to transform it into itself. “Contradiction” is, as Hegel says, thus “the root of all movement and life; it is only insofar as something has a contradiction within it that it moves, is possessed of instinct and activity” (*SL*, 382/*GW*, 11: 286). It is that which makes intelligible the becoming of things and ourselves as inflected by dynamic, tension-ridden tendencies that render them serious and open-ended ontogenetic processes.¹⁴⁷

However, to recognize an object as constituted by such irreconcilable tendencies leaves open the question of why one prevails. To answer this question, we must therefore make intervene the categories of “ground,” for to be a ground is to be precisely that which explains why something else, the “grounded,” came to be. With these categories, discourse takes on a new conceptual emphasis, shifting the logical stress from a principle that *underlines* a series of determinations to one that *materially accounts* for the determinations

¹⁴⁷ Here I follow Findlay, who argues that Hegel is drawing out a category from our use of “contradiction” in ordinary language to express conflict rather than inconsistency. Cf. Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-Examination*, 193–94.

in said series. This mode of explanation is apt for theoretical and practical registers: “ground” makes intelligible not only how an entity, event, state of affairs, or what not *brings about* some change in something, but also how desires, social norms, ethical precepts, etc., *bring about* an action.

In the conceptual moves that Hegel now describes, the task is to unearth which conceptual distinctions that discourse must introduce to make such explanatory talk more and more concrete. Initially, talk of “ground” and “grounded” can only treat the former as some abstract foundation of the latter. As an example, we might postulate that an evil deed was committed because of moral turpitude. The logical problem with such talk is that nothing cognitively significant has been claimed. We have, as it were, merely re-described the *explanandum* as the *explanans* in that no new content has been added: when pushed to explicate what moral turpitude is, we can only say it is that which brought about the evil deed, rendering explanation tautological. Nevertheless, there is a conceptual achievement: a principle has been inferred or derived, a hypothesis provided (cf. *SL*, 400-401/*GW*, 11: 305-306). It is now a matter of determining how such an explanation can be rationally satisfying. This is accomplished, Hegel submits, by exploring how a principle grounds a wide range of phenomena. Someone’s despicable nature is responsible not just for this one evil deed, but other deeds, character traits, dispositions, and so on. Nevertheless, there is an insurmountable indeterminacy. While explanation is no longer tautologous, it only makes intelligible a series of phenomena in a still relatively abstract manner: in supplying the “ground” for something, we have not yet provided enough resources through which the “grounded” follows like consequent from antecedent.

Put differently, the problem with the categories of “ground” and “grounded” is that, given what has been said, there is a gap between the former and the latter, whereby they always risk remaining external to one another. The objects in question do not fully contain one another as part of their nature (as, say, a substance contains its determinations). In this regard, it cannot be made intelligible *how* “ground” grounds this or that “grounded” or *when* it does so. To make explicit which additional factors are required for “ground” to lead to the “grounded,” discourse must bring into play the categories of “condition.” Take the following case in point. The ground for the construction of a house may be someone’s desire to settle down. Nevertheless, this desire *alone* will not fully explain why the house

came to be. A definite number of conditions must also be in place: they not only need to book a contractor, but also need a mortgage, the right permits, and so on. Nevertheless, *as soon as* the entirety of these conditions has been met, the construction crew will start their work. As Hegel puts it: “*When all the conditions of a fact are at hand*, the fact steps into concrete existence” (SL, 416/GW, 11: 321). In short, in introducing these categories discourse is conceptually determining the necessary and sufficient conditions for the emergence or destruction of something in the multilayered becoming of the world, an ontogenetic process that thereby proves to be “the self-staging of the fact” (SL, 416/GW, 11: 321). Hegel’s logical argument is that, as soon as we recognize the totality of such conditions, we are rationally forced to acknowledge the presence of a unique kind of object: one whose being is no longer factual or immediate, but instead internally carries its own explanation or mediation *within itself* by directly referring to all those factors that had to collude together for its arrival upon the scene of experience. In other words, it is as if *the object’s own story, the story of its becoming, is written on its face*. It is, as Hegel summarizes, therefore unconditioned because it contains all its own conditions within itself insofar as their totality lead up to it (SL, 416/GW, 11: 320-221).

3.5 The categories of appearance: the structure of our perceptual experience of “big” objects

For something to *concretely* exist is for it to stand on its own apart from the ontogenetic history that made it emerge into being as whatever it is, a set of conditions that are “left behind it” insofar as its being is a self-evident fact that can be now treated in its own right. The most elementary way that we can, according to Hegel, further conceptually determine such a self-explanatory object is through the introduction of the interconnected categories of “thing” and its “properties,” which further determine the makeup of the now standalone concrete existent by qualifying, building upon, and expanding the previous types of discourse. Accordingly, they function, as Hegel puts it, by “analysis” (SL, 432/GW, 11: 327): by making explicit the implicit unity, something and its distinguishing features, that has presented itself in the multilayered becoming of the world.

In placing our talk of “things” and “properties” at this advanced stage in his Doctrine of Essence, Hegel is advancing a unique thesis about our natural consciousness and

ordinary language. While we are wont in our practical and linguistic dealings with things with properties, the “big” objects of everyday perceptual experience that command our existential attention the most, to regard them as readymade objects to be manipulated or with properties to be picked out, Hegel’s claim is that these objects only have the solid presence that they have inasmuch as we take them, whether we realize it or not, to be facts of a very robust kind. To wit, for experience to be populated with intractable, internally cohesive objects that persist on their own, we must, implicitly at least, be aware of an immense amount of information about their ontogenetic history as that which made them the concrete existent that they are—enough that would make each one recognizable as an existent that, because it is a fact that unconditionally follows from its conditions, conditions tacit in our experience of it, has an existential irresistibility. In a nutshell, our use and language about the commonplace objects that we take for granted in our day-to-day doings and even chitchat are undergirded by an extremely conceptually artful discourse.

As an example, to be aware of my friend’s 2018 Toyota Yaris as a “thing with properties” is to not only recognize it as a black car with some dents and a 1.5-liter, 4-cylinder engine with 106 horsepower; we can only have the unwavering conviction that we do in being able to use and talk about it with ease because we recognize a set of conditions that worked together for it to come into concrete existence and for them to own it (engineers had to design it, factory workers had to build it, my friend had to decide on it, they got into a minor accident, etc.), a set of conditions that make us aware of it as objectively present as something mind-independent. We will never, of course, exhaustively know all such factors—but when we experience it as solidly present, we take all those factors to be already there in principle and do know or believe to know a very wide range of them. In this fashion, the categories of “appearance” describe how the putative straightforwardness of “big” objects is supported by an explanatory system of beliefs that we instinctively construct and navigate whenever we perceive them.

Hegel’s contention is that, insofar as these categories lay down the groundwork for the experiential objects that concern us the most, we are likely to not recognize, in the hustle and bustle of our lives, just how much our lives are predicated upon a sophisticated process of conceptualization occurring behind our backs and which bestows upon our experience the wealth of stable, unyielding content that it displays. We simply do what we

do, unconscious of how our behaviour towards things and ourselves is dictated by the conceptual distinctions that establish this or that as a complex, intractable object caught in a broader narrative that we largely presuppose. In this regard, Hegel advances a critique of natural consciousness, ordinary language, and any philosophical epistemology based on them such as common-sense empiricism. These assume that the objects that we manipulate and talk about are largely just immediately present such that our “essential” narratives are written on the basis of this immediate presence or that these objects are constructed out of a more fundamental level of experience constituted by raw sensations, both via abstraction and reflection. However, Hegel’s claim is that these positions, in effect, *divest* conscious experience of the vastly stratified conceptual structure that *informs it from the beginning*. For as we move through experience, we do not first encounter this or that object with certain traits and then think about it—we are always already navigating, by dint of the pre-conscious rational activity of our body, essential narratives. When we directly *see*, say, a person, we directly *see* that they are a person with a complex history that helped make them who they are (even if we simply make assumptions about what that history entails). Nor do we first encounter raw sensations. At the level of experience, a colour is already the colour of, for instance, a plant that we know has grown to have this colour because of certain environmental conditions that I helped maintain. We do not typically need to situate objects in essential narratives after we initially experience them, nor do we experientially build objects from mere stimuli; our experience is largely instinctively pre-structured by these narratives (we may, of course, consciously elaborate on them, as we do in science). Put differently, what we are directly aware of in conscious experience is much richer than what natural consciousness, ordinary language, or epistemological models like common-sense empiricism can acknowledge.

As a result, as we conceptually move into more and more intricate conceptual determinations of these objects, we see that we are not moving from the “concreteness” of perceptual data into “abstract” metaphysical and scientific reflection. Instead, we are formally outlining the categories that flesh out that background narrative and, in turn, make the structure of our perceptual experience of big objects richer and richer. Consequently, to the extent that “things” and their “properties” are the starting point for the experience of perception described in the *Phenomenology*, and these categories lead to ever more

complex ones such as “law,” the main subject matter of the experience of the understanding that the *Phenomenology* next describes, Hegel’s logical analysis has a two-fold significance. (1) It unearths those categories that make possible perception and understanding as a fundamental dimension of experience. (2) Owing to this, these categories explain why the latter dimension is the deep structure of the former: in both theoretical constructions underline experience, making the structure of experience from the get-go theory-laden.¹⁴⁸

Let’s return to the conceptual movement of Hegel’s Objective Logic. To conceptually determine something as a “thing” is to construe it as a self-standing *substrate* in which “properties,” its “concrete existence,” inhere, an exclusive unity ontologically separate from other such unities. In this regard, the first term refers to the second as “essence” to “surface appearance.” The logical problem with such a discourse is that a “thing” thereby risks becoming indeterminate. A “thing” is only recognizable as *this* rather than *that* singular entity through possessing “properties,” traits *proper* to it that others do not or cannot possess, but to treat its properties as secondary makes it into what Hegel, alluding to the *Phenomenology*, calls a “mere also”: an inclusive medium in which properties simply coexist and which has no cognitively significant content of its own (cf. *PS*, 68-69 §113/*GW*, 9: 72).¹⁴⁹ In order to make a “thing” determinate as the entity that it is, discourse can thus take its “properties” as themselves self-standing, whereby the *bundles* they form, their mereological sum, are taken to establish its nature. Nevertheless, this discourse, too, is confronted by the danger of becoming indeterminate: a mere bundle of disparate items cannot make intelligible how *diverse* “properties” that can come and go coalesce into a *resilient, singular* “thing.”

Hegel’s point is that while our everyday language of “things” and “properties” still operates under the assumption that there is some given essential, fixed set of determinations that make a solidly present object more intelligible, in the oscillation between taking the “thing” as a substrate in which “properties” inhere or as a mere bundle of “properties,” there is none. There is only the shifting play of “properties” as themselves somehow

¹⁴⁸ See above 1.2.2 and 1.2.3.

¹⁴⁹ See above 1.2.2.

constitutive of the “thing.” It is a question of how that play, as indeterminately laid down by these previous categories, can be conceptually held together in an internally coherent, stable narrative. This is made possible, Hegel maintains, by the introduction of the categories of “appearance.” The reason why is that with these categories, “essence” no longer has the meaning of that which *underlines* or *materially accounts* for a phenomenon; it has acquired the fuller meaning of that which *immanently structures* what is otherwise the *mere* surface appearance (the *Schein*) of a deeper reality such that it is synonymous with the full appearing of said reality (its *Erscheinung*) and the former has no significance outside how it internally regulates the flux of the latter.

The most elementary way we can conceptually determine “appearance” as internally coherent and stable is, according to Hegel, by the categories of “law,” “laws” being that which together explain why a certain class of “things” keep, gain, or lose the various “properties” that constitute them in virtue of an inner principle that guides the details of their becoming whatever they are. In the object that it formally outlines, both of its sides expressly refer to one another: a “law” is, by definition, that which *governs* the entire domain over which it has sway, a “world of appearance,” but with the stipulation that if there is any *disconnect* between the terms—if a “law” fails to make intelligible the series of determinations that it ostensibly governs—we cannot meaningfully speak of a “law” at all. For instance, a human law is only one insofar as it actually informs particular aspects of the lives of members of a community bound by it—a law that no longer does so has lost the structuring power it once may have had, thereby turning into, say, an outdated residue of a bygone time now lacking any essential role in dictating how these members comport themselves.

Two logical problems emerge.¹⁵⁰ (1) While “law” governs how “things” acquire properties in precisely defined situations, it never governs *all* the facets of its subject matter. For instance, the law of free fall may govern how physically bodies move due to gravity, but other factors beyond its jurisdiction also affect their motion (e.g., atmospheric pressure and friction). As Hegel puts it, a slew of content is “*externally bound up* with the law” (*SL*, 442/*GW*, 11: 345). In more contemporary language, “law” is an *ideal case* that

¹⁵⁰ Cf. John McTaggart Ellis McTaggart, *A Commentary on Hegel's Logic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), 139–41.

phenomena can only *approximate*. (2) There is an insurmountable facticity about “law”: why the content it connects together is so interconnected always seems arbitrary. The law of free fall on earth has the value of -9.8m/s^2 . But nothing in this law nor the nature of its terms explain why *this* correlation between space, time, and gravity obtains rather than another: “The relevant law here is drawn from experience and *is* to this extent *immediate*; there is still required a *proof*, that is, a mediation, in order to know that the law not only *occurs* but is *necessary*; the law as such does not contain this proof and its objective necessity” (SL, 442/GW, 11: 346).

To supersede the externality and facticity of “law,” particular laws must thus be made that are *at once* more and more specific *and* subsumable under ever more general laws. The ideal that Hegel here sketches is a Theory of Everything: a *finite* model of invariant natural and human constants that explains the *infinite* variability of whatever we experience and wherein these constants explain their correlation to one another. To the degree that said model is effective, it thus “*discloses* itself above the *world of appearance* as *one which is in and for itself*” (SL, 444/GW, 11: 348)—namely, the *supersensible* world that is the essential matrix of the *sensible* world (SL, 444/GW, 11: 349).

However, an indeterminacy hereby arises in the discourse of “law.” On the one hand, it takes the “the world of appearance” as *derivative* of the “world in itself” of laws. On the other, even where it looks like “the world of appearance” (the realm of change) is constitutively set against “the world in itself” of laws (a realm of self-sufficient unchanging laws), it already *contains* the latter within it (SL, 447/GW, 11: 351). That is, the very supposition on which the talk of “law” was initially based, that there is an ontological difference between the *supersensible* and *sensible* worlds wherein one has pride of place, is problematized by the very end results of such a discourse. Insofar as each term is only adequately definable by reference to the other, each *perfectly mirrors* the other from its own conceptual perspective so that “their *difference* has disappeared” (SL, 447/GW, 11: 351). Consequently, one cannot be taken as more fundamental; what matters *as essential* is the intimate connection between the depth and surface of things, how “each *continues* into the other” (SL, 447/GW, 11: 352).

In order for the object at hand to be made more fully intelligible, conceptual distinctions must therefore be brought into play that permit us to explain such an

interpenetration without taking one as primary and the other secondary. Hegel's strategy is to introduce categories that increasingly overcome the immediacy of the terms in question by absorbing the *reference* (*Beziehung*) between them into a *relation* (*Verhältnis*) that binds them together *by ontologically generating them in the first place*, whereby each comes to imply the other thanks to that relation's very *productivity* and *neither* has strict priority.¹⁵¹ Through the valid employment of these categories, there would therefore no longer be *two* worlds separated by an ontic gap, but rather *one* world, a *single* totality, in which what counts as the true is not "essence" as contrasted with its "appearance," but, to name that category that now takes the discursive stage, the "essential relation" between the two.

In short, the essential principles now taken to govern a domain of "appearance" no longer can be taken as minimally *transcending* that domain, but instead make it into a *totality*. Accordingly, the most elementary way that we can further determine the object now at play is by the introduction of the categories of "whole" and "parts," for to be a totality is to be precisely that whose components, due to its immanently existing holistic principle of organization, come together in a self-enclosed ensemble in which every item has a designated place. As such, its "parts" imply the "whole" that structures them and the "whole" is nothing outside of the "parts" that it structures. Nevertheless, to so speak of a "whole" and its "parts" is still abstract. The logical problem is as follows: while we have a totality in which its components internally relate to one another by a principle, we have not yet expressly stated why or how said totality comprises these components. As such, the unity of the "whole" risks being indistinguishable from an "*abstract identity*," whereas the unity of the "parts" is in jeopardy of being equated with an "unconnected manifold" (*SL*, 453/*GW*, 11: 357). For instance, human laws do not just transcendently govern us as individuals; they are more adequately defined of as that through which a state immanently organizes the life of a people spread over space and time, its parts, into its whole. Nevertheless, to merely speak of a state without further determination leaves unsaid both why and how this social configuration occurs and the interrelation between its members.

¹⁵¹ Here I draw upon George di Giovanni, "Hegel's Anti-Spinozism : The Transition to Subjective Logic and the End of Classical Metaphysics," in *Hegel's Theory of the Subject*, ed. David Gray Carlson (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2005), 34.

The next conceptual moves that Hegel analyzes consist in the recognition that to draw a cognitively significant conceptual distinction between a “totalized” domain of appearance that *merely hangs together* and one that *immanently structures* itself, a totality must contain an *active* principle by which its “whole” engenders its constitutive multiplicity and by which each “part” discloses the nature of that unity, both without extra-logical remainder. Accordingly, such a principle can be made intelligible by bringing into play the categories of “force” and “expression” or more determinately those of “inner” and “outer.” For something to be a force is for it to *actively* express itself in various observable phenomena, just as much as for something to be an “expression” of a “force” is for it to be that force *in action*. For instance, the electromagnetic force expresses itself in direct currents, electroluminescence, thunderstorms, etc., but is fully embodied in each of these phenomena, rendering them a unified, internally articulated domain of “appearance”—it is nothing “beyond” them, nor do any of these refer to it as something constitutively “behind” them. Nevertheless, a “force” is, by definition, blind: entangled in a web of forces *externally* impinging upon another soliciting them *into* action, there is no higher rhyme and reason to explain their occurrences besides the mere matter of fact that they *did* get solicited—“thanks to this deficiency of the form,” Hegel concludes, “the content is also limited and contingent” (*EL*, 204 §136 Remark /*GW* 20: 161). Consequently, the most conceptually complete fashion that a “totalized” domain of appearance can be made intelligible is if the “force” immanently structuring that domain brings *itself* into action, whereby each element of that domain is intelligible on its own account, whereby they acquire the meaning of “inner” and “outer”: the former formally outlining a dynamic, self-moving activity with a *disposition* to realize itself in the world in a complex variety of fashions and the latter the *realizations* in the world of that activity.¹⁵² In such a discourse, there is no need to postulate an interplay of forces to explain why a force is active: it is the inner momentum of the principle that makes each element of its domain into a coherent totality of phenomena.

In this context, Hegel provides an astute observation about human psychology (*EL*, 209-210 §140 Addition/*GW*, 23.3: 912-193) that gives a great illustration of the kind of

¹⁵² I take this language from J. N. Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-Examination* (Oxford University Press, 1958), 207.

object formally outlined by the categories of “inner” and “outer” and their philosophical implications: “a human being *is* what he *does*” (*EL*, 210 §140 Addition/*GW*, 23.3: 912). In the first place, the example indicates that in our experience of other people we make no distinction between a person (who they essentially are) and their actions (the appearance of their essence): what they are in their “inner self” is directly visible in their “outer self” as the character that ties all their deeds together in a coherent narrative. Put differently, the distinction between “essence” and its “appearance” is not one we tend to make in our day-to-day lives; in our experience we assume that what appears to us does, in fact, reveal the way things and ourselves are, making the ontic gap between them a false distinction of philosophical reflection. In the second place, our dealings with people are largely reflexive: we usually instantaneously respond to what people say and do in terms of who we take them to be based on our tacit knowledge of their behaviour over time and what best accounts for that behaviour. This goes to show the complex categorial machinery of “essential” distinctions that has to be instinctively at play in even the simplest human interactions or, for that matter, the simplest interactions with the natural world insofar as we approach it with the same categories.

The net result of Hegel’s logical analysis is therefore that “appearance” itself, the very domain of human experience, is in principle revelatory of what things and ourselves truly are or ought to be, the domain of “essence.” Its claim is that whenever the principles that we postulate make sense of the variable content that we encounter, we are justified in claiming that these essences are present in appearance as what makes them have the structure that they do. With these conceptual moves, Hegel’s logic is, in short, leaving behind the basic standpoint of classical Western metaphysics according to which there is an insurmountable ontic gap between the two (e.g., the visible world and the transcendent world of Platonic forms, Spinoza’s substance and its modes, or Kant’s phenomena and noumena). It thereby makes a metaphysical commitment via transcendental considerations: unless “essence” is conceived of as *showing itself* within the *movement* of “appearance” as that which is responsible for the *inner consistency* of the latter (similar to how a story’s theme does not lie outside of its narrated events, but is read off what transpires as the guiding principle of its content and form), it just could not be known. For as soon as true being is construed as some metaphysical Beyond constitutively separate from the here and

now of experience, all knowledge would be worse than limited—because ultimate reality would always *recede* from view rather than *reveal* itself, we could tell not the difference between a perspectival illusion and a true, but restricted perspective upon it, rendering our *de facto* knowledge claims incomprehensible.¹⁵³

3.6 The categories of actuality: the worldly structure of full-fledged experience

With the object formally outlined by the categories of “inner” and “outer,” the distinction between “essence” and “appearance” has been overcome: here whatever immediately is, is recognizable as the mediated product of a dynamic activity, this product being that through which said activity realizes itself. As such, the object at hand has acquired the meaning of something “absolute” in that any of its “modes” lead back to it just as much as it leads back to them, without the need to posit anything outside of that movement to make it intelligible, and which is in turn more adequately definable by the categories of “actuality” (*Wirklichkeit*). For it is determinable as *what is actual* (*das Wirkliche*), something whose being is not simply there, but the result of an immanent process of *actualization* (*Verwirklichung*)—a process that is therefore *effective* (*wirksam*) in the sense that the process is *at work*, that is, can *effectuate* itself (the various connotations of *wirken*, related to both *Werk* and *Wirkungen*) through its own operation. In this fashion, these new categories set the norms of meaning that enable us to discover intricate natural and spiritual processes that are self-evolving *worlds onto themselves*.

It is in this context that Hegel introduces his famous discussion of the modal categories. The most elementary way to conceptually determine something as “actual” is to take it as something that *has been* actualized and *can* actualize something else. But only what is *possible* is *actualizable* such that, to make more fully intelligible what has or may come to be in this immanent process, discourse requires the introduction of the category of “possibility.” In its most abstract meaning, however, “possibility” signifies anything formally non-contradictory. Yet, as Hegel points out, such a bare-bones notion can fail to track cognitively significant content. We can, for instance, imagine that the Turkish Sultan

¹⁵³ Cf. Findlay: “Hegel’s philosophy has absolutely no final place for realities that are non-individual, beyond human apprehension, merely posited or prescribed, infinite in the bad sense, supersensuous and without a firm lodgement in the Here and the Now.” Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-Examination*, 208–9.

will become the next Pope (*EL*, 214 §143 Addition/GW, 23.3: 916). Nevertheless, such a state of affairs could never *actually* come about in Turkish history, given the principles by which its immanent process unfolds. Consequently, “possibility” is always a function of “actuality”: ¹⁵⁴ something only acquires the meaning of “*real* possibility” vs. merely “*formal* possibility” insofar as it is conceptually determined in discourse which possibilities are *opened up* in contrast to those *closed off* by the actual itself

Once “possibility” takes on the significance of “real possibility,” a conceptual shift occurs in the meaning of “actuality.” It now implies that anything actual only emerges so vis-à-vis other actual states of affairs that *equally well* could have actualized in its place: there is always a *definite range* of real possibilities, one of which is realized. In short, “actuality” is more adequately defined in terms of “contingency.” But the mere fact that an actual state of affairs could have been otherwise is an affront to our search for rationally satisfying meaning. It is a matter, then, of conceptually determining why *one* thing rather than *another* comes to be. Since (1) any actual state of affairs is dependent upon a logically prior actual state of affairs that set the stage for whatever may possibly happen and (2) in any given actual state of affairs there are various circumstances at work effectuating themselves, discourse must establish how, as these circumstances themselves play out, eventually the conditions will be ripe for one of them to burst from the realm of the possible into that of the actual.

In virtue of these new conceptual distinctions, “contingency” acquires the meaning of “necessity”: insofar as *this* real possibility amongst others actualizes itself at that specific moment, it *forecloses* all others, thereby *transforming itself* into what is necessary in two interrelated senses. First, it has *become* irreversible. Second, it *irrevocably restructures* the modal texture of what is: it not only forecloses certain past real possibilities, but also certain future ones. To take a contemporary example, this is not unlike how Schrödinger’s cat is *really possibly* dead or alive until we observe it and, once we observe it, it is necessarily one or the other and this contingently actualized possibility, which cannot be undone, rewrites what can be the case in the future.

¹⁵⁴ I take this point from H. S. Harris, “Lecture Notes for Course on Hegel’s *Encyclopedia Logic*,” 1993, 117, <http://yorkspace.library.yorku.ca/xmlui/handle/10315/943>.

This entails that “necessity” itself is a function of “contingency.”¹⁵⁵ When the appropriate elements align, a particular result happens; yet nothing prevents these elements from having aligned themselves differently, issuing in another result. Consequently, what is necessary is always *contingently* necessary: there are always halos of real possibilities embedded in anything actual that may not be realized, but in principle could have been. Put differently, there is an *intrinsic openness* to even a necessary becoming. This is precisely what it means for “necessity” to be conceptually determined as “relative necessity”: in the self-unfolding chain of necessary actualities, there is an irreducible degree of ontological indeterminism that makes unpredictability a fundamental feature of the kind of object that Hegel’s Objective Logic here formally outlines.

Nevertheless, the object formally outlined by “relative necessity” still suffers from indeterminacy. According to its basic normative structure, the relation between each actuality is still minimally external: *one* actual state of affairs necessarily leads to *another*, but always could have led to a different one, rendering the necessity in question weak. However, while such an immanent process of actualization is, from one logical perspective, a merely “relative necessity,” it can prove to be, from another logical perspective, an “absolute necessity.” The idea is that, once such an immanent process has been conceptually determined as a series of events that merely follow one another, it might be further determinable as one through which a greater coherency can be gleaned: one in which a *single keynote* directs the process under investigation, whereby the relation between each actuality is fully contained by the process itself. In other words, what first strikes us as a self-forging *chain of links holding one another together*, must show signs of being a concatenation of otherwise contingently necessary happenings that, in how it comes to be strung together, is readable as an *internally coherent, self-writing story with a theme*

¹⁵⁵ Hegel is often interpreted as a philosopher of the “necessity of contingency” for whom what *seems* to us as contingent is, *in truth*, a logically necessary element of a “dialectical” process. As we shall see, Hegel is strongly attuned to the *irreducibility* of contingency not only as a category, but also as a feature of the natural and human worlds. For an extensive treatment of contingency in Hegel’s philosophy that stresses this, see John W. Burbidge, *Hegel’s Systematic Contingency* (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2007). This was a point already argued in the celebrated essay by Dieter Henrich, “Hegels Theorie Über Den Zufall,” in *Hegel Im Kontext* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971), 157–86.

that guides it (as when, say, the self-actualizing dynamic of molecular clouds leads to the formation of stars or that of social factors to the rise or fall of a nation).

“Absolute necessity” is thus a *belated* necessity that can only be reconstructed retroactively.¹⁵⁶ As Hegel reminds us, the Owl of Minerva only flies at the setting of the sun (*PR*, 23/*GW*, 14.1:16). This category formally outlines an objective process whose overarching unity *comes to be*, like a good story with a point, only in and through what contingently happens—if it does at all. Just as not all stories possess a discernable theme, even if events lead to one another in an intelligible manner, there is no guarantee that an absolute necessity can, in any real-life experiential context, be discovered from within a chain of occurrences that are relatively necessary with regard to one another. However, this renders “becoming” not only *open*, but also *open-ended*: open, because the meaning of “possibility” and “contingency” are fundamental to that of “necessity”; open-ended, because even if the story (of nature or humanity) shows itself to have a certain theme, this story is only ever comprehended *in media res*—and, as such, we cannot predict what else may arise from the play of possibility, contingency, and necessity that makes it up (what new formations of nature, what new shapes of spirit), similar to how a story with great promise may unexpectedly end, like T.S. Elliot said the world itself would, with a whimper.

Hegel’s discussion of the modal categories implies two broad philosophical points that should be brought to the fore. (1) To talk of something as “necessary” is not, for Hegel, to talk of it as *predetermined*. If that were so, we could not make sense of this category as a further determination of that of “becoming.”¹⁵⁷ A series of events in which one predetermines the other would not be a becoming at all: this would render becoming a mere perspectival illusion, since the entirety of what becomes would be set in advance and thus in principle rationally deducible. Consequently, the conceptual movement from “possibility” through “contingency” to “necessity” in Hegel’s Objective Logic is totally opposed to Spinoza’s metaphysics, where what *we* perceive as possible and contingent is

¹⁵⁶ I therefore endorse Žižek’s take on Hegelian “necessity.” Cf. Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, 217–18 & 575. For a detailed reading of Hegel on the modal categories along similar lines, see Adrian Johnston, “Contingency, Pure Contingency — Without Any Further Determination: Modal Categories in Hegelian Logic,” *Logos: Russian Journal of Philosophy & Humanities* 1, no. 2 (2017): 23–48.

¹⁵⁷ See above 3.1.

a mere side-effect of our *ignorance* of the logically necessary order of reality (cf. *SL*, 282-284/*GW*, 21: 323-25). Hegel is adamant that *all* the modal categories track *objective* content: while “overcoming the contingent, so construed, is generally the task of knowing [...] this should not be understood as if the contingent pertained merely to our subjective representation and that, therefore, it must be completely set aside in order to arrive at the truth” (*EL*, 216-217 §145 Addition/*GW*, 23.3: 917-918). Accordingly, he lists “the colorful play of individual varieties of animals and plants” and cloud formations (*EL*, 216 §145 Addition/*GW*, 23.3: 917) as instances that show that “contingency is still to be accorded its due even in the objective world” (*EL*, 217 §145 Addition/*GW*, 23.3: 918). This is because such natural processes are by definition ontologically indeterminate, making chance crucial in whatever occurs in them, as Hegel later observes in the *Philosophy of Nature* (*PN*, vol. 1, 215 §250 Remark/*GW*, 20: 240). At the level of spirit, after mentioning language and developments in law and art as areas where chance is also crucial, he cautions us, as if criticizing standard pictures of his philosophy, against “purporting to demonstrate to be necessary or, as one is accustomed to say, to construe as a priori, appearances that possess the character of contingency” (*EL*, 217 §145 Addition/*GW*, 23.3: 918).

(2) With these conceptual moves, Hegel is returning to a thesis already advanced in the *Phenomenology*’s inner exploration of reason¹⁵⁸ and foreshadowing the transition to the Subjective Logic that will occur shortly. By maintaining the objectivity of the modal categories and thereby opposing Spinoza’s metaphysics, Hegel is fighting against a classical theme in Western metaphysics: the idea that, if we could elevate ourselves to a standpoint *higher* than that of the human intellect, such as the mind of God or an all-encompassing vision of the universe, what *seems* to us as possible or contingent would be shown to be, *in fact*, a necessary component of what is. Because we are restricted to a partial perspective on being whose “larger picture” we can never have in full view, this position maintains that the necessary arrangement of the cosmos eludes us. In the opposed position advanced by Hegel’s logic, however, there is no such standpoint that could invalidate the claims that we make by appeal to the categories of “possibility” and “contingency”: if we discover objects that conform to the meaning set by these categories,

¹⁵⁸ See above 1.4.1.

then the objects that are so made intelligible are to be taken as truly possible or contingent and not just a feature of the happenstance limitations of *our* cognition. This is why, for Hegel, the Subjective Logic, as a theory of the logical space of reasons, is also a theory of truth in the robust sense (*SL*, 508/*GW*, 12: 6) even though that space is, on his account, the space that *we* instinctively navigate in order to make *our* experience intelligible. As a result, in the transition from Objective to Subjective Logic, we are not, as it were, to give witness to how the categories are merely the categories governing the domain of human experience and as such always fall short of ultimate reality, whereby the Subjective Logic would be “subjective” in the Kantian sense that it limits our experience and knowledge to phenomena. Instead, we are to give witness to how the logical space of reasons is, as that which supports the categories analyzed in the Objective Logic by providing the discursive contexts in which they are systematically deployed by our activities of conceiving, judging, and inferring, that which provides the space for being to be made intelligible as what it truly is or ought to be.

However, to conceptually determine an object as a completely self-realizing activity signifies that it is more adequately definable by another category: that of “substance.” For what we mean by “substance” is a *self-contained* and *self-justifying* process in which all things that come and cease to be are produced by its own inner principle, rendering it an *absolute power* over its “*flux of accidents*” (*SL*, 491/*GW*, 11: 395), meaning that no outside influence affects the movement of the latter. In this regard, “substance” is not something that *underlies* a flux of “accidents”; “substance” is only recognizable as “substance” to the extent that it *exercises* its power over them. While the physical universe is construable as “substance,” the prime example of it in Hegel is to be found in the *Phenomenology*: “ethical substance” denotes the beliefs and values that characterize the ancient Greek way of life. What makes such beliefs and values a “substance” is that they engendered and sustained a rationally self-enclosed normative framework that actively informed the day-to-day lives of the members of this community by setting down the roles that they could assume and the duties that they had to obey, whereby their behaviour was an irreducible function of the latter. Indeed, such a substance (a self-standing way of life) can only be said to be this distinctive substance as long as these beliefs and values continue to produce its accidents (are normative for the behaviour of those who lead it).

But by conceptually determining an object as an absolute, productive power, the category of “substance” only abstractly states the details of how this absolute power produces “accidents.” Nevertheless, this category already hints at the conceptual move required to make the object at hand more determinate: the introduction of the categories of “cause” (*Ursache*) and “effect.” To talk of something as a “substance” is to implicitly appeal to some originary fact or thing (*ursprüngliche Sache*) that, insofar as it is at work, brings forth effects (cf. *EL*, 225 §153/*GW*, 20: 170-171). However, since “substance” is only recognizable in and through the “accidents” that it produces, these are now to be conceptually determined as a dynamic movement in which *one* accident causes *another* accident, its effect. As such, it is only in the causal activity of finite things upon finite things that the absolute, productive power of substance can be concretely said to manifest itself.¹⁵⁹

The next discursive task is to make intelligible a substantial causal series that is self-contained and self-justifying on its own terms. A two-fold logical problem arises. (1) We open up the Pandora’s box of causes and effects. On the one hand, to explain something as the effect of a cause does not explain this cause itself, which demands its own cause, leading to an infinite regress (*SL*, 498-499/*GW*, 11: 402-403). Even if we suppose that the causal series *does* have an actual Beginning (for example, God or the Big Bang), the logical point that Hegel drives home is that such a Beginning would always be rationally unsatisfying (we can always ask *why* God created or the Big Bang happened). On the other, an effect is never just an effect. It will *itself* become the cause of another effect in an infinite progress (*SL*, 499/*GW*, 11: 403). (2) There is nothing in a finite thing that *guarantees* its activity will be the cause of an effect. As Hegel remarks, there are many natural and human phenomena in which strict unidirectional causality is excluded (*SL*, 496/*GW*, 11: 400). For instance, we should not talk of chilly weather as the *direct* cause of a fever, nor of Caesar’s ambition as the *direct* cause of the decline of the Roman Empire. The activity of a finite thing may be just a *stimulus* for something happening.

¹⁵⁹ For an insightful reading of Hegel on causality, see Stephen Houlgate, “Substance, Causality, and the Question of Method in Hegel’s *Science of Logic*,” in *The Reception of Kant’s Critical Philosophy*, ed. Sally Sedgwick (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 232–52.

To make a causal series more fully intelligible, we must therefore introduce conceptual distinctions that, instead of focusing on how one finite thing *unilaterally* causes another thing, permit us to be more determinately aware of why they behave as they do in certain situations. That is, the causal relation between two finite things is more intelligible to the degree that they do not merely change based on the *external impact* of one's power on the other, but instead each is *internally responsive* to one another such that it is the *interaction* between them that brings about the causal change. Consequently, things that enter into a causal relation must be determinable by the categories of "action" and "reaction" if rational satisfaction is to be had, which transforms the very meaning of the terms at play: instead of "substance" being the dynamic causal *order* in which one thing directly effectuates a change in another, now *each* thing in the causal relation is a finite "substance" of its own in that both establish, by means of their respective inner principles, when and how they will enter into a causal relation.

The reason why a bilateral model of causality is more rationally satisfying than a unilateral is as follows. By way of illustration, take a game of pool and the phenomenon rust as points of comparison. One ball hitting another forces it to move. To explain why that these events are linked, I must posit another event and so on *ad infinitum*. Rust is different. It is not caused by oxygen forcing iron to deteriorate. The ontological possibility for this causal process is created by the specific atomic properties of iron, which equip oxygen, in the presence of water, with the means of performing oxidation. In this sense, it is in the very nature of these substances to produce this change whenever they come into contact: inasmuch as the causal powers at work arise *from within* the relation between them, it is the relation *itself*, its productivity, that explains what happens. While such a causal relation is still part of a causal chain that goes on, forwards and backwards logically indefinitely, if the links of that chain exhibit a bilateral causation, then the terms of that relation are in an internally structured unfolding rather than in a haphazard flux of one damn thing after another.

Nevertheless, a logical problem remains. Insofar as these substances act *upon* and react *to* one another, their natures are *independent*, whereby there is still some facticity about how and when they come to interact. The only fashion that this facticity can be superseded is if their interaction proves to be *interdependent* moments of a self-sufficient

system. As moments of such a system, their interaction would be always already contained in terms of how their causal interplay contributes to the functioning of the system so that given one we have the other and also the whole that explains their very nature and hence why they act and react the way that they do—a system that, by explaining how everything has a necessary place within it also explains itself. In other words, we must bring into play the category of “reciprocity.” In the norm of meaning set by this last category of Hegel’s Objective Logic, we have (1) a relation in which all terms of the relation are produced by the relation itself and (2) the relation producing itself by producing its terms. With this category, Hegel attempts to do justice to the objectivity of autopoietic systems through which the organs of living bodies can only be grasped in virtue of the role they play in the spontaneously self-generating life of an organism, just as much as that of social systems such as the state in which the life of any individual is dependent upon the greater whole that they at once help to establish and which informs every aspect of their lives.

With the introduction of the category of “reciprocity,” Hegel’s Doctrine of Essence and, with it, his Objective Logic arrives at a close. We have exhaustively identified and defined all the categories required for the formal outline of an objective universe of meaning: one that, qualifying, building upon, and expanding the previous categories, issues in the recognition of a self-sufficient system of causally interactive substances. While Hegel’s Doctrine of Essence may seem like just a logical analysis of the conceptual presuppositions and use of the “scholarly” language of metaphysics and science, the point that he is making runs much deeper. To the extent that the categories are the *a priori* that we bring to experience in order to make it intelligible and these categories implant within us an instinct or drive to conceptually move from the abstract to the most concrete determination of a subject matter, the net result of Hegel’s Objective Logic is that whatever we encounter is always supported by the *presumed* horizon of the natural and human worlds as a system of which any encountered unity is taken as a part, one that we have a rational interest in recognizing. Put differently, inasmuch as the content of our experience is conceptually articulated and we are internally compelled to discover such systems in which these conceptual articulations are explained in order to be rationally satisfied, the basic structure of experience is one in which all qualitative, quantitative, and essential unities are never taken at face value (as immediate), but are taken as positioned or

positionable within an objective nexus of interlocking activities that make up a whole (as mediated)—a complex, systematic universe of meaning that we instinctively create and inhabit.¹⁶⁰

And such a universe of meaning we do instinctively create and inhabit. Hegel's position is that, just as an albatross is instinctively sentient of things at a distance of 20km thanks to its naturally occurring capacity of an impressive olfactory sense, we are instinctively aware of an intricate world, spanning space and time to even more remarkable degrees, because we instinctively develop a conceptual map within which we orient ourselves in experience. We can provide a regressive transcendental argument for this position by appealing to a commonplace experience of us modern-day city dwellers. While at an intersection, we might spontaneously stop an inattentive pedestrian from walking into traffic as we see this happen in the corner of our eye. If this act is to be more than a knee-jerk reaction, but something of which we are cognizant of doing, it can only be possible if we are instinctively making our experience intelligible by an intricate array of categories like those described by Hegel. For to be automatically *aware* that the car moving down the street would harm someone that steps in front of it and *behave accordingly* requires not only a conceptual reflex that can predict what might happen *at that instant*, but also one that, in the background of our day-to-day lives, pieces together our experience of the here and now into the story of a broader, multilayered becoming spread over space and time. First of all, to act so quickly, I must know my surroundings as part of an immanent process in which this present *actuality* (a car in motion) contains others as real *possibilities* (the car traversing the intersection without incident vs. injuring a person), one of which can be realized and when it does become *necessary*; the *causal* series through which said process comes to be (... , someone deciding to drive the car, the engine propelling it, ...); and how these *substances* can *interact* (metal at a high velocity causes the breaking of bones, bodies in response to trauma cause pain). But, for the car and the pedestrian to be taken as objective rather than, say, hallucinations, I must also recognize them to be part of a greater

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Pinkard: "What we encounter in our experiences of a world [...] are unified experiences of particular things embodying general features, experiences of 'this-such' as having their place in a 'whole.' Various judgments articulate the 'this-such' entities we encounter against the complex background of the world as a whole and the kinds of things at stake in 'Being' and 'Essence.'" Pinkard, *Hegel*, 348–49.

picture (the car was driven from somewhere, produced in a factory, can be damaged by the weather; the person walked from their home, has parents, affects the social world around them). As Kant had already argued in the Analogies of Experience (A176-218/B218-265), to differentiate between an objective series of representations (watching a boat go downstream) and a merely subjective one (a house as I walk around it), is only possible because we employ the categories of “causality,” “substance,” and “reciprocity.” Building upon this, Hegel’s assertion is therefore that a robust distinction between *me and the world at large*—the condition of possibility of full-fledged conscious experience—only occurs to the extent that the categories of “actuality” provide the basic structure of such experience: since to be fully aware of who I am requires that I know my existential place in the things and people around me, I only come significantly into my own insofar as I situate myself within a dynamically-unfolding objective series of which I am a part, that is, insofar as I create and inhabit a universe of meaning. It is the basic structure of such a universe, the fundamental concepts that make it up and which we all share, that is subject matter of Hegel’s Objective Logic.

3.7 The transition to the concept: Hegel’s argument for absolute idealism, human freedom, and anti-Spinozism

But such a system of reciprocally interrelated substances, Hegel maintains, is nonetheless not *fully* intelligible. While such a system is putatively a whole that emerges in and through its dovetailing components, the principle by which the whole makes itself into a *distinctive*, but *comprehensive* unity with *these specific* moments whose joining of forces is necessary for said unity is not yet been provided. For that system to be completely intelligible as self-sufficient, Hegel therefore claims that it must be supported by a *concept*, that is, by a *universal* principle in accordance with which all the *particulars* that fall under it are intrinsically interrelated and in virtue of which the universal is recognized as a *singular* universe of determinations (*SL*, 530-549/*GW*, 12: 33-52).¹⁶¹ In other words, only with such a concept supporting a system do we have at hand a conceptually articulated universe of

¹⁶¹ For a full discussion, see below 4.1.1-4.

meaning that is self-contained and self-justifying insofar as all the inferential relations between the concepts that constitute it would be clear, distinct, and explanatorily complete.

Hegel's own example comes from the spiritual realm (*EL*, 229 §156 Addition/*GW*, 23.3: 925-926). We may try, at the level of historical discourse, to explain the relation between the customs and constitution of the Spartan people by arguing that there was a reciprocal interaction between the two in their social system. But this is more of a dynamic going back and forth than a self-instituting whole. To grasp such a whole, we must demonstrate that these two elements were interrelated as expressions of the systematic conception of life led by the Spartan people—that is, by bringing their social system and its dovetailing components under a universal principle (the worldview that they all shared), which only existed insofar as it posited or set itself out (*setzen*) in particular integrated moments (their customs and constitution), whereby they were the singular people that they were (a people with a self-contained and self-justifying way of life made possible by a distinctive normative framework of beliefs and values that contrasted them with other peoples).

With this logical insight gained, we are ready to transition from the Objective to the Subjective Logic, “the concept” having proved itself to be “the truth” of the categories of “being” and “essence,” that which holds both within it as a moment (*EL*, 231 §159/*GW*, 175). As such, it is “the concept,” the process of conceptualization, that *supports* the unity of discourse and hence human experience *from the very beginning*. This constitutes Hegel's logical argument for absolute idealism. Inasmuch as the intelligibility of a systematic whole is only possible as a product of a concept and a concept is that which is produced from within the process of conceptualization—the logical space of reasons navigated through judgment and inference—its intelligibility is sustained and generated by the latter. In this transition, we therefore make explicit what was implicitly the case all along: what makes true the discourses for which the categories of “being” and “essence” supply the basic normative structure is n

not some *adequatio* between idea and reality, but rather the conceptual moves of *discourse as such* in its attempt to give meaning to things and ourselves.¹⁶²

Let's take two examples that will appear in Hegel's Subjective Logic. Our representations "the rose is red" and "gold is a metal," formed by concepts expressed in a judgment and that can figure in a variety of inferences, are not made true by correspondence to something immediately there or the mind-independent structure of reality as providing an external constraint on thinking. Hegel contends that our very consciousness of something immediately there or a mind-independent structure, as an awareness, must be conceptually articulated in order to have any content at all. Consequently, sensory data, perceptual objects, and the objective natural and human worlds are always already products of the process of conceptualization and cannot provide a check for our claims since they already stand in the logical space of reasons.

This has two implications. (1) Our experience of these worlds is *held together* by discourse. Consequently, we are only aware of the redness of the rose insofar as we, in our talk about it, provide some account of it as a universal that specifies itself into particulars, which makes it a singular universe of determinations. That is, we experience it as a fully-formed object with this determination only insofar as we tacitly recognize that it has other determinations, determinations that shift over time as even the here and now of the rose becomes a there and then at the very moment it is discerned, but which coalesce into the experience of this one something only insofar as we provide a conceptually convincing narrative for why they belong together. (2) Since sensory data and perceptual objects are not intractable "givens" nor are the objective and natural human worlds "at large," but each only become meaningfully present in experience in our discourse about them, this means we need a different method for establishing truth. We cannot claim "gold is a metal" and look to what is the case to test it; what we take to be the case is itself a conceptual product. As a result, we take the claim to be true when it is a consequence of a rationally satisfying

¹⁶² Harris makes the same point: "we are making to move to his absolute idealism. All of what we normally take as immediately real (Being) or true (Essence) is actually an ideal (i.e. thoughtfully mediated or interpreted) moment in the Concept. The Understanding takes Concepts to be forms of thinking (as opposed to extension) which represent the reality that is external to them. But the real world is the humanly interpreted world." Harris, "Lecture Notes for Course on Hegel's Encyclopedia Logic," 161–62.

account of what gold is, which assumes the form of an inference: “metals conduct electricity; so does gold; gold is a metal.” But whether we adopt the conclusion as a truth will depend upon whether we accept the reasons given for it. Taking both implications together, we may say that Hegel’s idealism is “absolute” simply because it requires no external support of truth: there is no need to exit discourse because discourse itself decides the content of experience.¹⁶³ As he himself summarizes: “The other of the concept has its independence, its foundation, only insofar as it has the concept as its ground” (*LL*, 171; translation modified/*GW*, 23.2: 772).

In short, the universe of meaning that supplies the structure of human experience is a creation of the logical space of reasons. This is the principal meaning of the transition from “necessity” to “freedom” at this stage in Hegel’s logic: what we experience as *necessary*, mind-independent facts about the natural and human worlds are what we *freely take*—or, in the nomenclature of the German Idealist tradition, *spontaneously posit*—to be facts. With the transition from the categories of “being” and “essence” to those of “the concept,” we thus do not transition, as orthodox Hegelians have it, to a revised Spinozism, but rather to a revised Fichteanism.¹⁶⁴ And this epistemological transcendental argument is simultaneously a transcendental argument for radical human freedom. For the very thinking of the conditions of possibility for recognizing a necessary order involves the “dissolving” of its ironclad hardness, the notion that necessity is some alien fate to which we are subject (*EL*, 232 §159/*GW*, 20: 175-176): in *taking* something to be necessary, we theoretically *determine ourselves to see* it through a perspective that explains why such and such must be and in so doing practically *determine ourselves to act* according to this perspective.

This in turn means, as Hegel puts it, that the process of conceptualization is tantamount to our “*liberation*” (*EL*, 232 §159/*GW*, 20: 176). Since we *demand* and

¹⁶³ Again, here Harris is dead on: “Not ‘things’ (or the world) but knowledge of things (or the world cognized) is what is immediately there.” Harris, 157.

¹⁶⁴ Cf.: “We must go from Spinoza, not to Herder, but to Fichte.” Harris, 154. While many have argued for the Kantian nature of Hegel’s idealism, few have highlighted how its project is, in many ways, more of a reworking of Fichte’s. Two notable exceptions here are Findlay and di Giovanni. See Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-Examination*, 42, 49–52; di Giovanni, “Introduction,” xxvii–xxxiv. Hegel himself speaks of “Fichte’s service” in an aphorism from his time in Jena (*GW*, 5: 502 §74).

therefore *respond* to reasons for belief and action, we never merely *react* to natural causes such as the external stimuli that cause us to have certain sensory data or internal stimuli that biologically or psychologically impel us to do something. In Hegel's words, while "the show of nature lies in the being of things outside of one another," their external determination, "inasmuch as we conceptually comprehend nature, we are therein free" (*LL*, 171; my translation/*GW*, 23.2: 772). Consequently, rationality is *the* determining factor of our behaviour—as Hegel puts it, "thinking or thought is the operative power in human beings" because "all of human intuition, memory, feeling, will, and the like, has its roots in thinking" (*LHP II*, 238/*V*, 6: 277-278)—and logic, as the description of its basic normativity, is the unveiling of the source of our radical freedom: "In the concept the kingdom of *freedom* is disclosed" (*SL*, 513/*GW*, 12: 15). Put differently, to the extent that in order to understand what we experience and how we act in experience we must reconstruct the conceptual moves made in the logical space of reasons, rather than see our experience and action as reducible to nature's causal chain, Hegel maintains that his transcendental argument is the "only possible refutation of Spinozism" (*SL*, 512/*GW*, 12: 15).

But in rejecting Spinozism, the position that all of human behaviour is ultimately describable in naturalist terms, Hegel is not rejecting naturalism *tout court*. He is not, like Kant, proclaiming that the rationality at the foundation of our freedom implies that we exist in some ontological zone that totally transcends the natural order. Yes: Hegel's logic decisively forecloses the possibility that what we believe and how we act can be *reduced* to mere physical, chemical, biological, or psychological mechanisms, no matter how we construe them. Since all aspects of human behaviour are inflected by the logical space of reasons and the basic normativity of this space is only graspable on its own terms, the logical space of reasons is *sui generis*. Yet Hegel's logic also sketches a unique balance of naturalism and non-naturalism with regards to the human being. Inasmuch as rationality is, for Hegel, (1) an instinct or drive that is constitutive of our form of life and (2) instincts, drives, and life are indeed products of our biology and hence also nature at large, Hegel's logic is metaphysically committed to their being a simultaneous *continuity* and *discontinuity* between the domains of nature and spirit. It maintains that, if we are to make intelligible how our rationality enables us to freely determine the course of our experience,

we must assume that nature itself brings forth, in us, something metaphysically new, something that goes beyond the natural order: a self-grounding, self-contained and self-justifying domain of reasons. Consequently, on Hegel's account nature makes room for what Spinoza and other naturalists deem impossible: a "kingdom within a kingdom" (*imperium in imperio*).¹⁶⁵ In this fashion, while, according to Hegel, the rational instinct or drive that makes up our ontologically distinctive form of life can indeed be explained by the natural sciences, just as much as the instincts and drives of other animals can be, nonetheless he advances the following thesis: once such a rational instinct or drive has emerged, the normativity that governs this instinct or drive, just as much as the rational behaviour that it gives rise to, must be grasped internally by the terms that it sets for itself. Put in more contemporary language, although natural science can tell us about the *preconditions* of human rationality (say, a *brain* with certain physical and chemical properties and which plays a role in a biological system and exhibits peculiar psychological mechanisms) and how they ontogenetically came to be (as an evolutionary adaptive strategy that was successful), it can never tell us why we think the way we do, why we come to uphold certain beliefs and values in the logical space of reasons, and why human history, as a product of the evolution of these beliefs and values over time in that space, has the specific shapes that it does. But that does not mean that natural science has no function at all in the story of what spirit is—the story that it tells may be restricted to the "pre-history" of human experience, but the pre-history of our experience is what paves the way for its history all the same. Indeed, this project of exploring how natural science explains the preconditions ontologically necessary for the emergence of spirit out of nature is a project that Hegel himself pursues in his philosophies of nature and spirit, concerned as they are with the biological distinction between animal life and spiritual life, the physiological nature of the human being as a part of nature, and the distinctive psychological mechanisms such as memory that undergird the possibility of the freedom of thought in a full-fledged sense.

These are the philosophical implications of the transition from the Objective to the Subjective Logic. They consist in a certain reversal: while the former concerns itself with

¹⁶⁵ Spinoza, *The Ethics and Selected Letters*, 103 (III pre).

a formal outline of the universe of meaning as defined by the elementary conceptual distinctions we can draw in order to produce an awareness of objects, the latter concerns itself with the process of conceptualization through which those distinctions have rational force over us. In short, while the former is occupied with our realist attitude, a sketch of the ontological framework through which we recognize things as they truly are or ought to be, the latter is occupied with the idealist attitude that supports it: the distinctively human space of reasons that we navigate to gain certainty that such and such exists. In other words, this transition repeats, at the higher level of the medium of formal reflection, the phenomenological transition from consciousness to self-consciousness and reason to spirit in the *Phenomenology*. With this in mind, we can now turn our attention to Hegel's Subjective Logic.

Chapter 4: Subjective Logic: Defining the Distinctively Human Space of Reasons

Whereas Hegel's Objective Logic describes the categories that establish the blueprints for the universe of meaning that informs every waking instant of our experience, the Subjective Logic describes the categories of "the concept": those governing the process of conceptualization, that is, the logical space of reasons that generates and sustains that universe. Consequently, in the concept of "the concept" that it articulates, we have finally reached "*the exposition of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and of a finite spirit*" (SL, 29/GW, 21: 34). For to say that the logical space of reasons is that through which the experiential universe of meaning is supported all along, is to say that it is only through this space that the universe of meaning that we inhabit is created by us in the first place, a creation that only transpires because we have a *subjective* interest in making things and ourselves *objectively* intelligible, indeed, objectively intelligible as possible.

In this regard, the categories that underline this space constitute the most fundamental instincts or drives that make up the "*logical* nature" of the human being as a creature endued with a naturally occurring capacity of "spirit" (thought, discourse, or theoretical mindedness) (SL, 17/GW, 21: 15),¹⁶⁶ namely those distinctive innate patterns of behaviour or "natural logic" (SL, 12, 15, 16, 18/GW, 21: 10, 13, 15, 16) through which it orients itself its environment: the activity of conceiving as transpiring through judgment and inference as that through which we navigate the logical space of reasons. As such, the basic normative structure of this process is not just some colourless, merely formal or artificial rationality only suited to, say, certain specialized contexts, but is the very ontological form of that life, *our* life. In this fashion, the Subjective Logic shows us what makes us, from time immemorial, *human*, that is, *Homo sapiens* by bringing to our awareness that rationality that has always been unconsciously active as the condition of possibility of the fundamental dimensions of human experience: our consciousness of the objects in the world around us; our self-conscious agency in that world; our inborn capacity

¹⁶⁶ See above 2.1-2.

for detached, scientific reason; and even our coming together in communities with shared worldviews, ways of life, and histories. With his concluding analyses, the promise that Hegel made in his preliminary discussions of the nature of logic is to be at last fulfilled: in describing thinking, logic more precisely describes the essence of “spirit” underlying all its rich, manifold shapes.

In the theory of conceiving with which it commences, Hegel’s Subjective Logic describes what we aim for when we conceptualize things and ourselves. We do not generalize from otherwise disparate, immediately given entities, forming merely representational concepts of what they have in common. Instead, we are instinctively driven to form self-contained, self-justifying inferential networks of meaning that stipulate all the possible material implications between concepts and, insofar as their goal is to explain why various entities have the features and properties that they do, make a subject matter fully intelligible. Discourse is, in other words, guided by an ideal of meaning: a “universality” that possesses its “particularity” by means of an inner principle, making itself into a “singularity.”

In the next two sections, Hegel’s Subjective Logic describes the conceptual moves through which such frameworks are constructed as we instinctively navigate the logical space of reasons by deducing all the possible relations between the conceptual determinations of “universality,” “particularity,” and “singularity.” Its theory of judgment describes two dimensions of the instinctive activity of judging. (1) How the specific logical form of each type of judgment enables the undertaking of a *doxastic commitment* in our discursive practice to a specific kind of conceptual relation between “universality,” “particularity,” and/or “singularity” in the logical space of reasons (the genera of perceptual, observational, theoretical, and evaluative commitments and their species). (2) How, in order to make good upon any given commitment, *another commitment* expressible in the logical form of a new type of judgment must be undertaken inasmuch as, in the absence of the latter, an initial commitment lacks full rational force. In a similar vein, its theory of inference describes two dimensions of the instinctive activity of inferring. (1) How the logical form of each type of inference enables us to confer entitlement upon the doxastic commitments that we undertake in our discursive practice by mediating a given conceptual relation from other conceptual relations, giving rise to arguments of distinct

kinds (those based on perceptual facts, scientifically observed matters of facts, essential facts of the matter, and their sub-classifications). (2) The vicissitudes of this conferring: how our entitlement to certain doxastic commitments can come into question and how they can be buttressed. It describes, in short, the communal game of *giving* and *asking* for reasons that we, as rational creatures, play by engaging in discursive practice. Put differently, in both its theory of judgment and inference Hegel's Subjective Logic expounds how each has a *functional* meaning within the logical space of reasons: how the various types of judgment and inference *take up* ("sublate," *aufheben*) one another by qualifying, building upon, and expanding each other such that they always *work together* towards the goal of establishing intelligibility.

4.1 The concept: conceiving and the ideal of meaning towards which it strives

Hegel starts his Subjective Logic with a primer on our average everyday notion of conceiving, what he refers to as "ordinary psychology." It is usually assumed that this activity reworks an opulent plethora of concrete empirical material that is "*just there by itself*" (*SL*, 518/*GW*, 12: 20) by bringing unity into it by abstraction, whereby we extract what is common to otherwise disparate objects to form concepts or classify them according to existing concepts, universals under which these particular objects then fall. In so doing, however, these concepts are construed as hovering, as it were, above said material, which overflows with content that they can never master. As such, despite the unity we bring into this manifold, concepts seem "impoverished" in contrast to it (*SL*, 518/*GW*, 12: 21). As a result, concepts obtain only insofar as they are entrenched in this material, rendering them empty forms into which content, supplied from elsewhere, must be inputted. In this model, concepts are not taken as expressing truth: as abstract, they hold less significance than the concrete, the world of sensible, quotidian experience.

On Hegel's opposed model of conceiving, when we conceive something, we do more than abstract common distinguishing characteristics between things, people, or what have you. Instead, our most principal use of concepts is to make experience intelligible. When we conceive, we therefore do not bring into play *mere representations*, what we often denote by "concepts": we bring into play *theoretical constructions* whose goal is to explain what and why these things are the way they are or what they ought to be. As Hegel

puts it, the concepts that we form and use never have a mere *abstract* universality; they always are, or at least always aspire towards being, a *concrete* universality through which the determinateness of a given kind of object is accounted for by means of an inner principle.¹⁶⁷ For to speak of something as, by way of illustration, a “house” is not to group together objects that otherwise fall apart in virtue of a mark—it is to be aware of something *as a house*, that is, as a material structure built by humans for the purpose of habitation and which has the colors, shape, and layout that it does because they were chosen for its design. It is precisely such a concept of what a house is that makes our experience of it meaningful and existentially significant at all. In this sense, conceiving is much more than a reworking of empirical material: we *go beyond* that material and seek to find *the truth* behind it so that concepts ought to be taken as more substantial than the world of sensible, quotidian experience in that they give it a depth it otherwise would not have. It is the very nature of a concept in general as what makes for the concreteness of what we encounter in experience that is the beginning topic of the Subjective Logic

4.1.1 Universal concepts

That being said, the concept of “the concept,” the process of conceptualization, as it initially enters upon the scene of the Subjective Logic, formally outlines the ideal schematization of an idiosyncratic kind of object: that of the theoretical framework towards which we aspire in the activity of conceiving in order to make something meaningful and existentially significant. As such, it constitutes the basic norms in accordance with which we, instinctively and/or self-consciously, measure the intelligibility of any given real-life instance of conceiving. In the first place, conceiving attempts to recognize a universal concept, what Hegel refers to as “universality”¹⁶⁸: a conceptual determination that remains

¹⁶⁷ I take this point from Pinkard, who suggests that a more apt translation of *Begriff* would be “conception” rather than “concept,” the latter being, in ordinary usage, what Hegel means by *Vorstellung*: “For Hegel, a *Begriff*, a conception is different than a representation (*Vorstellung*). [...] Conceptions express particular beliefs within a system of beliefs. A conception is supposed to explain the determinateness of things that fall under it, whereas a representation of something does not explain anything at all. The representation, for instance, of a dog does not explain anything about the dog.” Pinkard, *Hegel’s Dialectic*, 76.

¹⁶⁸ While in the main body of his logic, Hegel simply refers to “universality” and “particularity,” that these are shorthand for universal and particular *concepts* produced by us is seen in the titles of the respective subsections: “the universal concept” and “the particular concept.”

itself in and through the determinateness of the various conceptual determinations that fall under it and, by falling under it, make up what it is (e.g., a rose remains a rose while being red and fragrant).¹⁶⁹ In other words, the category of “universality” entails that of “particularity”: the universal is only recognizable as a universal insofar as it unites a manifold of particulars in their mutual differences from within its integrating framework. Logically speaking, however, “particularity” itself is also “universality” in that a particular, too, can hold other particulars within itself that it also unites in this manner, whereby each particular repeats the same structure (the concept “red” denotes particular shades). By the same token, “universality” is just as much “particularity,” for it can be united from within the integrating framework of another universal (roses are land plants which also include, for example, tulips), a logical fate to which this more comprehensive universal also succumbs (land plants fall under the kingdom “Plantae”). Nevertheless, while there is a simultaneous “upward” movement of universalization and “downward” one of particularization in the basic normative structure of “universality” so that the distinction between them becomes one of conceptual frame of reference, such a movement is only fully intelligible insofar as there is a “truly higher universal” that completely incorporates said movement in itself (cf. *SL*, 533/*GW*, 12: 36). This “truly higher” universal, one that contains an entire series of divisions and sub-divisions without there being another universal above it, is the most basic meaning of “universality” as the first conceptual

¹⁶⁹ It is worth pointing out that many representatives of the non-metaphysical reading of Hegel’s logic largely pass over its account of “universality,” “particularity,” and “singularity,” focusing instead on its theory of judgment and inference. Cf. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels analytische Philosophie*, 349–53; Paul Redding, “Subjective Logic and the Unity of Thought and Being: Hegel’s Logical Reconstruction of Aristotle’s Speculative Empiricism,” in *Internationales Jahrbuch Des Deutschen Idealismus: Logik / Logic*, ed. Dina Emundts and Sally Sedgwick (Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2017), 165–88; Paul Redding, “The Role of Logic ‘Commonly So Called’ in Hegel’s Science of Logic,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 22, no. 2 (2014): 286ff.; Paul Redding, “Hegel’s Subjective Logic as a Logic for (Hegel’s) Philosophy of Mind,” *Hegel Bulletin Hegel Bulletin*, 2016, 8ff. There is, that being said and as we shall shortly see (see below 4.2), a good reason for this: according to Hegel, judgment is the first unit of meaning, a meaning that comes to fruition in syllogism as that which establishes the rationality of judgment. Nevertheless, to the extent that Hegel’s theory of judgment and inference refashions classical logic by showing how the logical form of each type articulates different conceptual relations between “universality,” “particularity,” and “singularity,” a detailed understanding of his theory of judgment and inference are required for its full appreciation. There is, it should be highlighted, a notable exception to this trend: John W. Burbidge, *On Hegel’s Logic: Fragments of a Commentary* (Prometheus Books, Publishers, 1995), 111–24.

determination of the ideal product of “the concept” (in our example, this would be the all-encompassing universal “life”).

4.1.2 Particular concepts

This leads to a logical analysis of the basic normative structure of the category of “particularity” entailed by that of “universality.” By placing the focus of logical analysis on the latter, insisting on what is self-identical in difference, Hegel’s point in this transition is that we have overlooked how the two terms are reciprocally interrelated in the ideal product towards which this activity strives—in short, how the moment of difference is crucial to this self-identity. This is because, while each particular must exemplify a universal *equally*, meaning that there is no constitutive difference of kind between them (a rose is *just as much* a land plant as a tulip), each must also exemplify it *uniquely* if the universal is to effectively unite them (it would make no sense to distinguish between them if they were not *different* types of land plant). Furthermore, to the extent that a universal is only determinate in and through the determinateness that falls under it, it is only *fully* determinate when its determinateness has been *exhaustively specified*, that is, made into what Hegel calls a “totality” (we could never be sure to have understood the kingdom “Plantae” if some kinds of plants fell outside of the integrating framework of this universal) (*SL*, 534/*GW*, 12: 37).¹⁷⁰

How exactly, then, is the totality of particulars related to the universal that unities them? Here Hegel sets apart two possible fashions of construing this reciprocal relation: the completeness and principle model. Inasmuch as these particulars are differentiated from one another, we can take their totality as a *mere* diversity of terms that stand on their own (*SL*, 534/*GW*, 12: 37). The universal then expresses a defining characteristic that they all share, thus connecting them to one another. The logical problem is that, because each particular is self-subsistent, the totality of particulars through which the universal is fully determinate is “complete simply insofar as there are *no more* of them (*SL*, 534/*GW*, 12: 37). As a result, *even if* all its particulars were enumerated, this completeness would still be “unconstrained, contingent” (*SL*, 534/*GW*, 12: 37): there is nothing that *guarantees* that the totality is actually complete nor that the universal captures it. In this case, “universality”

¹⁷⁰ This point concerning exhaustive specification I take from Burbidge, *On Hegel’s Logic*, 115.

risks being a “merely external reflex,” something that *happens* to collect together terms that lie otherwise dispersed (*einheitslos*), rather than effectively bring them into unity (*Einheit*) (*SL*, 534/*GW*, 12: 37).

Hegel’s argument is that the relation between “universality” and “particularity” can only be made fully intelligible insofar as the former specifies *itself* into the latter, indeed exhaustively specifies itself so, by means of an inner principle all of its own. For only in that eventuality is its totality and hence its own unity recognizable as complete. In Hegel’s words, “universality” *posits* (*setzen*) its own determinateness, its own “particularity,” as what “results from” it, in virtue of which each particular also has an “*immanent connection*” to one another since, given that principle, an account has been provided for their identity and difference (*SL*, 534/*GW*, 12: 37). In more contemporary philosophical language, we must conceive, in a rationally-satisfying manner, how a totality of particulars *follows from* the very meaning of a universal and how, thanks to its intrinsic meaning, the meaning of one particular already *implies* the meaning of all other particulars (e.g., from the concept “rose” follows that it is by nature “red” and “fragrant,” just as much as for it to be “red” is also for it to be “fragrant” because its nature deploys both as different strategies for pollination).¹⁷¹

4.1.3 Singular systems of concepts

Next, Hegel argues that if the category of “universality” entails that of “particularity,” both equally entail the category of “singularity.” In light of a principle, “universality” and “particularity” show themselves to coincide: the universal means *nothing more* than its consummate particularization, whereas each and every particular is an interrelated part of

¹⁷¹ As will be demonstrated, this is first actualized in judgment as that through which we define a concept by stipulating the multitude of relations between different concepts that alone provide the meaning of any given concept (e.g., “the rose is red,” “the rose is fragrant,” “if the rose is red and fragrant, then it is pollinating,” all of which determine what we mean by the concept “rose”). In this context, however, Hegel is initially abstracting from judgment as the primordial unit of meaning. In other words, this is an artificial reconstruction of the activity of conceiving whose purpose is to separate elements that are, in fact, never separated in actual discourse in order to make the various elements that contribute to meaning more intelligible to the logician. In a nutshell, it is a matter of presentation. This is not unlike how, in a grammar textbook for a highly declined language, each declension is initially analyzed on its own, although in actual speech they are typically only ever used in conjunction with one another.

a differential totality of particulars that *is* the consummate particularization of the universal. With this, the object defined by the universal and its particularization has become a self-referential whole: the universal forecloses all reference to any determinations that it *itself* does not posit according to its principle in that its theoretical framework explains everything that falls within its grasp (to play with the German word *Griff*, the same root of “concept” and “to conceive,” *Begriff* and *begreifen*) without any extra-logical remainder. It is, in this precise sense, a singular (cf. *SL*, 513/*GW*, 12: 16): it signifies, as it were, *one* object that stands by itself in contrast to others, a fully formed, self-standing entity replete with rich, intelligible content that makes it radically distinct from others—in short, a self-contained, self-justifying *universe of determinations*. Whereas “universality” emphasizes the *identity* of such a universe, its internal coherence, and “particularity” its internal *difference*, “singularity” emphasizes how its theoretical framework is *self-enclosed*.

Through the above, Hegel has completed his description of the basic norms undergirding the activity of conceiving, that ideal of meaning towards which it strives. Indeed, this ideal maps on to how we actually talk: our everyday and specialized discourses are concerned with making sense of things and ourselves, the necessary background of which is the assumption that they can be made fully intelligible, that is, that they are self-contained, self-justifying universes of determinations open to conceptualization. In short, we always approach experience with the *expectation* that whatever we encounter has the kind of unity formally outlined in the concept of “the concept”: that everything is a universal (has a self-identity) that both remains itself in and through all its variety of particulars while explaining them (the features and properties that make up this identity), which makes it the distinctive thing that it is (something singular).¹⁷²

¹⁷² On this point, I disagree with various commentators. For instance, Burbidge argues that “singularity” arises when, through abstraction, the understanding isolates a particular from the universal to such an extent that it becomes devoid of all conceptual determination and by consequence becomes a singular referent of thought. Burbidge, *On Hegel’s Logic*, 119–24; Burbidge, *The Logic of Hegel’s “Logic,”* 83–84; John W. Burbidge, “Conceiving,” in *A Companion to Hegel*, ed. Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur (2011: Blackwell, n.d.), 163. A similar, but modified argument is provided by Ioannis Trisokkas, “Hegel on the Particular in the Science of Logic,” *The Owl of Minerva* 43, no. 1/2 (2011): 24–28. I take it that a singular, for Hegel, is a conceptually articulated universe of meaning in accordance with which a referent of thought is made intelligible. Here I am closer to two commentators. Taylor speaks of how a universal must not only be the “inner principle of a diversified totality,” but also “has to have real,

4.1.4 The basic normative structure of an inferential network of meaning

We can expand upon Hegel's logical analysis of the reciprocal interrelation between the categories of "universality," "particularity," and "singularity" in the following manner. Its principal argument is that any given concept (a universal) that discourse operates with is concrete to the degree that it posits *a logically complete inferential network of relations between other concepts*, that is, sets out all the possible material inferential consequences and material incompatibilities between them (a totality of particulars), but in such a way that why these consequences and incompatibilities exist is explained from within said network and the principle by which it is constructed. Moreover, inasmuch as the relation between each concept in this network is one of implication, no matter which node of this network that you have, as it were, in front of you, you already have the entire network at your disposal (the network is a singular, a self-contained, self-justifying universe of meaning). Such concreteness—a "growing together" of conceptual determinations, to refer this term's Latin roots—is foundational to the meaning of a concept for Hegel: without laying down an inferential network, a concept has no specifiable content.¹⁷³ This is another reason why Hegel is not a pragmatist: the meaning of a concept is not determined by how we *use* it, but rather by how we *define* it. Semantics precedes pragmatics, not the inverse.¹⁷⁴

Let's take an example: the concept "human being." When we apply this concept in discourse, we do more than consult a representation of what is common to various living organisms, namely those with rationality. The concept posits a complex series of relations between concepts, thereby internally articulating a whole system of beliefs about what it is to be human that we appeal to whenever we make something intelligible something as a

external existence, and as such be a particular thing, *Einzelnes* (sometimes better translated as 'individual')." Taylor, *Hegel*, 302, 308. According to Findlay, "singularity" arises because to conceive of a universal is to not only think of the particulars that fall under it, but also of the "to possible individuals to whom such a Notion might be applied." Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-Examination*, 224–25.

¹⁷³ Taylor parses out "the concept" along similar lines: "Translating Hegel out of his own language, we come to a thesis which would be widely accepted today: a concept is necessarily bound with other concepts: no concept can be introduced on its own. We cannot be said to have a *concept* of something if we can say nothing about this thing except to apply this concept to it." Taylor, *Hegel*, 305.

¹⁷⁴ A more sustained argument for why Hegel is not a pragmatist will be given in the conclusion. See below 5.3.

human. It articulates, to mention a few examples, all the fashions through which a human can be particularized: the different ways that we can be, by nature, sexed (X, XX, XXY, XY, XYY, XXXY, etc.); the genders that we can have (cis, trans, agender, queer, etc.); the languages that we can speak (English, German, French, Chinese, etc.); and so on. Moreover, it also articulates information about various qualities or properties that a human being can have: we can be physically tall or short and spiritually learned or unwise, while also indicating that physical qualities are, given what the concept “human” tells us about what any person truly is or ought to be, more accidental traits of our being, whereas the latter spiritual qualities are more important to understanding who we are. In this regard, the concept makes intelligible a self-contained, self-justifying universe of determinations, the universe of humans, such that if the concept is sufficiently set out in discourse, we have no need to leave the inferential network that it defines to be aware of what the human being is: the concept then captures what we are in truth.

4.1.5 The logical proof of the impotence of nature

This logically complete inferential network of conceptual relations sets, in short, the norm for what counts as a fully intelligible object: a self-contained and self-justifying universe of determinations. As such, it is the most fundamental *a priori* element that we bring to experience and against which we measure its intelligibility and which we, in making experience intelligible, expect to discover realized. Consequently, any empirical inferential network is only effective to the extent that it attains to this ideal of meaning. But Hegel’s logical point is that an empirical inferential network can *never* attain to this ideal one. Only in the reciprocal interrelation between the conceptual determinations of “universality,” “particularity,” and “singularity” as described *in logic* is there perfect transparency between its terms, for it formally outlines the discursive standard for what would be fully meaningful and which real-life discourse can only ever approximate:¹⁷⁵

As the absolute form itself, the concept is every *determinacy*, but
as it is in its truth. Thus, although the concept is at the same time

¹⁷⁵ Harris, commenting on the below remark, rightly puts it: “Compared with it [the concreteness of ‘the concept’], ordinary concrete things are only abstractions (just like their representative concepts ‘in our minds’[)].” Harris, “Lecture Notes for Course on Hegel’s Encyclopedia Logic,” 172.

abstract, it is what is concrete and, indeed, the absolutely concrete [*das schlechthin Konkrete*] [...] Everything else concrete, as rich as it may be, is not so inwardly identical with itself and, for that reason, in itself not as concrete, least of all what one commonly understands by the concrete, a manifold externally held together (*EL*, 239 §164 Remark/*GW*, 20: 180-181).

This should not come as a shock. Here in the Subjective Logic, “the concept” has *itself* as a subject matter (*ein Gegenstand*) to make intelligible (into an *Objekt*). The universal that it unearths *is* the universal, the particular, and the singular as these ideally should reflect one another: when the task of the Subjective Logic is finished, there will thus be no distinction between the concept of “the concept” (the conceptual objectivity constituted) and “the concept” (what is being conceptualized), whereby a *complete adequatio* between them the two emerges, rendering logic the only discourse in principle capable of full rational satisfaction. However, logic only concerns itself with the *form* of thinking, not the specific *empirical content* that it makes intelligible whenever we, in experience, think about something. To believe that real-life discourse can display the same level of transparency as the basic normative structure of rationality is like believing that, since the rules of a grammar constitute a coherent system *on their own terms*—a system whose very inner ordering is that which enables us to formally measure the meaningfulness of any given speech act because its inner ordering dictates what counts as meaningful and not—the subject matters of our conversations must also.

Once again, this just goes to show that Hegel does not ascribe to some ultra-rationalist metaphysics of nature on logical considerations. For instance, he expressly states that, in contradistinction to how, in logic, the category of “universality” entails that of “particularity,” the conceptual relations between universals and their particulars that we find in nature display an insurmountable air of contingency (*SL*, 536/*GW*, 12: 39). While each natural universal *does* have a principle positing the totality of its particulars, this principle is never rationally satisfying. Let’s return to our example of biology. The first major particularization of the universal “life” are the three domains of “archaea,” “bacteria,” and “Eukaryota”; domains are further particularized into kingdoms; kingdoms into phyla; and so on until we arrive at the bottom level of particularization that is species.

However, there *could have been*, in principle, more or less particularization at any level and there may be *factual* restrictions to what we can make intelligible in the biological world (we continually discover organisms that seem to defy these neat classifications). But this is not due to some limitation on knowledge. For instance, genera have, by their very nature, an indefinite number of species and the differences between them are largely accidental, reducing this totality to a mere diversity.¹⁷⁶ Why, for instance, are there only approximately 4,000 species of mammals and over 350,000 species of beetles? There is nothing in the concept of what “mammal” and “beetle” are that provides a principle through which all the possible particular species follow (unlike how, say, from the concept “natural number,” it follows that there are only even and odd natural numbers and we have a formal rule for generating all of them). As a direct effect of these ontologically opaque relations between its universals and particulars, the biological universe of meaning is not a singular, self-contained and self-justifying one.

According to Hegel, nature *itself*, whether we are at the level of mechanics, physics, chemistry, or biology, displays such logically “messy” relations between its determinations: “This is the impotence of nature, that it cannot abide by and exhibit the rigor of the concept and loses itself in a blind manifoldness void of concept” (*SL*, 536/*GW*, 12: 39). But we have to be clear on why exactly this is so. Hegel’s argument is that nature *just is what it is*. That is, it has no need for clear, distinct, or explanatorily complete reasons for it to be this way rather than otherwise. On the contrary, it is *we* who need to see reasons everywhere inasmuch as we are creatures who are instinctively driven to seek intelligibility and therefore will expect it to be present even where it cannot be found. The issue is therefore this: once nature is made to stand in the logical space of reasons, made an “immediacy” to be explained or “mediated,” it is forced to play a game that it is bound to lose in that nature is not a product of some cosmic Mind or Spirit (“mind” or “spirit” is a distinctively and uniquely human capacity) whose Reason supplies a rationale for everything that is, but a product of its factually existing forms and becoming. It is we, in

¹⁷⁶ As Taylor summarizes: “the ordinary genus groups a diverse set of species which does not follow any necessary articulation which can be deduced from its Concept. The genus of birds includes a whole row of species neither whose number nor whose differentiae show any necessity whatsoever.” Taylor, *Hegel*, 303. Cf. Mure, *A Study of Hegel’s Logic*, 164.

other words, who *write contingency into nature*, who *make it* impotent, by measuring its system against the ideal of meaning that orients all our rational activities. Put differently, in the opening sections of the Subjective Logic Hegel is unearthing the categories that made it so that the experience of modern scientific reason, as internally explored in the *Phenomenology*, was unable, despite its confidence to bring all reality under its intelligent apprehension, to find rational satisfaction—he is, that is, repeating at the level of formal reflection why speculative reason is a necessary fundamental dimension of experience and why it has certain restrictions in achieving the satisfaction that is its own.¹⁷⁷

4.1.6 From the concept to judgment and syllogism: the construction of an inferential network of meaning

It is Hegel's wager that the basic normative structure of "the concept," the ideal product of the activity of conceiving, opens up onto the basic normative structure of the activities of judging and inferring. The idea behind the transition is as follows: while this ideal product formally outlines a self-contained, self-justifying inferential network of conceptual relations, it has yet been said how these relations between concepts come about. After all, in order for such a network to emerge, concepts have to be first *put in relation* if they are to command rational force as entailing one another¹⁷⁸ and a *formal case has to be made for their relation* if their rational force is to be secured. However, putting concepts in relation with one another is precisely what the logical tradition takes as the work of judgment and making a formal case for any given relation between concepts is precisely what it takes as the work of inference. As a result, rather than being three separate activities, the activities of conceiving, judging, and inferring prove to be coeval, namely, part and parcel of one process of conceptualization. To the extent, therefore, that the activity of conceiving is one that strives towards a certain relation between "universality," "particularity," and "singularity," Hegel maintains that we should refashion (and therefore he renames) all the traditional logical forms of judgment and inference in terms of these basic conceptual

¹⁷⁷ See above 1.4.1.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. John McTaggart Ellis McTaggart, *A Commentary on Hegel's Logic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), 199.

determinations and all the possible conceptual relations between them that they put forward and back up.

Consequently, for Hegel the logical peculiarity of judgment is not to express a conceptual relation between a subject and a predicate. Instead, insofar as the goal of conceiving is to construct an inferential network of meaning and judgment must contribute to this goal, in the latter “universality,” “particularity,” and “singularity” alternately occupy the subject and predicate positions. In this regard, each type of judgment *stipulates a certain kind of conceptual relation* between these conceptual determinations, thereby forging a certain inferential link in a network in virtue of the unique logical function of its respective form. Nevertheless, we must keep in mind that rationality is, on Hegel’s account, essentially normative:¹⁷⁹ insofar as *I* take a given conceptual relation as rational, I demand from *you* consensus, and vice versa. As such, each type of judgment is what enables *the undertaking of a doxastic commitment* to a specific kind of state of affairs that we and others are to take as objectively existing within a discursive practice that is an intrinsically social practice as you and I hold ourselves and one another to the rationality of our claims. To anticipate, a positive judgment of existence, an example of which would be “the shirt is black,” stipulates a relation between a presumed singular subject and an abstract or qualitative universal, which corresponds to a commitment in our practice to the objectivity of a perceptual fact. Similarly, an apodictic judgment of the concept, such as “that’s a good film,” stipulates a relation between a singular subject that embodies the universal norm of what it should be, which reflects an evaluative commitment to it being objectively so in our practice.

By the same token, the logical peculiarity of syllogism is not to justify a judgment *x* by demonstrating that it follows from judgments *y* and *z*. As we have just seen, Hegel’s theory of judgment is one in which the logical forms of judgment stipulate a certain conceptual relation between “universality,” “particularity,” and “singularity.” Likewise, syllogism is refashioned as that which makes a formal case for why a given conceptual relation, as stipulated by a given form of judgment, is authorized as a conclusion insofar the objectivity of that relation is shown to follow from other judgments. In this manner, the

¹⁷⁹ See above 2.1.

minor, middle, and major terms of syllogism are replaced by the universal, particular, and singular and their different varieties. For convenience, Hegel formalizes the patterns of inference with the general schemas S-P-U, P-S-U, and S-U-P. However, given the essentially normative nature of rationality, each type of syllogism is therefore that which enables us, in discourse, to *confer entitlement upon certain doxastic commitments* to specific kinds of states of affairs that we and others are to take as objectively existing or *put these entitlements in question* by affirming or denying the rationality of our claims—whether these claims and their commitments be perceptual, evaluative, or something else. Once again to anticipate, by appeal to a syllogism of existence I may justify a positive judgment of existence such as “the hike was pleasing” by contending that this is entailed by two previous claims of mine that you have accepted: “exercise is pleasant” and “that hike was a workout.” As a result, the relation between a singular subject and an abstract or qualitative universal taken as capturing something about its nature is mediated by a relation between a universal and a particular, of which the initial universal is acknowledged as a moment. Comparably, we might dispute the moral standing of the apodictic judgment of the concept “that white lie was the right thing to do” by arguing, on the basis of some account of what the right is in a disjunctive syllogism, that it does not fit any of the criteria. In virtue of such conceptual moves, the relation between a singular subject and the universal taken as being identical with its nature is denied by showing that, since the universal does not specify itself as this particular, there is no possible mediation between the singular subject and said universal.

To the extent that syllogism is the “truth” of judgment—that is, it is only by being taken as justified or justifiable that claims can have a rational force in our discursive practice—Hegel’s Subjective Logic here describes the basic rational norms in accordance with which the process of conceptualization, what he designates by “the concept,” is a logical space of reasons that is only realizable only as a *communal game of giving and asking for reasons*. As Hegel puts it, it is in spirit and spirit alone—in the historically unfolding universe of meaning that we create and inhabit together, a universe of meaning realized in the social practices of politics, science, art, religion, and philosophy—that “the concept” concretely exists (*EL*, 239 §164 Remark/*GW*, 20: 180).

In other words, with the transition to judgment and syllogism we are now unearthing the essence of “spirit” as characterized by the desire for what Hegel calls in the *Phenomenology* “recognition.” For it defines the logical syntax of the conceptual process through which we have, in virtue of our naturally occurring capacity for thought, discourse, or theoretical “mindedness,” a tendency to produce and modify, by working through the rationality of our claims and the commitments that they bring about in our real-life discourses, *like-minded* attitudes towards the things around us and ourselves, *shared* understandings of the natural and human worlds that provide the social norms that underline our communal worldviews, ways of life, and their histories as the fundamental normative framework of human experience. In this respect, all the possible relations between conceptual determinations utterable in judgment and inference define not just the rationality of our language, but also the ontologically distinctive form of life that we, as necessarily linguistic creatures, must live. In this fashion, it describes those categories that made possible the social practices that tacitly informed the experience of self-conscious agency and expressly informed that of communal spirit as internally explored in the *Phenomenology*.¹⁸⁰

4.2 Judgment: the basic normative structure of doxastic commitments

In traditional logic, as Hegel remarks, judgment consists in the mere “combination” or “connecting” of two concepts (*SL*, 553, 558/*GW*, 12: 56, 61), one occupying the place of the subject term and the other the predicate term, yet each term being otherwise self-subsistent. On his account, however, judgment is never a matter of gluing together two independent concepts that have a meaning on their own. Since a concept only has meaning insofar as it participates in an inferential network of meaning, judgment specifies the very meaning of concepts by constructing such an inferential network in which concepts entail relations of material inferential consequences and incompatibilities with one another, so that, because of the commitments thereby undertaken, any given concept entails, by itself, an inferential network of such relations, which, in turn, dictates how it is to be used in discourse. Hegel exploits a non-translatable wordplay to facilitate this transition from the

¹⁸⁰ See above 1.3 and 1.5.

formal outline of the inferential network of meaning to judgment. He argues that we have seen that “the concept” *differentiates itself* into the moments of “universality,” “particularity,” and “singularity.” Consequently, the primordial activity of “the concept” is the originaive division of itself (*die ursprüngliche Teilung seiner* or *Ur-Teilung seiner*) into a self-referential whole of conceptual relations (*SL*, 549/*GW*, 12: 52). This conceptual process is nothing other than what we mean by “judgment” (*Urteil*) as that through which conceptual relations are first stipulated: “Judging is therefore *another* function than conceiving; or rather, it is *the other function* of the concept, for it is the *determining* of the concept through itself.” (*SL*, 550/*GW*, 12: 53)

The central thesis of Hegel’s theory of judgment can be gleaned from mundane claims like “cats are agile,” scientific ones like “insulin regulates glucose in the blood,” or ethical ones like “Sam is virtuous.” These claims do not attach together concepts whose meaning is pre-given, as if readymade for judgment—instead, we stipulate (part of) what we mean by them in the first place. Indeed, the mere conceiving of the concepts “cat,” “insulin,” or “Sam” tells us nothing determinate about these subject matters. In this regard, Hegel offers, contra Aristotelian term logic, a type of propositional logic wherein judgments are the basic unit of meaning: unless conceptual distinctions are asserted, *nothing is intelligible*. Furthermore, since our conscious experience of things and ourselves depends upon being aware of the conceptual distinctions that determine what something is and is not, and it is the types of judgment that underline the basic norms according to which such conceptual distinctions are to be drawn, the activity of judgment is thus *the creation of the (intelligible) world (of human experience)*: “Judgment is what we call the act of creation [*Schöpfung*], [the] producing [*Erschaffen*] of the world is the originate division. God is this: to posit distinction.” (*LL*, 182; my translation/*GW*, 23.2: 777-778) For Hegel, we are, as judges, therefore truly God-like in that we create a universe of meaning that otherwise would not exist, as it were, *ex nihilo*, a universe that we then inhabit in our day-to-day lives.

Hegel’s theory of judgment advances one more highly original thesis. Not only do concepts only acquire meaning by being put in relation with one another, but also no judgment has a meaning on its own. Judgment is, by definition, *functional*: the rationality of the specific content of *any* logical form of judgment is determined by the support it

receives from *other* logical forms. As a result, in the conceptual movement from one type of judgment to the next, we are to give witness to how we, as agents in discourse, make various kinds of claims (perceptual, observational, theoretical, and evaluative) by reflecting, instinctively and/or self-consciously, upon the commitments that they come equipped with and how these commitments require other claims with new commitments to be made good upon rationally, and these others still. At each step, Hegel's Subjective Logic thereby seeks to demonstrate how discourse *itself*, by broaching a theme (seeking to comprehend something), may encounter a certain problem in establishing meaning (an "immediacy"), but is subsequently able to supersede this problem. It does so not by leaving it behind, but rather by containing it in a new discursive context that it itself creatively brings forth in a norm-governed fashion to resolve that problem, at once qualifying, building upon, and expanding it so that eventually, through this procedure, full meaningfulness ("mediation") bursts forth through the inner life of discourse as it progressively develops itself in facing and overcoming its problems by internal resources. It is to the extent that the forms of judgment are shown to functionally require one another that Hegel believes to furnish a completeness proof of them.

4.2.1 Judgments of existence: commitments to mere perceptual facts

Judgment is that through which the conceptual relations of an inferential network of meaning are stipulated. By definition, however, such an inferential network is only fully intelligible as a singular universe of determinations. In other words, the necessary discursive background of judgment is the *a priori* conception of a singular subject with a number of particular determinations held together by a universal principle. Hegel's thesis is that in all our language, whether it be that of quotidian practical life or science, we always assume that that of which we speak is a unified *this such and such* and not a *mere this* (or, in more standard philosophical language, a *bare particular*). This unity is taken as something that precedes and underlines all judging (cf. *SL*, 554/*GW*, 12: 56-57) such that all judgement is measured by the degree to which it achieves the expression of this unity (cf. *SL*, 552/*GW*, 12: 55).¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹ Cf. Pinkard, *Hegel's Dialectic*, 79.

In this regard, the most elementary logical judgment has to be one that defines a universal with respect to a putatively immediately concrete singular subject whose nature it is supposed to express. It thus takes the form of the positive judgment “the singular is the universal.” Nevertheless, the initial specification of a universal has to be abstract: the very first conceptual move discourse can make is to take some immediately present *sensory quality* (cf. *EL*, 246 §172/*GW*, 20: 186) as capturing what the singular subject is.¹⁸² The reason why we start here is the same one for why we started in the Doctrine of Being with the categories of “quality”: the logical beginning of discourse can only consist in the picking out of simple unities just there, which then provide the basis upon which further, more complex claims can be warranted.¹⁸³ As such, the positive judgment is a sub-type of what Hegel calls “judgments of existence” (his reworking of “judgments of quality”) as those that undertake commitments to *perceptual facts* in the here and now of experience. Indeed, inasmuch as the categories of “being” provide the basic normativity for discourses through which we can pick out such unities, judgments of existence therefore create the discursive contexts in which these categories can be systematically deployed by being put in relation to one another within an inferential network. In other words, Hegel’s theory of judgment is now re-casting the Objective Logic—he refers to its “reproduction” (*EL*, 245 §171 Remark/*GW*, 20: 186) and “transformation” (*EL*, 246 §171 Addition/*GW*, 23.3: 934)—by showing how its categories, now analyzed as determinate concepts, are put to use.

Positive judgment

One of Hegel’s examples of a positive judgment, that through which a commitment is undertaken to a subject having a certain sensory quality, is “the rose is red” (*SL*, 558/*GW*, 12: 61). While judgments of perceptual fact may seem logically uninteresting—everyone, even toddlers learning language make them with ease—their basic normative structure is

¹⁸² Once again, “sensory” and “quality” are not to be construed in terms of mere qualia. “Quality,” for Hegel, is a logical category signifying a kind of immediate unity that can be recognized in something, which he takes to be at the foundation of typically human sensory experience of “this” or “that.” See above 3.2.

¹⁸³ See above 3.2.

such that, in making them, discourse is already constructing a rudimentary inferential network in two ways. (1) They stipulate that the subject is a universal in which the predicate *inheres* as one of its particularizations (the concept “rose” is taken as differentiating *itself* into “redness,” the former entailing the latter as a moment of its inferential network). (2) They stipulate that the predicate is a universal of which the subject is a particular *instantiation* (the concept “redness” is taken as differentiating *itself* into the particular “red rose,” the former entailing the latter as a moment of its inferential network).

Discourse, however, encounters a two-fold logical problem in upholding the rationality of such a commitment. On the one hand, the singular subject is taken, by definition, as a universe of determinations. As such, its meaning is not exhausted by the predicate asserted to inhere in it. The rose is not just red, but also fragrant, in bloom, and so on (cf. *SL*, 561/*GW*, 12: 64). On the other, the sensory universal is taken, once again by definition, to apply to not just this singular subject, but to many: its extension is not exhausted by this one instantiation (*SL*, 561/*GW*, 12: 64). Roses, political symbols, fire hydrants, and many other things are also red.¹⁸⁴ In this manner, the sensory universal is, in the distinctively Hegelian sense, an abstract universal.

Negative judgment

To consistently uphold the commitment undertaken by positive judgment, the latter therefore requires the support of negative judgment of the form “the singular is not the universal” if it is to be made intelligible that the singular and universal do not exhaust one another. In the first place, this form makes it explicit that the universal is but *one* of the many universals that inhere in the singular. In the second place, it makes explicit that the singular is but *one* instantiation of the universal. The net result of this logical negation is therefore a commitment to the singular and universal being *open to more determination*. In describing how a positive judgment normatively demands a negative judgment that itself calls for further conceptualization of the singular and universal, Hegel is describing the logical presuppositions behind why we, already at the level of the most rudimentary

¹⁸⁴ There *could* be, of course, a universal that only applies to one singular in the universe. But Hegel here is not dealing with real-life cases, but rather with the logical form of “universality” itself as he understands it, the basic normative structure of which is to entail a totality of particulars.

sensory experience of a perceptual fact in the here and now of experience, are instinctively driven *to know more and more*: what else the rose is over and above being red, what else may be red other than the rose, and so on—that is, why the most rudimentary sensory experience already partakes in the creation of a universe of meaning.

Nevertheless, another logical problem arises in upholding the rationality of this new commitment. In virtue of the logical negation at play, it has been brought into the open of logical space that neither the singular nor universal exhaust one another. However, while a singular is a “universe of qualities” (*SL*, 561/*GW*, 12: 64) and a universal has a wider extension than a single positive judgment can express, the singular cannot contain *all* qualities nor does a universal have an *unlimited* extension. But this is something that the negative judgment cannot state, even if it is implied.

Infinite judgment

To be made more fully intelligible, the singular and universal must therefore be conceptually demarcated from everything that they cannot be. This requires a new type of judgment, which Hegel, following Kant, calls “the infinite judgment” and which also assumes the form “the singular is not the universal.” The apparent similarity of logical form notwithstanding, the function of the logical negation is quite different: it asserts the radical non-identity between subject and predicate, thereby committing us to the impossibility of any inferential link between them in their respective inferential networks of meaning. Take, for instance, the example: “the rose is not an elephant” (*SL*, 567/*GW*, 12: 70).

Although infinite judgments are “*correct or true*,” they are, as Hegel rightly points out, also “nonsensical and fatuous.” (*SL*, 567/*GW*, 12: 70) But he is not thereby contending that this logical form of judgment is thus inane.¹⁸⁵ At the level of average everyday existence, it is, of course, obvious that the rose is not an elephant, but nonetheless these non-relations, what something is not, *are* part and parcel of what we mean by such concepts. While we may not *consciously* ever make such judgments, except perhaps in the

¹⁸⁵ Hegel is often construed as meaning precisely this. Cf. Findlay speaks of the “complete nugatoriness” of the infinite judgment wherein “the whole form of Judgment becomes a hollow sham,” while Harris refers to “the absurd forms of the identical judgment and the so-called infinite judgment.” Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-Examination*, 233–34; Errol E. Harris, *An Interpretation of the Logic of Hegel* (University Press of America, 1983), 231.

highly specialized context of logic, such judgments shape, albeit *unconsciously*, all our inferential networks. Their achievement is to commit us to radical material incompatibilities between concepts.

Another logical problem now shows its ugly head. The singular and universal can only be *effectively* put in a conceptual relation of radical material incompatibility if each is a self-enclosed inferential network of conceptual relations. Otherwise, we could not foreclose the possibility that inferential links between them could be forged. To make good upon our commitment, a new commitment must thus be undertaken. This is made possible, Hegel argues, by the introduction of the positive infinite judgment of the form “the singular is the singular” and “the universal is the universal,” his twist on what the tradition calls “tautology.” Whereas a tautology is the mere identity of something with itself ($a=a$), on Hegel’s logical analysis the positive infinite judgment says something much more: “[t]he singular is thus *posited* as *expanding* into *its predicate*, which is identical with it,” equally as much as “the universal is posited also as a turning back into itself.” (*SL*, 568/*GW*, 12: 70), whereby a commitment is undertaken to their self-enclosedness. Consequently, the universal through which the subject becomes intelligible can no longer be treated as an *abstract*, sensory universal discerned in the here and now of experience as just present in a singular, which leaves upon the logical consideration that it is merely haphazardly so present and expresses nothing substantial about the singular at hand. It is, as Hegel says, “posited as a universal that has collected itself together into a unity through the connection of different terms” (*SL*, 568/*GW*, 12: 71), by dint of which the predicate has acquired the meaning of a *class* that groups together various entities as *belonging to it* as members.

4.2.2 Judgments of reflection: commitments to observed matters of fact

The aim of the process of conceptualization is to discover a universal that, in and through its own nature, posits all the particular determinations that make up a singular object. At the end stage of the judgments of existence, we have a universal that, rather than being just directly realized in the here and now of the experience of one object, has an extension over and beyond the latter. As such, its further determination may lead to the eventual discovery of a universal that does capture something essential about why a whole group of objects is the way it is. To be more fully intelligible, judgments of existence therefore require the support of “judgments of reflection” (Hegel’s reworking of “judgments of quantity”) as

those through which we, by observing experience over space and time, instinctively and/or self-consciously make generalized claims about things and ourselves.

While judgments of reflection formally outline the basic normativity of claims about class membership, Hegel understands the latter in a unique manner. His examples of appropriate predicates are “being mortal,” “perishable,” “useful,” “harmful,” “hard,” “elastic,” and “happy” (*SL*, 569/*GW*, 12: 71). Although we may be wont to think of classes in formal set-theoretical terms that are indifferent to their content so that one can speak with equal validity about, say, the set of all red things and the set of all medicinal plants and manipulate them with the same rules, according to Hegel class membership should be reserved for the latter distinctive kinds of sets (cf. *EL*, 248-249 §174 Addition/ *GW*, 23.3: 936). Hegel’s argument is as follows. Roses, political symbols, fire hydrants, and many other things are red. However, there can be no class membership in any robust sense: since it is *arbitrary* what is subsumed under this concept, there is no rational force behind its quantification in that the predicate does not get at anything cognitively revealing about the things in question (it is purely accidental that these things are red). Consequently, predicates of this sort are only abstract universals that are the proper subject matter of judgments of existence and whose truth simply depends on whether they are or are not realized in sensory experience.

Discourse must therefore bring into play predicates of a different sort to make something more intelligible. To call a set of plants medicinal is to do more than focus on its sensory qualities in the here and now of experience—it is to say that it displays this predicate in *relation* to other things (*SL*, 569/*GW*, 12: 71), in short in connection to *the external world* (*EL*, 248 §174/*GW*, 20: 188). In this manner, the predicate makes a claim as to how it is *disposed* to behave under certain conditions.¹⁸⁶ As such, what is subsumed under it is not arbitrary: the predicate captures something fundamental about the subject. A set of medicinal plants cannot just lose its healing properties. In the right circumstances, it will heal. Hegel’s point is that when we say “this,” “some,” or “all” *x* is *F*, the logical form of such judgments of reflection stipulates a unique conceptual relation between a set of singulars and the universal: we are thereby undertaking a commitment to the constant

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Harris, “Lecture Notes for Course on Hegel’s Encyclopedia Logic,” 187.

conjunction of two variables, that is, to *observed matters of fact* extrapolated from the heres and nows of experience. In Hegelese, the very concept of a universal singular set of entities differentiates *itself* into possessing this universal determination, the former entailing the latter as a moment of its inferential network, whereby the kind of network being construed has grown immensely in size and complexity vis-à-vis the one made possible by judgments of existence. Inasmuch as the categories of “essence” provide the fundamental concepts in accordance with which we can meaningfully recognize such relations between objects, how an essence has the disposition to emerge into concrete existence in precisely defined relational situations,¹⁸⁷ the judgments of reflection therefore create the discursive contexts in which these categories can be systematically deployed.

Singular judgment

The most elementary form of judgments of reflection is one in which a certain universal is taken as more than an abstract universal of a singular subject arbitrarily realized in the here and now of experience. Instead, based on the observation of how said subject interacts with its environment, it is taken as expressing something more essential about it (*SL*, 570/*GW*, 12: 72). As such, the logical form of judgment is “this singular is the universal.” Hegel gives the example “Gaius is happy,” which really means “this person is happy” and where “happy” carries the connotation of indicating something about Gaius’ psychological makeup qua a person, a disposition that he is said to have in light of the observation of his association with others and which we can expect to repeat in similar circumstances. Put differently, the universal predicate indicates less a (potentially ephemeral) quality than a (robust) property.

Nevertheless, to speak of *this* person as happy implies, as a non-accidental characterization, that the extension of this universal may apply to *other* persons. Furthermore, to the extent that the intelligibility of the universal as a characterization of a singular will depend on the degree to which it captures a fundamental fact about it, to make our commitment to the rationality of the claim more consistent, we must thereby be able to show it actually does apply to others.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-Examination*, 220.

Particular judgment

Accordingly, the basic normative structure of singular judgment internally compels discourse, in order to make its universal predicate more intelligible, to bring into play particular judgment through observation: “some singulars are the universal.” Nevertheless, as Hegel points out, equally “[i]mplicated in [such a] judgment” is “the *immediate consequence*” that “some singulars are not the universal” (*SL*, 571/*GW*, 12: 73). In this fashion, the positive particular judgment also demands the introduction of its negative form.

But particular judgment fails to make explicit the implicit commitments it requires to be consistent in another way. The subject of a particular judgment is not an amalgamation of the singular subjects of a series of singular judgments, say, “some Gaiuses” (*SL*, 571/*GW*, 12: 73). Rather, inasmuch as a particular judgment has its negative form as a material inferential consequence, the particular judgment in effect also tacitly appeals to an *entire class* of singulars: if *some x* are *F*, then *the rest* are not. But for such a class to be intelligibly grouped together, there must be a single universal characteristic that they all essentially share and on the basis of which these sub-classes are derivable. For instance, to say that “some people are happy” not only implies that “some people are not happy,” but also tacitly appeals to the class of “humans” who, because of their psychological makeup, can be either.

Universal judgment

To the extent that particular judgment requires appeal to an entire class to be fully rational, to make good upon its commitments it must be supplemented by a new type of judgment: the universal judgment “all singulars are the universal.” Such a judgment functions by identifying, through the observation of a series of singulars that are “*pre-given* and externally *picked*” (*SL*, 573/*GW*, 12: 75), a commonality that each and every one of them shares. This authorizes discourse to collect these singulars together under a universal that we are warranted in taking as capturing something essential about them inasmuch as the former is never encountered without the latter (*SL*, 572/*GW*, 12: 74).

Nevertheless, universal judgment never attains to the allness that it claims to. It faces a three-fold logical problem in being derived from observation. (1) All universal judgment can do to increase its warrant is to add more cases.¹⁸⁸ But this makes it into a mere *task* insofar as we can never practically examine all cases (*SL*, 573/*GW*, 12: 75). (2) No matter how great the plurality of cases it that draws upon is, it cannot foreclose the possibility that other cases exist that contradict it (*SL*, 573/*GW*, 12: 75). As such, it can be at best *probabilistic*. (3) It is unable to draw a conceptual distinction between the rationality and irrationality of competing universal claims such as “all inhabitants of a city are human” vs. “all inhabitants of a city have earlobes”: both, on the basis of observation *alone*, hold for all singular subjects *so far observed*, but we know that the latter claim expresses an arbitrary universal fact about city dwellers while the former an essential one that gets at what they truly are.

4.2.3 Judgments of necessity: commitments to the facts of the matter

While the universal judgment faces the logical problem of being unable to conceptually distinguish between an arbitrary and essential universal, it does provide the sufficient, albeit not the necessary conditions for further determination. In virtue of the information *collected* in front of us, discourse must *take* a certain universal as being something that does not just *happen* to characterize all the singular members of this class, but instead as being their *defining characteristic*. For this conceptual move to be possible, the universal judgment requires the support of another type of judgment, which Hegel calls “judgments of necessity” (his reworking of “judgments of relation”), as that through which discourse stops *extrapolating* from singular cases and makes claims about the class *as such*, claims that by default affect all singular cases, even those that never have been or never will be observed. Only by undertaking such an additional commitment to an incontrovertible conceptual relation between a class and a universal can discourse make its initial commitment consistent. Put phenomenologically, as we here shift from one way of talking about things and ourselves to the next, there is a shift in the rational conviction of our claims: when we make use of a universal judgment, we are willing to admit that we might be dealing with *an observed matter of fact (eine Tatsache)*, something that can be at best

¹⁸⁸ Findlay speaks of it as a mere “enumerative universality.” Findlay, 234.

provisionally upheld until new findings are unearthed, while when we make use of judgments of necessity we believe that we are dealing with *a fact of the matter* (*eine Sache*), something from which we will not easily step down in discourse because we take it to be the truth and for which we therefore demand, because such a fact of the matter is error proof, consensus from others with no exception. Consequently, with the introduction of this new type of judgment a radical change has occurred in the inferential networks of meaning that we construct: the inferential links between concepts are no longer *fragile* by being open to discursive critique, but are instead *ironclad* because these judgments stipulate that a singular, because of its very nature, necessarily coincides with a universal without any extra-logical remainder (a given concept is taken as differentiating *itself* into its defining characteristic, the former entailing the latter as moment of its inferential network such that, supposing one, the other has to be there).

In the judgments of necessity, we therefore witness the basic normativity governing those claims through which we develop theories concerning what things or ourselves truly are or ought to be. Inasmuch as the upper-level categories of “essence,” in particular those of “substance” and “causality,” provide the fundamental concepts for the recognition of a principle that contains within it all of its possible determinations, the judgments of necessity therefore create the discursive contexts in which these categories can be systematically deployed (*SL*, 575/*GW*, 77). The idea is that, in first systematically deploying the categories of “being” in the discursive contexts created by judgments of existence in order to make intelligible various abstract qualities in the here and now of experience, one might discover new determinacies best explored by the discursive contexts created by judgments of reflection, which, systematically deploying the lower-level categories of “essence,” may enable us to discover dispositional features or properties that something displays in interaction with its environment, traits that they do not just have fortuitously but instead by its very nature. On the basis of these new determinacies, we might be able to abduce its nature, the essence that appears in them, by the systematic deployment of other categories made possible by the discursive contexts created by these judgments of necessity.

Categorical judgment

To maintain a difference between a universal that just happens to characterize an entire class and one that necessarily does so, discourse must introduce a logical form of judgment that enables it to conceptually move from talking about the complete list of subjects of a certain class *extensionally* (e.g., “all roses,” where “all” implies “so far observed”) to talking about a class *as such* (“the rose”). For Hegel, this is achieved by appeal to the categorical judgment wherein the universal, which has the connotation of “essential nature,” stipulates an inferential link between a subject and predicate that is *unqualifiable* or *beyond dispute*. Here, the set of singulars loses its initial importance as a discursive point of departure: instead of being a *pre-given* set providing the truth conditions for a claim about a universal pervading it, the universal explains *in advance* what each and every member of that set is by supplying the very principle that generates the set and its members. The predicate now “contains within” itself, as Hegel puts it, the subject’s very nature (*EL*, 250 §177/*GW*, 20: 189).

An example would be “the rose is a plant.” In such a judgment, a necessary conceptual relation is stipulated between the two: if a rose stopped photosynthesizing, it would no longer be a plant, for this function is crucial to what it means to be a plant, but, on the contrary, organic matter on the way to becoming humus. According to Hegel, this entails that the meaning of the subject and predicate are now transformed: what was once a *class* with a *commonality* is now integrated into a *genus* and its *species* because a species is only what it is as long as it displays the defining characteristics of its genus. In other words, the logical form of the categorical judgment is “the particular is the universal.”¹⁸⁹ What is crucial to underline with categorical judgment is how it radically curves the logical space of reasons. Such a claim functions like the formation of a large semantic body of gravity around which all previous types of claims orbit and, in orbiting it like smaller satellites, acquire stability:

¹⁸⁹ At this point in both the *Science of Logic*, *Encyclopedia Logic*, and the 1831 *Lectures on Logic*, Hegel largely stops informing us about the exact logical form of the types of judgment. However, it is clear that the subject in the categorical judgment carries the meaning of “particularity”: “The *determinateness* of the subject [...] makes it a *particular*” (*SL*, 576/*GW*, 12: 78).

It must be designated a deficiency in someone's training in logic, if judgments like these: "Gold is expensive" and "gold is a metal" are regarded as standing on the same level. That gold is expensive concerns an external relation of it to our inclinations and needs [...]. By contrast, being a metal constitutes the substantial nature of gold, without which it or anything else that is otherwise in it or asserted of it cannot subsist. (EL, 251 §177 Addition/GW, 23.3: 938)

That is, it is only on the condition that we have determined the nature of something that we have the discursive context within which other perceptual and observational claims can be explicitly taken for what they are: arbitrary features of its essential nature, which are only fully intelligible from within in the theoretical perspective of the latter.

Although categorical judgment represents a drastic increase in intelligibility in discourse, it still faces a logical problem. It stipulates that the particular and universal are *coordinated* such that a given particular species will always exhibit the universal genus and its defining characteristic. But the normative structure of a genus is one that exhaustively specifies itself into a totality of different species. Consequently, with what has been asserted it is still unclear why this genus *must* realize itself in *this* species, rendering the ironclad inferential link between them a *brute* rather than *intelligible* fact of the matter: if it is not clear why plant life comes in roses, it is also not clear why roses must photosynthesize. For such a claim to be fully rational, this facticity must be superseded.

Hypothetical judgment

Put differently, if a categorical judgment is to be more than a *mere* assertion that a necessary conceptual relation holds between (1) species and genus and (2) species and the specific difference of the genus, it requires the support of another type of judgment that stipulates how a given species is *grounded upon* or *caused by* their genus and displays the defining characteristic of the latter. This conceptual move, Hegel argues, is made possible by the hypothetical judgment of the form "if A, then B," which he unpacks as "[t]he being of A is not its own being but the being of another, of B" (SL, 576/GW, 12: 79) and which we can render in his logical vocabulary as "if anything is the particular, then it is the

universal” (“if anything is a plant, then it must photosynthesize”). Put differently, here we do not make a claim about how a universal genus makes some singular subjects fully intelligible—we make the stronger claim that this species is what it is because the genus must realize itself in it.

Once again, the upholding of this commitment runs into a logical problem. Hypothetical judgment stipulates a merely formal and therefore “empty” relation between antecedent and consequent (*SL*, 577/*GW*, 79). This is due to its logical form failing to expressly state what it is *about* the antecedent, if anything, that necessitates the consequent as what explains it. Consequently, such a judgment would still be true and hence rationally binding even if there were no significant relation that would make the inferential link from one to the other meaningful, as contemporary logic makes clear (as in Tarski’s famous example “if $2 \times 2 = 4$, then New York is a large city”).¹⁹⁰ This entails that even if both the antecedent and consequent of “if the streets are wet, then it is raining” are true, our commitment to it could always be challenged: given what has been *so far said* at least, it could be the case we have not hit upon any real fact of the matter.

Disjunctive judgment

If the hypothetical judgment is to be fully rational, it must involve more than a formal and empty relation between the particular and the universal—it must say *what it is* about the latter that necessitates the former. As a result, it requires the support of a theoretical construction that explains *why* a genus articulates itself, according to its own principle, into species that exemplify it *equally* yet also *uniquely*, such a construction being the only background against which significant hypothetical judgments can be distinguished from insignificant ones. That is, while categorical judgment focuses too much on the defining characteristic of a universal genus and hypothetical judgment too much on how that genus is realized in different particulars, we need a form of judgment that can bring these together. This is accomplished, Hegel submits, through the conceptual move made possible by the disjunctive judgment of the logical form “A is either B or C (or ...)” in which the disjunction is simultaneously inclusive and exclusive (*SL*, 578/*GW*, 12: 80-81;

¹⁹⁰ A similar approach is offered by Burbidge, *The Logic of Hegel’s “Logic,”* 86–87.

EL, 251 §177/GW, 20: 189): “the universal is either the particular₁ or the particular₂ or ... the particular_n.”

Hegel illustrates the complex commitments of the disjunctive judgment by comparing two ways of conceptualizing colour as a universal (SL, 581/GW, 12: 83). In terms of our perception of colour, we may identify the basic colours that we can see and claim “colour is either violet, blue, cyan, green, yellow, orange, or red.” For Hegel, however, this is an illegitimate use of a disjunctive claim because nothing said necessitates why colour is experienced in this way—we report mere observed matters of fact concerning human vision. Things are quite different with a scientific theory of colour. Hegel mentions Goethe’s, but we can update his example. Through physics in conjunction with the neuroscience, we now recognize two facts of the matter concerning colour. (1) Colour corresponds to a wavelength of electromagnetic radiation that we can neurologically register (between 390 and 780nm). (2) Our brains respond to certain wavelengths within that range differently (red arises from our perception of the wavelength 622-780nm, orange from 597-622nm, and so on).

Hegel’s logical argument is that it is only on the merits of such a theoretical construction that a disjunctive claim can take hold. The universal “colour,” as laid out in such a theory, contains the principle for *a priori* generating the entire spectrum of visible colour. It thereby explains why the phenomenon of colour necessarily has this, and only this, makeup and also why any given experienced colour is caused, by the nature of colour itself, to be necessarily this, rather than that, colour. Indeed, with such a disjunctive claim colour *means nothing more* than the entire spectrum of visible light in its unity and difference: to grasp any particular colour is simultaneously have in mind colour as an entire spectrum and colour as irreducibly distinct segments of that spectrum as experienced in the visual field. Consequently, in this disjunctive claim there is a *complete coincidence* between subject and predicate such that the predicate exhausts the meaning of the subject *without any extra-logical remainder*.

4.2.4 Judgments of the concept: evaluative commitments

With the disjunctive judgment, we have a logical form that commits us in discourse to the belief that a theoretical construction captures what a phenomenon truly is. What remains unsaid, however, is whether the singular instances we encounter in experience actually

exemplify the universal or fail to do so. Since this is something that the disjunctive judgment itself cannot discursively manage, it requires the support of another type of judgment, what Hegel calls “judgments of the concept” (his reworking of “judgments of modality”). Via the introduction of the latter, discourse now takes the universal that it has produced as a norm against which historically existing subjects are “measured,” a norm that “is simply presupposed” as firmly established (*SL*, 582/*GW*, 12: 84). As such, the conceptual move here formally outlined unpacks how our rational accounts of things and ourselves—the inferential networks of meaning that we construct—become *normative ideals* in light of which we *evaluate* the natural and human worlds (Hegel speaks of “*Beurteilung*”): “[t]he concept is at the basis of this judgment, and it is there with reference to the subject matter, as an *ought* to which reality may or may not conform.” (*SL*, 582/*GW*, 12: 84)

According to Hegel, it is here for the first time that we have a right to bring into play the predicates “true/false,” “beautiful/ugly,” and “good/bad.” This has stark consequences. To say that truth is arrived at whenever a claim captures a fact of any kind is, for Hegel, a trivial conception of truth. Truth occurs whenever *we take our theories to aptly describe the nature of something*, as a result of which only judgments appealing to the latter are the appropriate subject matter of truth claims. In his terminology, for instance, judgments of existence are merely “correct” or “incorrect” (*EL*, 246 §172 Remark/*GW*, 20: 180-181): while a claim such as “the child has blue eyes” may express a perceptual fact (truth in a “weak” sense), it does not tell us anything about what a human being deep down is (truth in a “robust” sense). By the same token, something is not beautiful because there are objective, mind-independent criteria for its instantiation. We may find Homer’s epics, Beethoven’s music, or modernist paintings beautiful because they correspond *to the standards of taste that we take to reflect what an artwork quintessentially is*. Last but not least, something is not good in light of moral facts “out there,” social rules that we hold one another to like scorekeepers, divine commandments, or what have you—it is good because of *the idea of the good that we take to be the best explanation of how we should comport ourselves*.

In describing this new type of judgment, Hegel is thus arguing that the normativity of our theoretical and practical judgments *has the same source*. Put differently, he is

fleshing out why exactly values structure human experience so strongly. The guiding insight is that, because we are rational, we are instinctively driven to find the most adequate accounts of things and ourselves and, whenever we have found them, we uphold one another to them in discourse. However, theories do more than tell us what we take to be truly the case: as soon as we have theories that we take to get at the truth, these theories orient how we view the natural and social worlds and act within them. For instance, to believe that a human is, in truth, rational is to place within us the commitment that humans ought to act rationally, just as to believe that an artwork or a good action is, in truth, an organic whole or that which is conducive to happiness places within us the commitment that the former ought to be formalistically cohesive and the latter the commitment that all actions ought to aim at happiness. Put differently, Hegel's thesis is that the normative pull of our first-order value judgments derives from the intelligibility of the theories that these values derive from. Practical normativity is undergirded by epistemic normativity, praxis by theory, so that all disagreement in terms of our evaluative judgments must be resolved in terms of what is objectively true. Strictly speaking, therefore, judgments of the concept do not systematically deploy the categories of "being" and "essence" like the others do. Instead, they systematically deploy the theories that have come to be through the previous deployment of them, while creating the discursive contexts in which they can be put to new use.

Assertoric judgment

To make a claim about whether a singular subject exemplifies the universal taken to capture its nature, discourse must introduce the assertoric judgment of the logical form "the singular is (not) the universal." Here, the universal has acquired the meaning of a rational account of what something truly is such that any such claim always occurs within the discursive backdrop of our already undertaken theoretical commitments as to what are the facts of the matter. For instance, to claim "Germany is a good state" would be to claim that it is a state that conforms to our idea of a state that truly performs its functions, an idea that hence sets the norms for what makes up a state and which given states may realize well or poorly: a democratic one that guarantees the equal rights of its citizens.

But assertoric judgment faces a logical problem as soon as it is uttered. To *merely* assert that something does or does not conform to what it truly is or ought to be, does not *warrant* that assertion. As Hegel puts it, “its *credential* is only a subjective *assurance*” (*SL*, 583/*GW*, 12: 85). Consequently, whenever such a *claim* is made it can always “with right be confronted by an opposing one” (*SL*, 584/*GW*, 12: 86), a *counterclaim* that commands an equal degree of rational force. For if I *just* put forward a claim, I cannot prevent you from disagreeing with me and vice versa—a disagreement that, if left unresolved, annuls the rationality of both our claims, whereby the consensus that each demands becomes unattainable.

Problematic judgment

Since both claim and counterclaim have the same logical standing, discourse requires a way to avoid falling into flat out contradiction. This is secured by the intervention of a new type of judgment: “problematic judgment,” with the logical form “the singular is the universal,” but where “is” has the connotation of “might be.” What this contributes to discourse is the creation of *the possibility of adjudicating between claims*. If I make a claim and then you a counterclaim, but we can go no further, the discourse we were having will come to a complete standstill. Consequently, it is only insofar as you and I modify our commitments to our respective claims, shifting from seeing them as expressing what is or not the case to seeing them as equally viable alternatives deserving further investigation, that we could hope to come to a consensus about which (if any) is the most rationally satisfying one. Moreover, because problematic judgment is a *necessary* form of discursiveness, it also entails that this shifting of commitments is *something always feasible for us to do*, even when we existentially refuse. Accordingly, here lies Hegel’s logical justification for *optimism in all matters of dispute*, whether they be petty or all-important, or between friends, politicians, states, artists, religions, or philosophers: dialogue is never for once and for all over, at least logically speaking; we can always try to come to a shared understanding.

Apodictic judgment

Nevertheless, discourse cannot remain at the level of merely entertaining competing claims—it must pronounce a verdict if it is to not stagnate in the halfway house of truth. Consequently, a problematic truth has to result in a type of judgment whose logical form definitively provides the resources through which one over the other comes out on top: “apodictic judgment.” For Hegel, this judgment takes the form, once again, of “the singular is (not) the universal.” However, in it the meaning of the subject has been amplified: it no longer simply refers to a singular of which it is merely asserted that it corresponds to its universal nature; instead, the singular is taken, in virtue of its particular constitution, to correspond to it. In other words, whenever we make an apodictic judgment we are always, in principle at least, making a judgment of a much more complex logical form: we may *say* “the singular is (not) the universal,” but we *mean* “the singular, as so and so constituted, is (not) the universal” (*SL*, 585/*GW*, 12: 87), which forecloses its opposite. Take, for instance, the competing claims “Socrates is good” and “Socrates is not good.” When we say and seriously mean one of these as a type of apodictic judgment, we must tacitly or expressly state “Socrates, *as the philosopher who lived the examined life*, is good” or Socrates, *as the corrupter of youth*, is not good.”

In short, Hegel is describing the conceptual moves through which truth adjudication can occur. But at this specific logical juncture, judgment has, in effect, superseded itself. Judgment is that which *stipulates* a relation between conceptual determinations. Here, quite to the contrary, judgment does not merely stipulate such a relation (between a singular and universal): it *justifies* it by demonstrating that it derives from another conceptual determination (a set of particulars). Expressed in other terms, Hegel’s logical argument is that apodictic judgment only commands the extreme rational force that it does over us because, in making this type of claim, *we are implicitly providing a reason for taking it as the case*, a reason that we believe outflanks all reasons to the contrary, even if that reason does not come to the surface linguistically. That is, the claim entails a “because,” a pattern of inference, behind its back as its logical deep structure: we do not adjudicate claims by fixing the truth-functional value of our judgments by recourse to given facts about the world—adjudication is a product of the game of giving and asking for reasons through which we argue for the rationality of a claim.

Hegel's wager is that once we have recognized how apodictic judgment requires syllogism to perform its function as the type of judgment that it is, we will have seen how *all* judgment requires syllogism in order to entitle us to our commitments, thereby proving why syllogism is the deep structure of rationality *as such*. This enables us to explain something otherwise odd in Hegel's theory of judgment. Why does the logical possibility of disagreement and consensus only arise in assertoric, problematic, and apodictic judgment? Hegel is, in this context, exhibiting a great sensitivity to how real-life discourse works. Judgments of the concept deal with the basic normativity governing how we use fundamental beliefs to pronounce verdicts on matters of great importance. While we may be quite unaware of how the structure of our experience is determined by our commitments to perceptual facts, observed matters of fact, and even many facts of the matter, we are typically more aware of how it is determined by our commitments to normative ideals inasmuch as these are things that more actively engage our self-conscious actions and decisions. Indeed, these are the more common topics of our discourses than, say, judgments like "the rose is red," which largely instinctively occur without us ever even knowing. By making explicit to us the implicit formal patterns of inference that we instinctively navigate whenever we do uphold a normative commitment against its opposite, Hegel's logic is endeavoring to make visceral how all forms of claim making must similarly have such patterns supporting them—ones that we do not necessarily recognize in performing them because such performing transpires unconsciously, but which have to be there to account for their rational force. In more contemporary language, while in the conceptual movement of judgment we have been describing the *material inferences* whose validity we just accept in discourse, in the conceptual movement of syllogism we see the *formal inferences* that, in fact, underlie them from the beginning.

4.4 Syllogism: the basic normative structure of entitlement conferment

With the transition to syllogism in Hegel's logic, we are to recognize that the conceptual movement of judgment has been artificially reconstructed for the purposes of logical analysis. Judgment is the stipulating of a relation between conceptual determinations, which constructs the inferential networks of meaning through which we give our experience an intelligible structure. However, judgment merely *puts forward* these relations, as a consequence of which it can only command rational force if it, tacitly or

expressly, appeals to a syllogism that *backs up* what it claims to be the case. This is the meaning of Hegel's often cited thesis that "the truth is the whole" (*PS*, 11 §20/*GW*, 9: 19): it is in how claims come to support one another *through argument* and ultimately how arguments come to support one another *through more arguments* that we adjudicate their truth, for "syllogism is [...] the *essential ground of everything true*" (*EL*, 254 §181 Remark/*GW*, 20: 192). While a judgment may be the basic unit of meaning,¹⁹¹ the drawing of conceptual distinctions through which an intelligible world is created, it is only insofar as these judgments themselves enter into patterns of inference that we can substantiate them and thereby establish the objectivity of this world. As a result, if the categories of the Doctrine of Being and Doctrine of Essence are the blueprints for the universe of meaning, in the Doctrine of the Concept the categories of judgment indicate how the framework of that universe are to be constructed and the categories of syllogism indicate, in turn, how the foundation of this framework is to be constructed—since the framework of any building, no matter how exquisite it may be in design, will topple over if it do not stands on proper support.

Put differently, insofar as the logical forms of judgment articulate how we undertake certain doxastic *commitments* in our discursive practice and how we by our "logical nature" (*SL*, 17/*GW*, 21: 15) uphold each other to their rationality, we must first be *entitled* to these commitments in that practice before they can have any normative pull over us. As such, the metaphor of the communal game of *giving* and *asking* for reasons is a very apt one for capturing the uniqueness of the logical space of reasons as defined by Hegel's Subjective Logic.¹⁹² It makes intuitive how syllogism, for Hegel, has a very specific kind of *functional meaning*. In this game, the pieces that we play with are the relations between the conceptual determinations of "universality," "particularity," and "singularity." The goal of the game is to make a subject matter (*ein Gegenstand*) maximally intelligible as an object (*ein Objekt*) by exploring those relations in the appropriate order

¹⁹¹ See above 4.2.

¹⁹² While some non-traditional readings of Hegel have employed this metaphor to elucidate the framework of Hegel's theory of syllogism, no one has actually shown that the details of the text can be consistently read this way. Cf. Pinkard, *Hegel*, 348–51; Pinkard, "Hegel's *Phenomenology* and *Logic*: An Overview." In doing precisely this, I hope to fill in this lacuna and lend more support to this kind of reading.

through the introduction of the right conceptual moves at the right time in discourse. For each pattern of inference that it describes formally outlines the specific conceptual moves that are valid for *justifying* a claim of a certain kind and those that are valid for *objecting* to such a justification as adequate. In each case, however, it then describes the conceptual moves that are valid for *defeating* such objections with more robust justifications and justifications that can be *responded* to with further objections, a conceptual movement that continues until the justification formally outlined, which qualifies, builds upon, and expands previous ones in a norm-governed fashion, is so robust that no objection is possible. That is, the conceptual movement from one pattern to the next tracks the conceptual moves that discourse should make in order to *advance* and eventually *win* the game of giving and asking for reasons. In this regard, these conceptual moves fall under the three distinctive phases of the game itself: its opening (the syllogisms of existence, inferences based on perceptual facts), middle game (the syllogisms of reflection, inferences based on observed matters of fact), and endgame (the syllogisms of necessity, the inferences based on established facts of the matter). It is to the extent that the forms of syllogism are shown to functionally require one another in the game of giving and asking for reasons that Hegel believes to furnish a completeness proof of them.

Nevertheless, although Hegel's logic is a formal outline of a communal game of giving and asking for reasons whose goal is to achieve a rationally satisfying account of things and ourselves, it must be qualified that even when we do follow its basic norms in real-life discourse, we may not be able to win the game—just as, incidentally, following the rules of any game does not promise victory. In logic, we are concerned with purely conceptual determinations. In actual, real-life discourse, however, we deal with empirical ones whose precise meaning will depend upon (1) our state of knowledge about a subject matter and (2) the ontological makeup of the subject matters themselves. As for (1), discourse can *get stuck* historically at certain phases of the game until we can bring more complex conceptual determinations into play on the basis of further experiential enquiry, but we might, say, be temporarily or permanently barred from doing such due to technological limitations or the destruction of the remaining data that we would need respectively. With regard to (2), discourse can end up in a *stalemate* if the inner principle of the subject matter that it endeavours to make intelligible has no good reason for why it

is so and not otherwise. Put differently, how far we can advance in the game of giving and asking for reasons will depend upon the degree to which the subject matter is, as it were, apt for the game. This is the realist pull of Hegel's idealism: while it is *we* who adjudicate truth without external support, the arguments that we furnish are always beholden to the subject matters that we discover in experience and what they are in themselves so that, although discourse has an inner drive to reach full intelligibility, this is no guarantee it can be had if the object at hand does not, in its heart of hearts, display it. Consequently, the conceptual moves that Hegel's logic here describes are more *discursive strategies* for playing the game than any *sure-fire technique* that we can apply to get a certain result.

In other words, in formally outlining the basic normativity of the logical space of reasons as a communal game of giving and asking for reasons, Hegel's Subjective Logic is an account of the activity of giving meaning to experience by presenting the rational endeavour of discovery and enquiry, the very quest for intelligibility that is at the core of being human, in an idealized form. It describes how we, in being internally compelled to comprehend the here and now of experience, instinctively push ourselves and others to comprehend experience more and more, thereby generating and sustaining an elaborate universe of meaning in and through the discursive practice whose conceptual moves are here identified and defined. But one more qualification must be added. Despite the fact that the inferential machinery through which our experiential universe of meaning is supported is quite intricate, it has to be stated that real-life discourse is *much more* intricate than the idealized discourse dramatized by logic. Once again, in the former we do not play with the pure conceptual determinations of "universality," "particularity," and "singularity," but instead with empirical universal, particular, and singular concepts. By way of comparison, let's take chess, on whose board there are 16 pieces for each player and 64 spaces they can occupy. After *only three* moves individually, there are *over nine million possible positions*. Even if many of these moves may be considered outright bad according to chess theory—this theory being the "logic" of the game as a logic interested in the dynamicity of the game itself instead of just tabulating its rules (as Hegel's logic understands itself vis-à-vis traditional logic)¹⁹³—this still leaves a staggering amount of possibilities for a grandmaster

¹⁹³ See above 2.5.

to navigate at the opening phase alone. But the game of giving and asking for reasons that we participate being in our average everyday existence has not only many more pieces (thousands upon thousands of empirical concepts) and players (a whole community and sometimes communities), but also pieces and a board (what our discursive practices look like in how they arrange the strength and starting positions of various empirical concepts) that are constantly shifting in experience and human history as we learn more and revise what we have learned.

Hegel's logical point is that this just goes to show the complexity of the human experience and the distinctively human activity of conceptualization that makes it possible, a complexity that we take for granted in day-to-day hustle and bustle of average everyday existence. We, on the whole, do not realize how when we discover qualities in front of us and behave accordingly, practically orient ourselves within an ever-changing environment as we go about our business, or respond to a situation in a certain way because we feel that it is good or bad, we are in fact instinctively navigating the *infinity* of the game of giving and asking for reasons with ease. For we largely are *just aware* of the variety of facts that give our experience the shape that it has and which informs how we respond to it (we *just know*, say, that the water in the kettle is boiling hot to everyone, rather than being just uncomfortably so for me, that a train on the tracks is in a causal chain that, were I to become a part of, could end my life me, or that murder is wrong). It is these very facts that bestow upon our experience of the natural and human worlds the very rich and nuanced structure that it possesses, a logical structure that we simply orient ourselves like a dog orients itself in a world filled with rich and nuanced aromas, facts stipulated by judgment and argued for by syllogism and which therefore explain the very form of human life as we instinctively lead it.

4.4.1 Syllogisms of existence: inferences based on perceptual facts

The conceptual move that begins the game of giving and asking for reasons is a positive judgment of existence that predicates an abstract universal to a supposedly immediately concrete singular, in so doing undertaking a commitment to a sensory quality being realized in the here and now of experience, that is, a perceptual fact. The question is how we become entitled to such a commitment. For this to occur, we must introduce the syllogisms of existence: patterns of inference that, basing themselves upon various other perceptual facts

about this singular subject accumulated through other judgments, argue that, because there is a conceptual relation between a given sensory quality and another, one being a universal that contains the initial as a particular, we have reasons for upholding our claim. Consequently, the most elementary pattern of inference will be constructed from three judgments that are taken to be interrelated and confirm one another: the major premise “the singular is the particular” (which Hegel formalizes with the shorthand S-P) and the minor premise “the particular is the universal” (P-U), from which the assertion “the singular is the universal” (S-U) is warranted. Consequently, the “general schema,” as Hegel puts it, of the syllogisms of existence is S-P-U (*SL*, 590/*GW*, 12: 93). Any transmutation that this logical form of reasoning will undergo will have to derive from how, when a syllogism of this figure is introduced, certain objections can be raised to it and how a new figure, by defeating such objections, is the conceptual move we must make to advance the game of giving and asking for reasons.¹⁹⁴

First figure: S-P-U

Hegel’s example of the first figure is: “the rose is red; red is a colour; therefore, the rose is coloured” (*EL*, 256 §183 Addition/*GW*, 23.3: 940). However, three valid objections can be raised insofar as its conceptual determinations, referring to perceptual facts, are “*entirely accidental and arbitrary*,” in short “*contingent*” (*SL*, 594/*GW*, 12: 96). (1) The conclusion of this pattern is disputable. The pattern makes the case that a universal should be predicated of a singular subject due to the presence of a particular that the latter possesses, the latter being a particular determination of this universal. Nevertheless, nothing said prevents the particular from falling under different universals (*SL*, 594/*GW*, 12: 96). Red is not only a colour; it is also, say, a political symbol. Thus, the pattern of inference alone is not sufficient to justify that that *this* universal, rather than another (“the rose is a symbol”), more accurately defines the subject.

¹⁹⁴ As Hegel puts it: “these other [figures of syllogistic inferences] are not *diverse species* of figures that stand alongside the first but, on the one hand, to the extent that they are assumed to be correct inferences, they rest on the form of syllogistic inference in general; and, on the other hand, to the extent that they deviate from it, they are variant forms into which the first abstract form necessarily passes over and thereby further determines itself.” (*SL*, 591-592/*GW*, 12: 94)

(2) The pattern can lead to inconsistency. The singular subject is taken as something immediately concrete, something displaying “an infinite multitude of determinacies that belong to its particularity” (*SL*, 593/*GW*, 12: 95-96). As such, *any* particular determination may serve as the middle term, as a result of which this pattern can justify opposed universals equally. For instance, a singular act of theft may have the particular determination of securing vital necessities, which would authorise the conclusion that it is justified in the name of the universal duty of self-preservation. But since it additionally has the particular determination of depriving someone of property rights, itself a universally binding right, the contrary is also justifiable (*LL*, 194/*GW*, 23.2: 785).

(3) While this pattern of establishes a conceptual relation between the singular and the universal (S-U), it does so by *merely* asserting two premises: “the singular is the particular” (S-U) and “the particular is the universal” (P-U) (*SL*, 596/*GW*, 12: 98). In Hegelian terms, while the conclusion is mediated, the premises are still immediate. Accordingly, it is open to the objection that, unless its premises are justified, we have no good reason to accept its justification of S-U.

To the extent that we are only consciously aware of physiological data insofar as we bring into play conceptual determinations, and these syllogisms formally outline the conceptual moves through which the conceptual determinations that give perceptual facts their experiential content command a rational force, Hegel’s logical point is that, already at the level of sensory experience, our bodies are making such well-reasoned claims about what reality is. That is, already when we *see* that a rose is red, we already *see* that it is coloured, rather than a symbol, because our bodies have made an instinctive inference of this type, an instinctive inference that exhibits the logical form of a formal inference. But at the same time, we also instinctively recognize the rational dissatisfaction of this inference: how the truth of the universal that we *see* only has a limited, contingent truth—and that, in order for a universal to be found that does not succumb to such contingency, a different type of inference must be made such that, within our very sensory experience, there is an inborn internal compulsion to make what we sense more and more intelligible.

Second figure: P-S-U

Despite the deficiency of the first figure, it constitutes a positive achievement: it bestows upon the inferential link between a singular and a universal *minimal* rational force, making it something that we are provisionally entitled to work with in the game of giving and asking for reasons. Phenomenologically, we may say that, with the introduction of the first pattern, our rational conviction in the claim S-U changes—it becomes *plausible* and therefore demands more reasons.

Since the objections center on the arbitrariness of the inferential link between *this* singular and *this* universal, the next conceptual move, Hegel contends, is to argue that the particular *in this singular case* in the here and now of experience is a particular of this universal. This gives rise to the second figure with the general schema P-S-U: a syllogism with the major premise “the particular is the singular” (P-S) or “the singular is the particular” (S-P) and the minor premise “the singular is the universal” (S-U), from which the conclusion “the particular is the universal” (P-S) is justified and no longer a *mere assumption*. To use the above example, if we can, appealing to this rose in my garden, convincingly argue that it is red and coloured, rather than a symbol of the communist revolution, we will be justified in believing that red, in this case, is best taken as a particular colour than as a particular symbol.

However much this pattern shuts down the objections to the previous, it is still open to another valid charge. By justifying the inferential link between the particular and universal by appealing to *this* singular case in the here and now of experience in which both immediately inhere or are instantiated, it only proves that these terms converge in *this* subject. They are, as Hegel says, potentially “two qualities linked together, not in and for themselves, but through the mediation of an accidental singularity” (*SL*, 598/*GW*, 12: 100).

Third figure: S-U-P

Nevertheless, even if the conferment of entitlement upon the claim P-U is still deficient, the second figure has started to transform the logical space of reasons. With it, the conceptual process has begun to move away from a supposedly immediately concrete singular and its sensory qualities towards producing an “*abstract universal existing in itself*,” that is, a universal that sets, on its own and however inchoately, the norm in

accordance with which we can recognize a singular subject as one of its particularizations (*SL*, 600/*GW*, 11: 102). In this fashion, the meaning of the universal is being expanded into that of a *class* that groups together various entities as *belonging to it* as members.

But this process has, again, only just begun: it is here a still matter of justifying the inferential link between *this* singular, *one* of its particular determinations, and a *given* universal—a link whose justification now requires that we argue in a rationally satisfying manner that the universal *itself* authorizes the claim that the singular is indeed a particular. Consequently, the next conceptual move we should make in the game of giving and asking for reasons is to introduce the third figure with the general schema S-U-P: “the singular is the universal (S-U); the particular is the universal (P-U); therefore, the singular is the particular (S-P).” To the extent that we can show how the universal permits the subsumption of both the singular and the particular, we will have shown that, no matter *what else* the singular may be in its particularity or *which other* universals contain the particular, the singular and particular are, in this case, identical in that they both satisfy the norm that has come into play, which permits us to abstract from any determinateness of the singular and particular (cf. *SL*, 601/*GW*, 12: 103) that is not relevant to figuring out whether said norm has been satisfied.

4.4.2 The circle of circles: the self-containedness and self-justification of discourse

What is crucial to underline in the conceptual movement of the syllogisms of existence that Hegel’s logic describes is how each figure *functionally depends upon the others*. It thereby seeks to demonstrate how no pattern of inference is a procedure of justification to which appeal can be made *ad hoc* and in isolation from other patterns by taking up any old content and inputting it into any of these forms in order to arrive at a conclusion that is guaranteed as long as the validity of the relevant form is respected. This is, of course, how patterns of inference are typically understood in the discipline of logic. Quite to the contrary, for Hegel the valid use of each pattern hangs on the broader discursive context to which it contributes by qualifying, building upon, and expanding the conclusions of previous patterns. As Hegel puts it, the first figure presupposes the second and third just as much as these presuppose it and one another (*EL*, 261 §189/*GW*, 20: 197): from one perspective in the logical space of reasons, once we seek to justify even the most elementary claim by introducing the most elementary pattern of inference at our disposal, this pattern requires the introduction of

these new patterns *in order to substantiate* the proof that it furnishes, while, from another perspective in logical space, the introduction of each new pattern is a valid conceptual move *only insofar as it effectively responds* to the logical problem encountered in the previous. Put differently, when we try to entitle ourselves to a doxastic commitment in our discursive practice, not only may this entitlement be challenged for reasons *x*, *y*, and *z*, but also, if it is challenged, we will be normatively bound to search for new ways of entitling ourselves to it if we are unwilling to back down from our commitment to the rationality of the claim made, which may result in a back and forth of giving and asking for reasons that will keep on going until full entitlement has been conferred or shown to be not viable. It is this dynamicity of reasoning that the formalism of conventional logic, according to Hegel, fails to account for.

We see how patterns of inference have a functional meaning in how the three figures of the syllogisms of existence formally confirm one another. The first (S-P-U) can face a series of objections that stem from the fact that its premises (S-P, P-U) are assumed. This gives its conclusion (S-U), at best, *minimal* rational force. The next two figures are introduced to defeat such objections in sequential conceptual moves that justify its premises, while each figure, in so doing, simultaneously marshals the resources of the previous to strengthen its own argument. As such, the second figure (P-S-U) represents an advance over the first figure in two fashions. (1) Its conclusion (P-U) increases the rational force of the first figure by justifying its second premise, thereby defeating some charges raised against it. (2) The rational force that it itself commands is more formidable than that of the first figure. Its argument (P-S/S-P, S-U \therefore P-U) does not operate, as the first figure, on the basis of two unproven premises: its second premise (S-P) has already been tentatively justified by the first figure. Nevertheless, its first premise (P-S or S-P), which it shares with the first figure, is left without justification. The task of the third figure (S-U-P) is to prove precisely this as a conclusion (S-P) from two premises (S-U, P-U). But this entails that the third figure is unique vis-à-vis the others, for it has *no unproven premises*—these have already been tentatively justified by the first and second figures, while it itself justifies the still unproven premises of the latter two.

It is worth tarrying with this point because it is, as Hegel says, the most basic normative structure of the game of giving and asking for reasons: “[t]he objective sense of

the figures of the syllogism is in general this, that everything rational demonstrates itself in the form of a threefold syllogism” (*EL*, 260 §187 Addition/*GW*, 23.3: 941). In other words, this dynamic activity through which patterns of inference give each other the support that they require to make their reasons more rationally satisfying reoccurs, with a higher level of conceptual artistry, in what follows in two interrelated ways. (1) In the conceptual movement *internal* to the syllogisms of reflection and necessity, between the three patterns of inference within each type of syllogism, we, too, encounter a logical circle. (2) In the *global* conceptual movement from one type of syllogism to another, in the movement from the syllogisms of existence through those of reflection to those of necessity, we encounter *another* logical circle, indeed a logical *circle of circles*.

For Hegel, this intimates how, although any given pattern of inference *on its own* may be unable to confer full entitlement upon certain kinds of commitments, when they *work together* as our reasons inform one another, entitlement can be more robustly guaranteed. As he puts it, here we witness a closed “circle of reciprocal presupposing,” a self-sufficient “totality” (*SL*, 603/*GW*, 12: 105): while the conceptual movement of the game of giving and asking for reasons is a linear movement wherein reasons follow reasons, this movement bends back upon itself. That is, arguments do their work by *anticipating* in a forward-looking logical register what kinds of arguments would *fulfil them* and by *retrospectively substantiating* in a backward-looking logical register *what has been argued*. This reveals how discourse is a self-contained, self-justifying conceptual process of truth adjudication: self-contained, because at no point do we need to exit discourse—it is the conceptual process itself that decides when a reason provided is sufficient or not and dictates what other kinds of reasons must be brought into play for it to hold; self-justifying, because, at each discursive step, there is no need for any external support of truth in that the conceptual process itself is capable of fully justifying a claim. As such, we concretely see, for the first time, how discourse *supports itself* and, indeed, concretely in the Hegelian sense: we give witness to how the conceptual moves of discourse grow together in a complex whole.

When Hegel refers to philosophy as a circle of circles (*EL*, 43 §15/*GW*, 20: 56), it is this kind of self-contained, self-justifying conceptual process of truth adjudication that he has in mind, except now in terms of how that process works in real-life discourse rather

than in terms of its basic normative structure. The idea is that just as patterns of inference can only logically justify their claims by mutually reinforcing one another, so too the various domains of empirical knowledge can only hope to attain to the justification of their claims if they similarly do so. Hegel's theory of syllogism therefore articulates something like a coherence theory of truth insofar as the more reasons that we provide in support of a claim, the more we have the right to uphold its truth, rather than claims simply being made true by facts of the world. Put differently, while individual positions in science, politics, art, religion, and philosophy may be plausible on their own, it is only from within empirical knowledge taken as a whole that they can command full rational force. Indeed, to the extent that this whole is demanded by his logic, and Hegel envisages philosophy as a means of constructing that whole, philosophy becomes, under the tutelage of his logic, necessarily an interdisciplinary enterprise in which all experts should be open to dialogue with one another. This, and nothing else, is the aspiration behind Hegel's own system.

4.4.3 Syllogisms of reflection: inferences based on scientific inquiry

When they work together, the syllogisms of existence are capable of conferring entitlement upon our initial commitment to S-U. But in so doing, they in effect transform the very meaning of conceptual pieces that we have been playing with.¹⁹⁵ The “universality” that has been introduced rises above that of a sensory quality: it has been made into a *class* whose predicate is taken to non-arbitrarily group together a set of objects and therefore reveal something fundamental about their nature. Similarly, “particularity” is not just taken as something directly realized in the here and now of experience. Instead, it now stands for a particular *sub-class*. Likewise, “singularity,” too, has acquired a new logical connotation. We no longer discursively treat it exclusively as a supposedly immediately concrete universe of determinations—we are concerned with how singulars display, given their class membership, an essential predicate. In this fashion, the conceptual movement of syllogism charts shows how the pieces that we play with *can get*

¹⁹⁵ In Hegel's words: “The *middle term* was the abstract particularity, an isolated simple determinateness, and was a middle only externally and relative to the self-subsisting extremes. This term is now posited as the *totality* of the determinations; thus it is the posited unity of the extremes [...] The extremes are the determinations of the judgment of reflection, *singularity* proper, and *universality* as a determination of relation, or a reflection that embraces a manifold within itself.” (SL, 609/GW, 12: 110-111)

promoted in the game of giving and asking reasons, thereby allowing the player to make new conceptual moves, similar to how in chess a pawn can become, in certain situations, a more valuable piece and which, whenever it occurs, changes the very logical layout of the board.

As a whole, the syllogisms of existence have the general schema S-P-U. In this sense, Hegel's thesis is that the first global discursive strategy that we should employ in the game of giving and asking for reasons is to amplify the meaning of "particularity" such that the inferential link between the singular and universal that we claim exists is not taken to be a mere perceptual fact about *this* singular subject, but instead a robust fact about singular subjects of a certain *kind*. For it is only by providing reasons of this sort that we can sidestep the objections that S-U is contingent. In other words, to be fully rational the syllogisms of existence require the support of what Hegel calls "the syllogisms of reflection." To the extent, however, that the endeavour of latter is to argue that a universal captures something fundamental about a singular subject because all singular subjects of a particular kind display that universal, they must take as their middle term a set of singulars. In Hegel's formalization, they thus fall under the general schema P-S-U. Insofar as these patterns of inference do not depart from *this* singular subject in the here and now of experience, but information collected through observation about *many* of them scattered throughout the heres and nows of experience, they are therefore patterns that formally outline the basic normative structure of scientific inquiry.

Consequently, with the introduction of these new syllogisms of reflection, Hegel is unearthing how, built into the very structure of human sensory experience, is not only the scientific impulse of curiosity and speculation, but also its basic method. Put differently, science is not something that only comes on the scene with modernity—its critical mode of observation, hypothesis building, and theoretical construction are *with us from the beginning* as an instinct. In other words, at the very instant that we start picking out "this!" and "that!" *we cannot help*, already at the level of our bodies, to begin making generalized claims that go beyond what we encounter directly in front of us. As such, at this juncture Hegel brings to the fore those categories that explain why, in the *Phenomenology*, modern

scientific “reason” is a deep structure of experience:¹⁹⁶ insofar as, in the very experience of a “this!” or “that!,” there is a recognition of the potential arbitrariness of the universal through which we make this singular subject intelligible as a “this!” or “that!,” we are forced, by internal compulsion, to supersede it by determining whether it is more fundamental determination, that is, a recognizable pattern in objects that applies more broadly to experience as such.

Syllogism of allness: inference of observation

To more effectively justify the claim S-U, we must show that all singular subjects of a certain particular kind possess this universal, whereby everyone would have to agree that the universal must be transitively ascribed to any given singular subject. This requires the conceptual move made possible by the syllogism of allness with the general schema S-P-U: “all singulars (i.e., a particular) are the universal (P-U); this singular is the particular (S-P); therefore, the singular is the universal (S-U).”

We can illustrate the discursive advantages that this conceptual move brings the player of the game of giving and asking for reasons with one of Hegel’s examples (*SL*, 610/*GW*, 12: 112). If we argue that “this painting is beautiful because it exhibits regularity” on the basis of perceptual facts, in light of the reasons provided it could be the case that the painting is ugly on the grounds of other particular determinations (e.g., its subject matter is disgusting). But if it is taken as true that “all regular things are beautiful,” then, as Hegel puts it, “only predicates commensurate” with this predicate and the “*concrete totality*” that it denotes may be attributed to it (*SL*, 610/*GW*, 12: 112).

Nevertheless, another objection is possible. While this pattern contends to have justified the attribution of a predicate to the subject, one can counter that the predicate has *already* been attributed to the subject in the major premise (“all regular things are beautiful” includes this painting) (*SL*, 611/*GW*, 12: 112). In a similar vein, the major premise is only true if the conclusion is *already* true—we have, in short, begged the question (*EL*, 261 §190/*GW*, 20: 198).

¹⁹⁶ See above 1.4.

Syllogism of induction: the inference of hypothesis building

The syllogism of allness can therefore only command sufficient rational force if its major premise, which it takes for granted, is justified. It thus requires the support of a new type of syllogism that can demonstrate that *every* member of the particular possesses this universal. Consequently, the next conceptual move in the game of giving and asking for reasons is to take as the middle term the *exhaustive numeration* of singular members of a particular set and to show that this universal is the case for the set as a whole. This gives rise to the syllogism of induction with the general schema P-S-U or, more precisely, P-S₁,S₂,...,S_n-U: “singular₁ is the particular, singular₂ is the particular, ..., singular_n is the particular (S-P); singular₁ is the universal, singular₂ is the universal, ..., singular_n is the universal (S-U); therefore, all particulars are the universal (P-U).”¹⁹⁷ As a result, this syllogism is one of hypothesis building: through the constant conjunction of certain variables—a recognizable pattern in objects—we can postulate an explanation for this observed matter of fact. Hegel’s example runs: “gold is metal, silver is metal; similarly, copper, lead, and so forth; all these bodies are electric conductors; therefore, all metals are electric conductors” (cf. *EL*, 262 §190 Addition/GW, 23.3: 943).

Nonetheless, an objection can be validly raised. This pattern can only argue for its hypothesis, the claim P-U, in a rationally satisfying manner if it shows that *all* singular members of a certain particular class possess a universal—hence, unless observation is complete before we build a hypothesis, discourse can never ensure that it has not committed the error of an inductive leap (Hegel speaks of it being “imperfect”) (*EL*, 262 §190 Addition/GW, 23.3: 943). But discourse, which takes place in experience, is unable to reach such closure: although it may establish that a great number of cases displays the pattern, since it cannot have access to all relevant cases in the past, present, or future, it cannot foreclose the possibility of counter-instances. Induction is, by definition, always a *task*, a bad infinity without a logical endgame (*SL*, 613/GW, 12: 114), as a result of which the “all” in its conclusion does not carry the logical connotation of a *complete* set, but only ever means “all *as have been so far observed*” (*EL*, 262 §190 Addition/GW, 23.3: 943). This

¹⁹⁷ In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel gives the general schema “U-S-P.” Here I follow the *Encyclopedia Logic* whose presentation allows for a neater summary.

renders the hypothesis *problematic* (SL, 613/GW, 12: 114) or, in more contemporary language, *merely probable*, making it tentative with respect to new findings.

Syllogism of analogy: the inference of extrapolation

For our entitlement to the claim P-U to not be subject to such a discursive charge and increase in rational force, we must argue in a rationally satisfying manner that, even if we have not observed all instances of a pattern, the claim is “true *in and for itself*” (cf. SL, 613/GW, 12: 114-115) because it is *applicable* to all other instances. In other words, arguments based upon hypothesis building must give way to extrapolation arguments: ones that make the formal case that a claim established as true within a delimited range of known cases will also be true beyond that range by extending that claim to unknown cases. As such, while induction is experientially open-ended, we can defeat the objection that stems from its incompleteness by maintaining that our hypothesis can successfully *predict* new findings, which provides extra reasons for our postulated explanation in that it no longer simply derives from a *case by case* observation of a pattern in objects, but can be taken as a model for that pattern *universally*.

For such an argument to function, however, it must demonstrate that its hypothesis is not a *mere generalization*, but instead has *explanatory* power. Such a conceptual feat is accomplished once discourse, after examining the findings of induction, maintains that the particular class, as observed in these singulars, is not a mere class, but instead a universal genus whose defining characteristics, as observed in these particular determinations, explains their nature (SL, 613/GW, 12: 115). By appealing to this genus, we can, with good reasons, argue that any singular instance observed in the future will follow the stipulated pattern. This new conceptual move is made possible by the introduction of the syllogism of analogy with the general schema S-U-P: the premises “the universal is the particular,” where “the universal” has the logical connotation of “some set of singulars taken in their universal nature” (SL, 614/GW, 12: 115), and “the singular is the universal,” in virtue of which we can justify the claim “this singular is the particular.”

Hegel provides two strikingly different examples of this pattern of inference, one that, although valid, may elicit laughter and another that reveals how it, when used meticulously, is a vehicle for genuine scientific discovery. The first runs: “the earth is a

heavenly body with inhabitants; the moon is a heavenly body; the moon is inhabited” (cf. *SL*, 614/*GW*, 12: 115). The second Hegel expresses as a material inference: “this law of motion has been found previously to hold for all planets; hence, a newly discovered planet will probably move according to the same law” (*EL*, 262 §190 Addition/*GW*, 23.3: 943). Focusing on these examples will permit us to flesh out the basic norms governing extrapolation.

In the first place, this pattern of inference can be more or less robust.¹⁹⁸ While the argument that the moon has inhabitants because it is a heavenly body analogous to the earth may be easily shot down because it rests on an extrapolation from *one* case, and the argument that a newly discovered planet will also obey this law of motion is virtually unassailable in that its analogy is based on an extrapolation from *innumerably many* planets, there is a wide spectrum in-between. As a result, even if the more that a pattern has been observed the more rationally satisfying is our argument that it reveals something fundamental, we always run the risk of being charged that our reasoning was too hasty.

In the second place, this pattern of inference cannot foreclose the possibility that its explanation, even if it successfully predicts new findings, is wrong. For instance, even though it is conceivable that life on earth originates because it is a heavenly body—in the early modern period there was widespread speculation that God had populated all planets with life, this being the outcome of His bounteousness—it could be the case that life is dependent upon purely factual conditions (water, raw materials needed for the assemblage of organic molecules, an atmosphere, etc.) (cf. *EL*, 263 §190 Addition/*GW*, 23.3: 943-944). Consequently, supposing that it did prove true that there is life on the moon, but due to such factual conditions, our explanation, although it did successfully predict this result, would not track truth. Put formally, this pattern of inference, which maintains that that we can explain a particular determination that a set of observed singulars has by recourse to a universal genus with this determination (U-P, “the earth, as a heavenly body, has inhabitants”), argues that, because this singular falls under this universal genus (S-U, “the moon is a heavenly body”), it must also possess this particular (S-P, “the moon has inhabitants”). However, the explanation may be false although the conclusion is true: the

¹⁹⁸ Here I paraphrase Harris, *An Interpretation of the Logic of Hegel*, 247.

observed set of singulars may just happen to possess this particular for other reasons (S-P, “the earth has inhabitants”), whereby the major premise and conclusion risk sharing the same logical form, rendering the inference invalid (*SL*, 616/*GW*, 12: 117).¹⁹⁹

In the third place, while Hegel does not mention this, nothing also prevents two explanations (U-P) from faring equally well in their predictive success. To take Hegel’s other example, while Newton’s laws of motion predict with remarkable accuracy the orbits of planets, this model cannot rule out that another explanation could be just as effective or even more (as Einstein’s theory of relativity would prove). In other words, discourse cannot subdue the logical worry that the explanation it provides, even when on the good authority of countless examples, is not the only viable option such that alternative ones always compete (U-P vs. S-P, U-P vs. U-P).

4.4.4 Syllogisms of necessity: inferences based on theories

Globally speaking, the valid objections against the syllogisms of reflection stem from the fact that they together take as the starting point of reasoning some set of singulars from which we generalize, hypothesize, or extrapolate a conceptual relation between that set as a particular and some universal determination. Formally speaking, their inability to confer adequate entitlement upon their commitments is a result of their general schema P-S-U. As a result, they cannot *prove* that the pattern they argue for obtains, but only *submit* that it is likely it will obtain to varying degrees.

The validity of these objections notwithstanding, the syllogism of analogy already intimates a new conceptual move capable of responding to them. In the explanation that it makes a formal case for, it appeals to a universal genus as that which captures the essential nature of all singulars that fall under it, said nature also accounting for particular determinations as fundamental to what that nature is. Consequently, discourse must qualify, build upon, and expand the meaning of this genus. For by maintaining that the hypothesized pattern reflects a universal genus that captures the essential nature of all singulars that fall under it, this nature also accounting for particular determinations as

¹⁹⁹ I owe this point to Richard Dien Winfield, “The System of Syllogism,” in *Hegel’s Theory of the Subject*, ed. David Gray Carlson (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2005), 136.

fundamental to what that nature is, we have all the rudiments needed to construct a self-standing *theory* that provides a principle that *necessitates* the observed pattern.

In other words, to advance the game of giving and asking for reasons we must do more than extract a pattern from sample data *a posteriori*—we must also argue that the principle behind that pattern, on the strength of theory-internal reasons, explains the *full* range of possible data, whereby that data can be *a priori generated*. That is, we must conceptually move from the *bottom-up* approach of inductive reasoning to the *top-down* approach of deductive reasoning, the former paving the way for the latter. But in order for discourse to make this conceptual move, a new type of syllogism must be introduced, one that, taking a universal genus as the middle term, shows that from this universal genus *itself* the particular determinations of the singulars that fall under it are derived. As such, the syllogisms of reflection must be supported by what Hegel calls “the syllogisms of necessity” with the general schema S-U-P. The insight motivating this conceptual move is that theories (universal frameworks that set out the nature of something) are debated not only in terms of whether they *fit* the facts (some set of singulars with reoccurring particular determinations), but also in terms of whether they make *the best sense* of the facts (by writing a conceptually convincing narrative of why these are the way they are and not otherwise). In this respect, once a theory is taken as a rationally satisfying explanation, we take it to have a rational force *over and above* the empirical matters of fact from which it initially emerged as describing the principle at their origin.

With the conceptual movement from the syllogisms of existence through those of reflection to those of necessity behind us, we can now summarize the three global discursive strategies that Hegel contends that a player in the game of giving and asking for reasons should follow if they are to be rationally satisfied that they have discovered a universal that makes fully intelligible what a singular subject is. Hegel’s thesis is that the first global discursive strategy (syllogisms of existence: S-P-U) is to amplify meaning of “particularity” to the point that we can take a universal as no longer being a mere arbitrary perceptual fact about *this* singular subject in the here and now, but is instead conceivable as being a fact that it exhibits as a singular subject of a certain *kind*. If these reasons are rationally satisfying, the second global discursive strategy (syllogisms of reflection: P-S-U) is, through observation, hypothesis building, and extrapolation, to amplify the meaning

of “singularity” with the aim of showing that all singulars, which present a particular class of phenomenon, possess a universal determination. On the strength of these reasons, a player is then entitled to employ a third global discursive strategy (syllogisms of necessity: S-U-P) to amplify the meaning of “universality” to such an extent that it can be taken to entail *unconditionally* the fundamental particular structure of all possible singulars that it can subsume. If this move is triumphant, the pieces we have been playing with get once again promoted: “particularity” from a particular class to a universal genus; “universality” from an observed universal determination across a class to a particular one contained from within the universal genus; and “singularity” from all members of a particular class to those of a particular species. However, inasmuch as these new patterns of inference are based on a theory that is taken as providing *all that is required to make a subject matter intelligible*, this strategy constitutes the *discursive endgame*: those specific conceptual moves a player should make if they are to have the best chances at winning the game with the pieces they have.

Categorical syllogism

The conceptual move that starts the discursive endgame occurs through the categorical syllogism, which qualifies, builds upon and expands the upshot of the syllogism of analogy, the putative discovery of a genus, by arguing (1) that the nature of something is captured by a genus and (2) that the distinctiveness of this nature is captured by a universal. If these reasons are accepted, we are justified in claiming that something, insofar as it is a species of this genus, necessarily possesses the specific difference that defines the genus as such. In this regard, the categorical syllogism follows the general schema S-P-U: “this singular (species) is a particular (genus) (S-P); the particular (genus) is the universal (P-U); therefore, this singular (species) is the universal (S-U).” By way of illustration, Hegel reworks a previous example: “copper is a metal; metal is an electrical conductor; so, copper is an electrical conductor.” (*LL*, 199/*GW*, 23.2: 788)

This pattern of inference radically transforms the logical space of reasons. If taken as rationally satisfying, none of the objections raiseable to the previous patterns are valid conceptual moves (*SL*, 618-619/*GW*, 12: 120). For instance, contra the syllogisms of existence, which also exhibit the same general schema S-P-U, it is always possible to

protest that the universal inferred from a particular is arbitrary or show that, on the basis of some other particular, that an opposed universal is equally inferable. Now, however, such disagreement is foreclosed. Since S-P and P-U are *categorical* judgments—judgments about facts of the matter that are *unqualifiable* or *beyond*—it is, in the logical space of reasons so defined, impossible to argue that it is arbitrary that cooper conducts electricity or, from another property that it possesses, that it cannot conduct electricity. By the same token, there is no need to prove its premises to make the syllogism fully rational. Insofar as they are taken to be rationally satisfying on their own due to theoretical internal reasons, they are already taken as justified or justifiable. Similarly, this pattern cannot succumb to the same discursive charges as the syllogisms of reflection. Against the latter, it could always be upheld that, in concluding that “cooper is an electrical conductor” on the basis of all observed metals, we are presupposing the truth of the conclusion or that it is merely probable. Here, the conclusion is *actually entailed* by nature of the genus.

That being said, there are still two valid objections to the stipulated necessity between, on the one hand, the species and its genus and, on the other hand, the genus and its specific difference (*SL*, 619/*GW*, 12: 120-121). (1) A genus, by definition for Hegel, subsumes not only *this* species, but also *an indeterminate number of others*. One could argue, therefore, that there is nothing necessary in this species actually being one of its species, on account of which it is also not necessary for it to possess this universal: if it is not clear why metal comes in the form of cooper, it is not clear why cooper must, as a metallic substance, conduct electricity. (2) The species also possesses a plethora of determinations not captured by its putative nature, its genus. Because it therefore seems to behave indifferently towards the latter, this occasions the logical worry that the latter does not have the explanatory thrust that it was argued to have.

Hypothetical syllogism

To overcome these objections, we must argue that a given species *implies* its genus and hence the specific difference of the latter such that, whenever we encounter it, we know that its fundamental nature is *grounded upon* or *caused by* the genus as one of its necessary realizations. On the strength of these reasons, the inferential link between the particular and universal is made more fully intelligible and no matter what other determinations that

the species may possess, these determinations are now secondary to its fundamental nature. This conceptual move is made possible by the hypothetical syllogism of the general schema P-S-U: “the being of A is not its own being but the being of another, B; A is; therefore, B” which we can rework as “if anything is the particular is, then it is universal is; this singular is the particular is; therefore, this singular is the universal.” To resume our example: “if anything is metal, then it must conduct electricity; cooper is a metal; so, cooper is, as a metallic substance, an electric conductor.”

The ironclad inferential link between species and genus forged by the hypothetical judgment notwithstanding, an objection can be raised. This results from the same problem that plagued the logical form of this judgment.²⁰⁰ Since the judgment is true *whenever* antecedent and consequent are true, the argument is valid even when there is no significant relation between them.²⁰¹ As such, a player in the game of giving and asking for reasons may insist that there is nothing about the one that necessitates the other.

Disjunctive syllogism

Because the hypothetical syllogism works by maintaining a formal relation between particular species and their universal genus, what is required is a form of syllogism that makes that relation more intelligible by showing exactly how particular species depend upon their universal genus. In other words, we must argue from a principle that explains why a genus is *equally* exemplified by all its various species (why it grounds or causes the specific difference exhibited by one *as well as* the other) and why it is, simultaneously, *uniquely* exemplified by them such that these species are materially incompatible (why it is only ever present in *either* one *or* the other at any given time). It is precisely on the basis of such a principle that we can say, with certainty, *what* about the genus necessitates *this* vs. *that* species in a given situation, whereby, given a singular instance, we can infer why it necessarily is the way that it is. This is accomplished, according to Hegel, by the introduction of the disjunctive syllogism with the general schema S-U-P: “A is either B or

²⁰⁰ See above 4.2.3.

²⁰¹ For an account that expands on Hegel’s logical analysis of the formal deficiency of the hypothetical syllogism by appealing to the truth functional value of the conditional in contemporary logic, see: Burbidge, “Conceiving,” 171.

C or D or ...; A is neither C or D or; therefore, A is B.” In Hegel’s logical vocabulary, we have: “the universal is either the particular₁ or the particular₂ or the particular₃ or ... the particular_n; the singular is neither the particular₂ or the particular₃ ... the particular_n; therefore, the singular is the particular₁.”

We can elucidate the uniqueness of this pattern by recalling two previously discussed examples: the scientific theory of colour and the claim “Socrates is good.”²⁰² As we saw, a complete scientific theory of colour is one that explain the objective phenomenon that subjectively occurs whenever we perceive a certain spectrum of electromagnetic radiation. When we accept this theory as rationally satisfying, we are entitled to appeal to the disjunctive judgment “colour is either red, orange, yellow, green, blue, or violet” as a well-established reason. However, what is unique about appealing to such a theory to justify a claim like “this is red” is that to recognize a singular item as this color is to recognize its place in the exhaustive totality of particular colors (where it stands on the spectrum as materially incompatible with them) and also why it appears as the color it does to our eyes (how our brain responds to this part of the spectrum), given the very nature of the phenomenon of color as a universal. As such, the conceptual distinction between the singular, particular, and universal has *fallen away*: we are, in effect, situating ourselves in *a logically complete inferential network of meaning*, a self-contained and self-justifying universe of colour with no extra-logical residue.

But such a logically complete inferential network of meaning is more than the ideal we strive towards in giving meaning to nature; we also strive towards it in giving meaning to ourselves, not just at the level of biology or psychology, but also at that of politics, art, religion, and philosophy. Hegel’s thesis is that if a claim such as “Socrates is good” is to find apodictic certainty, it must appeal to a rationally satisfying complete theory of goodness: one that can exhaustively explain all the species of goodness and the criteria by which we can recognize them so that we can guarantee that any evaluative claim will be adjudicated as to its truth or falsity. On the strengths of such a theory, we can convincingly argue that Socrates, insofar as his particular biography shows that his actions satisfy the criteria set by our theory for the recognition of a particular species of the good, embodies

²⁰² See above 4.2.3 and 4.2.4.

the good fully.²⁰³ Here, too, we have at hand a self-contained, self-justifying universe with no extra-logical residue.

Consequently, what is unique in this pattern of reasoning is that, in so arguing from a theory whose explanatory completeness and truth is taken as rationally satisfying—a theory slowly formed by passing from perceptual facts through observed matters of fact to necessary facts of the matter from within the logical space of reasons—we have made a subject matter (*Gegenstand*) into a self-sustaining intelligible presence, a consummated object (*Objekt*) in that here both subject matter and object *coincide*. In short, there is nothing in the former that is not captured by the latter, nothing indeterminate that could call us to put into question the claims that we have made and the justifications that we have furnished for them. We see this in the very form of the disjunctive syllogism: to the extent that we take the theory as complete and true, that is, this phenomenon as described by the theory without extra-logical residue, there are *no more objections that can be validly raised so that the game of giving and asking for reasons has come to a close with a victor*: the player has discovered a universal principle that exhaustively explains all its particular moments, thereby forming a singular universe of meaning.

4.5 Objectivity, Idea, and Releasing Nature: Anticipating the Worlds of Experience

Through the conceptual movement of judgment and syllogism, we therefore give witness to how the ideal of meaning towards which the activity of conceiving aspires can come about. In short, we have formally outlined what *logically adequate objectivity* consists in and *how we should proceed to attain it in discourse*: “Of the concept, we have now first

²⁰³ Why, however, are there no syllogisms of the concept corresponding to the judgments of the concept? This is a question that has bothered many interpreters. Cf. David Gray Carlson, “Why Are There Four Hegelian Judgments?,” in *Hegel’s Theory of the Subject*, ed. David Gray Carlson (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2005), 114–24; Winfield, “The System of Syllogism,” 140–42; David Gray Carlson, *A Commentary to Hegel’s Science of Logic* (Springer, 2007), 519–20. I propose that the answer is simple. There are two reasons for it. (1) Hegel argues that judgments of the concept assert or deny that a singular conforms to a universal taken to explain what it truly is or ought to be. (2) Such a judgment is only apodictic insofar as it implicitly argues for such an identification between them by means of the particular constitution of the singular. Consequently, judgments of the concept are justified by disjunctive syllogisms inasmuch as it is the latter that infer that a given particular is a moment of a given universal. Put differently, because practical normativity is, for Hegel, undergirded by epistemic normativity, he has no need for distinctively practical syllogisms.

shown that it determines itself as *objectivity*.” (SL, 625/GW, 12: 127). This, and nothing more, is the meaning behind the transition from the “subjectivity” of the conceptual process to “objectivity” in Hegel’s logic. In this last transition, we never leave behind the former, the distinctively human space of reasons and the rational interests that we pursue in navigating the latter. Instead, we change our logical perspective from one reflecting upon the conceptual moves *via which discourse maintains rational consistency in making something intelligible* to one that reflects upon what *could be objectified* through discourse, thereby making explicit the intentional pull, the “aboutness,” that orients the game of giving and asking for reasons all along.

In this regard, if the Doctrines of Being and Essence are logics of categories, our fundamental concepts of types of objects in general, and the Doctrine of the Concept is the logic of the categories governing the space of reasons through which these first categories are systematically deployed by being put in conceptual relation to one another, the sections on Objectivity and Idea that succeed the latter is a logic of the categories underlying differing domains of objectivity that can arise from within that space. It explicates how we, in thinking about objects, place them in specific types of relationships to one another (mechanical, chemical, teleological, biological, and spiritual) and the degree to which each type of relation constitutes an ontological zone that is fully intelligible according to its intrinsic nature.²⁰⁴ Put differently, since these Doctrines deal with the categories through which we create and inhabit an experiential *universe* of meaning, these sections deal with the types of experiential *worlds* that may populate said universe, each replete with objects in varying relations due to the unique semantic conditions of these planets and the extent to which such worlds are self-standing or supported by discourse itself. In the terms of Hegel’s technical language, it is a question of whether the reality of objectivity (the domains or worlds that we can *anticipate*) conforms to the subjectivity of “the concept” (the logically clear, distinct, and explanatorily complete *ideal* of meaning that we seek in existentially exploring those worlds and expect to find realized in them).

The names of the categories that Hegel’s logic now describes seem to reflect the physical cosmos that is the subject matter of the natural sciences. However, these are

²⁰⁴ I take this interpretation from Burbidge, *The Logic of Hegel’s “Logic,”* 95–96.

strictly speaking logical categories whose meaning define specific relations between objects within a sphere of such relations as constituting a self-sufficient whole. “Mechanism” therefore defines not just a spatial world where bodies in motion causally impact upon one, thereby giving rise to a self-unfolding chain of movement and change. It defines any world wherein fully-formed objects impinge upon one another due to outside influences over which they have no control. As such, it corresponds just as much to states that exercise their power over individuals by coercion as the orbit of satellites. As a *category* of “objectivity,” it unearths the norms in accordance with which we can recognize a complex, mind-independent order of a certain type. What matters for a reflection on such a type of “objectivity” is that the ontological zone whose recognition it makes possible must lack full intelligibility: insofar as its objects are open to the hazards of external determination, it is largely accidental what occurs within it; any putative order that emerges from such external determination is not *internal* to the objects themselves and their movement and change, but contingently comes or ceases to be due to what happens *to* them.

The same goes for the categories of “chemism” and “teleology” with regards to worlds that they define. A chemical world defines not just a physical world in which substances, in virtue of their own inherent properties, chemically react to produce new substances. It defines any world in which objects coalesce to produce movement and change not as an outcome of arbitrary contexts to which they are subject, but through their own inner principles—just as, say, we speak of the “chemistry” between two people to make intelligible how their emotional energies and psychological makeup, when placed in contact, create a situation (a conversation, a friendship, a romantic partnership) that only these two and no others could. As a category of “objectivity,” such a world is taken as more objective than a mechanical one because the relations that come about do not originate from happenstance; they arise from the very terms of the relations themselves in their dynamic unfolding. Nevertheless, such a chemical “objectivity” harbors a surd: while these objects do spontaneously control their own becoming, since they have independence vis-à-vis one another whether they come into contact in the first place is still a matter of chance.

This leads to a reflection on a type of “objectivity” that would exhibit greater discursive integrity: “teleology” as the definition of a world in which various objects are

related to one another as means to ends, thereby exhibiting a self-sufficient whole of interrelated parts. For whatever the mechanical and chemical relations that teleological ones may utilize for their raw material, external determination and accidentality have been overcome: the discursive keynote is the purpose recognized in the specific composition of objects and their relations to one another. Such a category is behind not merely, say, the medieval worldview of God argued for on the basis of the putative purposiveness of creation, but also the creation of human artefacts and various social arrangements. But in spite of such a world having a principle that organizes its components, the fact that the design that it makes intelligible as its determining factor is *external* to that which it organizes, *imposed upon* the latter from the outside, it still carries an air of arbitrariness: the elements that it weaves together, by having a self-standing existence of their own, can upset the purpose that governs them.

In other words, in all these worlds the concept or extrapolated universal principle said to produce particular relations between objects, thus rendering them a singular universe of determinations, does not fully produce them. This entails that there is here a limit to what discourse could make re-exist as meaningful in existentially exploring them because these worlds are open to movement and change that *they themselves* do not regulate. As Hegel puts it, it “essentially refers to an objectivity that it does not determine itself but which still stands over against it in the form of indifference and externality” (*SL*, 671/*GW*, 12: 173). In each case, therefore, these worlds are not fully intelligible in and of themselves: the relations between objects in these domains are *held together by discourse itself*. By way of illustration, in the mechanical world objects just bounce off of one another, having no control over their becoming. As such, there is only a *single* story to be read off of that becoming—it only presents itself as *a* unified world at all—insofar as this story is told *by us* in bringing into *one* conceptually convincing narrative objects that otherwise have no intrinsic relation to one another and hence fall apart in fragmentation. And although the chemical and teleological worlds display more of an internally coherent thread in their becoming whatever it is that they are, their becoming still succumbs to what Hegel variously calls “externality,” “rulelessness,” “chance,” “accidentality,” and “contingency”—in short, *brute facticity* (immediacy) that eludes explanation (mediation).

This leads to a discussion of “life,” the first logical category of “objectivity” where we give witness to an objectivity that conforms to the concept construed as internally regulating it. Such an “*adequate concept*” (*SL*, 670/*GW*, 12: 173) is what Hegel means by the transition from “objectivity” to “idea”: the latter simply represents a more concrete world objectifiable through discourse. In this case, this is because the category at hand defines a unique world in which organic systems construct themselves by their own principles and relate themselves to what exists outside their system equally in accordance with the latter. In the first place, a living body is not an ensemble of objects related to one another mechanically, chemically, or teleologically. It is only comprehensible insofar as its parts are members of a single whole wherein each reciprocally causes one another with a view towards engendering the whole that bestows upon their functions and such that said members have no independent existence apart from their function as stipulated in said whole as that which determines their ontogenesis. In the second place, a living body is in a dynamic bond with its objective environment. It not only responds to the latter in virtue of its subjective constitution, making it a stimulus rather than a direct cause for its movements and change, but also actively appropriates and transforms it for its subjective interests, the biological goals of life as realizable through the specific drives that it possesses. In the third place, a living body is reproductive: it maintains itself in being by continually constituting itself and propagates its own system in other living bodies that exhibit the same form of life.

Put differently, it is only in a living world that we may discover a rational system that is not just, as it were, *applied externally* to bring it into unity but is *internally realized* from within. The cycle of life as one of genus, species, and individual obeys the basic normative structure of “the concept” that governs thought: it itself is a universal that determines itself, in virtue of its inner principle, into a totality of particulars within a singular universe of determinations. Nevertheless, insofar as the becoming of that cycle is spread over space and time and open to their vicissitudes, the endless repetition of creatures and their vicarious lives, too, only comes to broach a single theme in a discourse that makes said play of life and death, survival and reproduction, into a conceptually convincing narrative. For Hegel, this intimates that what holds together all the worlds that we may experientially discover is thinking itself, the distinctive “*drive*” to establish a

correspondence between the concept and reality, mind and world (*SL*, 697; translation modified/*GW*, 12: 199-200). Accordingly, Hegel's logic now turns to the logical categories of "cognition" that define a radically unique world: *the world of the life of spirit* as arising from its capacity for thought, discourse, or theoretical mindedness and without which no such objective experiential worlds would be, for us, recognizable—and one that, because *it itself holds together* the mechanical, chemical, teleological, and biological worlds in the discourse that characterizes its life, is where the concept more adequately permeates objectivity.

To say that the world of cognition is a drive comes with a series of implications. It is to claim that rationality itself is an *ontologically distinctive form of life*, a naturally occurring biological phenomenon similar to others. Just as all living creatures freely and spontaneously relate to their environment by appropriating and transforming it in distinctive ways, so, too, do we freely and spontaneously relate to ours by seeking to understand it and acting with respect to our understandings. In this regard, thinking is, for Hegel, the re-enactment *reflectively* what is occurring in merely natural life *immediately*. Animals orient themselves in their environment by means of their subjective interests in survival and reproduction, through which mere nature (say, water, plants, animals, a storm) is made proto-conceptually intelligible (as drink, food, mates, danger), and navigate it by means of innate patterns of behaviour (e.g., smelling, vision, echolocation). Likewise, we orient ourselves in our environment by means of our species-specific subjective interest in knowing the world, through which it is made intelligible as what it objectively is, and navigate it by means of the innate patterns of thinking itself (conceiving, judging, inferring). In short, it is to claim that we *need* to know what things and ourselves are in order to live our distinctive form of life to its fullest, just as other life-forms *need* to drink, eat, copulate, and survive to secure contentment.

In this respect, the world of cognition that Hegel's logic defines is the instinctively created world of human experience as such. It is, to speak metaphorically, the native *home world* from which we may discover all the other worlds that populate the universe of meaning that we, in searching for "the idea of the true," an *adequate* correspondence between concept and reality, generate and sustain—just as other living creatures, in searching for the objects that would gratify their natural desires, generate and sustain their

own living universes. This conceptual process of discovery only occurs because we, in comporting ourselves to our environment, do so via the innate patterns of “analysis,” “definition,” “division,” and “theorems”: spirit is instinctively driven to analyze what it *finds* in experience (cf. *SL*, 700/*GW*, 12: 202) in terms of concepts, define its specific differences, divide it within a system of classification, and provide theorems that explain why exactly it has the contours that it does.

Nevertheless, especially insofar as these procedures depend upon such content as experientially discovered, a reflection on how spirit cognizes its environment reveals their intrinsic limits in achieving the strived-for full correspondence between concept and reality. To analyze is to merely collect information. While definitions are to capture the defining characteristics of an object of a certain kind, the things of nature and spirit are so rich in determinations that it can be difficult to establish *which* of them constitute their specific difference, just as much as malformations indicate there are always exceptions to the rule. Indeed, given this richness, classificatory systems are endlessly shifting as new objects and/or new determinations are found, just much as theorems oscillate between making found data fit theory and using this data to derive new theories.²⁰⁵ The continual dissatisfaction of the drive of cognition to establish an adequate correspondence between concept and reality, Hegel wagers, is the source of human praxis. Since this correspondence cannot be had *at the level of rational knowledge*, we seek, *at the level of rationally oriented will*, “the idea of the good”: to *force* reality to conform to our concepts, thereby bringing about said correspondence by *making them true*. However, here as well no such correspondence can be had. This is because the very striving to realize our practical ideals and projects in the natural and human worlds is always obstructed by the very inherent structure of the latter, for these worlds have a dynamic of their own.

Yet, if our practical ideals and projects are constantly impeded by the natural and human worlds, then any attempt to re-create them in accordance with a concept will *succeed* or *misfire* to the extent that it *is* or *is not in synch* with external reality’s fundamental structure. As a result, praxis requires cognition of these worlds for its effective realization, while theory requires praxis to establish whether its constructs actually have

²⁰⁵ For a detailed commentary of Hegel’s analysis of the limits of cognition along these lines, see Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-Examination*, 256–61.

existential traction. By acknowledging this, however, a final shift occurs in Hegel's logic. We have come to the insight that it is only in the ever-ongoing *back and forth* of theory and praxis in the life-world of spirit—the never-ending *self-revision* of discourse as realized in the social practices of science, politics, art, religion, and philosophy and the specifically human institutions that maintain them—that objectivity is achievable. For now we see that, in making claims *about* things and ourselves and justifying them, discourse is always *about itself*.²⁰⁶ it is “the rational concept that in its reality only rejoins itself,” that which “in its other only has *its own* objectivity for its subject matter” (*SL*, 735/*GW*, 12: 236).

Discourse's capacity for rational self-revision, and nothing else, is what Hegel designates as “the absolute idea” with its “method.” It defines the very “life-pulse” (*Lebenspuls*) of discourse in its self-unfolding conceptual movement as the source of *what we take* as “the idea of the true and the good” (cf. *SL*, 17/*GW*, 21: 15). For in saying something (starting from an immediacy, a claim about what objectively is or ought to be), we thereby open ourselves up to the possibility not only that we may run into logical problems of justifying what we mean (negation), but also that these problems may be contained and superseded by something else that is subsequently said (negation of negation), which sets the stage for the conceptual process to recommence (a new immediate, a new claim about objectively what is or ought to be) (cf. *SL*, 737-750/*GW*, 12: 238-251; *EL*, 125-133 §79-82/*GW*, 20: 118-120). This is a process that is *absolutely* self-contained and self-justifying insofar as each discursive systole and diastole, by instinctively and/or self-consciously reflecting on what is said and the reasons given for it, requires no external support to adjudicate its claims and criticisms. It legitimates itself solely by recourse to its own inner normativity, what Hegel calls its “logicity” (*das Logische*) (*SL*, 735-736/*GW*, 12: 236-237): we uphold our fundamental beliefs and values when we take them as rationally satisfying according to the standards set by discourse and when we no longer do, we battle that rational dissatisfaction only ever by saying more and

²⁰⁶ This is why Hegel says Kant's claim that consciousness is always accompanied by self-consciousness (B131ff.) is precursor to his theory of “the concept” (*SL*, 515-516/*GW*, 12: 17-120). In a similar vein as to how an act of conscious awareness (of S being P) is always paired with an act of self-consciousness (“*I think that S is P*”), so for Hegel any claim in discourse (“S is P”) is always supported by discourse itself (“S is P *because* x, y, z”).

more in discourse such that we never exit language (towards intuition, feeling, mysticism, or what have you) in the making of intelligibility.

With this last transition to “the absolute idea,” Hegel advances one last thesis. To the extent that discourse is that which structures our experience as our awareness of things and ourselves, the life-pulse of discourse is also the life-pulse of human experience itself construed broadly. Consequently, its “method” is that which brings into *one* coherent narrative the development of human experience *spread over historical space and time* as its support. For the social practices of science, art, religion, and philosophy in which discourse is realized and in which we by nature participate as creatures endowed with “spirit” not only constitute the worlds of beliefs and values through which we navigate our environment *instinctively* (Hegel speaks of how “[e]very cultured consciousness has its metaphysics, its instinctive way of thinking” [PN, vol. 1, 202 §246 Addition/GW, 24.31182]), but these worlds also transcend me and you as individuals in three very unique manners. (1) They *predate* our lives with a long history, are something *into which we are born*, and will continue *long after we have died*, presuming some natural or human-caused disaster does not undue our existence. (2) Nevertheless, inasmuch as these practices are defined by a conceptual process of self-revision as the source of the true and the good, *whenever* we talk about nature or people in average everyday conversations, maintain a scientific explanation, engage in art, embark upon religious faith, or raise philosophical themes about existence, we implicitly bring into play *the entirety of the universe of meaning in its past historical development*: the chains of reasons, largely instinctive, that led us to believe or value this rather than that, given *our* lived but rational response to the success and failure of our beliefs and values to make sense of what we say and do—even if we are not mindful that our practices have their origin in them. (3) We also equally implicitly bring into play *its future historical development*: the possible chains of reasons that may lead us to believe or value different things, given the respective success and failure of these practices to make the life of spirit—the nature around us, our place in it, and our own deeds—intelligible.

As a result, “the absolute idea” defines a world of discourse as the life-world of spirit in which we can encounter a becoming that is fully intelligible or rational. It unearths the categories that made possible the historical life-world of spirit, internally explored in

the *Phenomenology*, as a form of “absolute knowing” insofar as the latter testifies to the fact that “its [spirit’s] becoming, *history*, is a conscious, self-mediating process” (*PS*, 492 §808/*GW*, 9: 433). Hegel’s argument is that in *every discursive act*—every act of conscious awareness, self-conscious action, scientifically maintaining a model, or socially committing ourselves to a worldview—we participate and help bring forth a self-contained and self-justifying order greater than us, but which makes our lives meaningful: self-contained, because discourse holds itself together from time immemorial and despite being diffused spatially and temporally; self-justifying, because the reason for why this or that belief or value exists is supplied from the chains of reasons themselves in their historical unfolding, in effect overcoming the brute facticity of the other worlds of experience that Hegel’s logic has defined. In his words, “the absolute idea,” as itself the formal outline of our ontologically distinctive form of life, lays the foundation for a new conception of spirit, of ourselves: one that is, like discourse itself, logically (even if not actually) an “imperishable life” (*SL*, 735/*GW*, 12: 236).

The philosophical reverberations of this thesis are profound. It entails that, if we are to find a meaning for life, a unity that helps explain who we are and what we can do and hope, we should not turn, as did the Romantics of Hegel’s time in a return to Spinoza, to nature as the absolute horizon in which alone meaning can be secured, or God as the absolute person who presides over the cosmos. Quite to the contrary, spirit *itself* is construed as the absolute, except in a way incomprehensible in classical metaphysics in that the absolute is not a *cosmic*, but *semantic* presence. Therefore, while such positions contend that it is only by determining our place in the cosmos or creation that nihilism may be combatted, for if our lives signify naught in the grand scheme of things, then nothing matters—we are, to put it anachronistically, reduced to mere accidental pieces of reborn stardust in a cold, uncaring universe with no purpose—Hegel, on the other hand, rejects this very premise. When push comes to shove, his logic, as an anthropology, defends a type of humanism.²⁰⁷ Insofar as the universe of meaning that it defines breathes life into us

²⁰⁷ This thesis has been defended by J. N. Findlay, Walter Kaufmann, and Kojève. Findlay argues: “We may also praise [Hegel] as the philosopher of the ‘absolute negativity,’ the believer in nothing that does not spring from the free, uncommitted, self-committing human spirit.” Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-Examination*, 354. Kaufmann summarizes Hegel’s position with a good Hegelian motto: “in God I do not believe; spirit suffices me.” Cf. Kaufmann, *Hegel*, 275, 277. In a similar vein, for

inasmuch as we are born into it, gives us things worth believing and valuing, even dying in the name of, a universe that has been from times long past and can continue for times long future, we must not look outside the *self-writing epic* of spirit to secure meaning. Neither nature nor God can or should be taken, as it were, as its ghostwriter by supplying the norms that should govern its historical development. That would be to deny spirit's very rational freedom to compose its own story. As such, just as to discover the meaning of any story, we only have to read through events that might slowly reveal a theme that has been guiding it from the beginning, so too, for us, we just have to live our lives on their own terms and try to discover and help create what is meaningful for us—and while our story is still *in media res*, and hence open and open-ended, it is the odyssey that counts, our engagement in something greater than us—the odyssey of the human race.

Hegel's logic now comes to a close. It has formally outlined the basic normative structure of the logical space of reasons that we instinctively navigate as beings naturally endowed with “spirit” in order to knowingly discover what is true or ought to be. Nonetheless, the mere formal outline of that space is, as Hegel says in the preliminary discussions of the nature of logic, “a realm of shadows” (*SL*, 37/*GW*, 21: 42). For the truth of that space, its more determinate expression, is the existential matrix that makes possible the human experience of an objective world. Consequently, logic must freely “release” or “discharge” nature (*SL*, 753/*GW*, 12: 253). The reason for this is that logic itself cannot tell us *what we will experientially discover* in our environment. But that is precisely why we are instinctively driven to navigate the logical space of reasons. The quest for knowledge is just what defines us as rational creatures. With the implicit rationality driving human experience as an awareness of what things and ourselves are now made explicit, the only thing left to do is for us to return to those empirical practices of giving and asking for reasons that characterize our life and thereby recover the worlds of experience that they have existentially explored and are still existentially exploring with a more intelligent eye and so to better orient ourselves in them and live our lives. Just as the grammar and vocabulary of a natural language is lacking its true vivacity when laid out in a textbook and

Kojève “to *realize* Freedom and to *live* in the World as a human being, autonomous and free—all this is possible only on the condition that one accept [...] atheism. Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 57.

only attains to it when spoken by linguistic agents in their joint formation of a culture, so too logic, in abstraction from its embodiment in subjects' personally engaged in these practices to create and inhabit historically existing universes of meaning, is devoid of its effective reality. It is in this sense that Hegel's logic is the point of entry for his system. It signals that we can now commence a philosophical survey of our discourses of nature, our place in it, the human being, and human society and history—a snapshot, as it were, of our spiritual universe of meaning in its ever-ongoing, ever-evolving development.

Conclusion: Hegel on Human Rationality: Thought, Language, and the Space of Discovery

The image of “releasing” or “discharging” nature with which Hegel’s logic comes to an end is, however, all important. It brings into prominence what is, for Hegel, the defining characteristic of thought, language, and the logical space of reasons that govern them: that said space, while the distinctively human space of rationality that we navigate to make our experience intelligible, is *the space of discovery*.²⁰⁸ Hegel’s position is that, in bringing *a priori* categories to experience and systematically deploying them in the activities of judging and inferring in a discourse that is self-contained and self-justifying, we create the room for being to reveal itself as whatever it truly is or ought to be. For while there is no *external* support of truth—there is no *given* material that somehow makes our claims about things and ourselves true (whether this material is supplied by raw sensations, everyday perception, feeling, Platonic intuition, mysticism, and so on), since anything that we take as a fact of the natural or human worlds is a product of the process of conceptualization, something that we only believe in when there are good reasons for upholding it as a fact—that we *never* exit discourse does *not* close us off from truth by trapping us in a world of our own making.

Hegel’s point is that although discourse, whose fundamental framework is formally outlined by “absolute knowing” or “the absolute idea,” is self-referential—in following its inborn normativity, we are always concerning ourselves with whether the claims that we make are, in accordance with that normativity, justified or justifiable—nonetheless discourse itself is beholden to the objects that are its subject matter. That is, it is always already intentional: in making a claim and adjudicating whether it is or is not rationally satisfying from within the standpoint of a particular type of discourse, we are not just establishing whether we have followed the basic norms of discourse correctly, say, applied categories or used them in the right way, but are also establishing whether a given set of categories captures what an object is on its own terms and hence can be taken as a normatively appropriate response to its intrinsic, mind-independent structure. In thinking

²⁰⁸ I take this turn of phrase from di Giovanni, whose uses it to advance a similar thesis. Cf. di Giovanni, “Introduction,” xxxviii.

and talking we, as it were, thus grant being a place in our discourse as the centre of gravity around which discourse orbits in the logical space of reasons. It is in virtue of our conceptualizations, their ability or inability to maintain a stable orbit around the objects that we discover only by thinking and talking about them, that being shows itself positively (manifests itself without extra-logical remainder) or negatively (is still lacking determination, ambiguous, surrounded in mystery, or inconsistent). It is this object-orientedness, the curving of the logical space of reasons by something over which it has no control but simply seeks to understand as what it is, that makes for the seriousness of discourse. In other words, despite it being we who decide what we are to take as the truth, it is not interpretation all the way down. The truth is not how *I* construct my experience, how each *society* has its own culturally specific beliefs and values, and so on, for when we are certain that we have attained the truth, it is the very evidence displayed by this truth that commands us—*all of us*—from within the logical space of reasons. Put differently, once the truth is at hand, it is self-validating. As such, there is an irreducible element of “otherness” that guides thinking and talking from the very beginning, an “otherness” whose immediacy we all, as creatures of “spirit,” endeavour to mediate by making it rationally comprehensible.²⁰⁹

In this fashion, Hegel’s logic articulates an idealist epistemology in which we are not imprisoned within the domain of appearance, language games, or what have you. It gives voice to a strong realism. For Hegel, discourse functions by taking content discovered in experience and making it intelligible, indeed, as intelligible as possible. Discourse thereby adjudicates truth not in some vacuum, but by asking *itself* whether the conceptual narratives that it weaves to make sense of said content do convincingly make sense of the content *at hand*. In this sense, while it still operates with idealist rather than realist criteria for truth, it does so in a unique way. There may be no given reality against which discourse

²⁰⁹ Of course, there are *de facto* a plurality of ways of truth-taking. But Hegel’s argument is that these, insofar as they comprise a multitude of claims that attempt to understand what is otherwise found in experience, always normatively function as competing claims to the rational comprehension of the fact of the matter. Because of this, it is always possible, in principle at least, to adjudicate between them: our discourse does not assume that each way of thinking and talking about things and ourselves is equally valid, but rather that there is, ideally, *one* truth that each tries to get at.

can check its claims insofar what counts as even a perceptual fact (“This rose is red”) is already a conceptual product. Nevertheless, there is an experiential pull in discourse precisely because it cannot decide in advance of the content that it finds what it should take as objectively existing: it cannot predict that there is a nature with these mechanical laws of motion, these physical properties, these chemical structures that react in this or that way or these life forms, nor that there are these historical arrangements of human societies; it can only give reasons for why we should take such objective state affairs, as they are found in experience, as objective presences of various kinds. And while it always asks *itself* whether these reasons are sound, it has to respect the objects that it discovers and seeks to make intelligible. We witness this respect in discourse’s capacity for self-revision. It is the object of discourse as revealed through it that dictates when this self-revision occurs. When a particular discourse about some experiential domain is rationally satisfying, the truth we take to be known becomes its own source of universal and necessary authoritativeness; but when the process of conceptualization uncovers new information that can no longer be accounted for on the basis of our conceptual narratives, we know that what we previously took as knowledge must be modified. It is this openness to being as it shows itself positively and negatively through discourse, the rational fallibilism of the latter, that proves that thought and language can track objective truth. It makes possible a realist form of check by “the world” within idealism, without making that check some intrusion of a raw given.

This is why, according to Hegel, the logical space of reasons is the space of discovery. By providing us with clarity as to the categories that define our fundamental concepts of objects in general and our activities of conceiving, judging, and inferring as that through which we can gain certainty as to whether or not we find real-life instantiations of certain types of objects in experience, his logic intends to supply us with the resources required to navigate that space more intelligently insofar as these categories and their systematic deployment in the logical space of reasons is something we largely do instinctively. But what discourse discovers in making experience intelligible is not the subject matter of logic, which deals only with the *form* and not the *content* of discourse; this latter can only be the subject matter of real-life discourse in its independent unfolding as it follows the inner normativity described by logic. This is just like how, even though we must follow the lexical and grammatical rules of our natural language, simply knowing

those rules in their systematic detail, as set out by linguistics, will not enable us to anticipate how any given culture brings its language into the service of giving meaning to its own life. While a culture's beliefs and values arise from how it speaks about itself, the content of this speaking, although it must obey the formal rules that are its condition of possibility qua meaningful speech, has a dynamic of its own. As a result, homologous to how the appropriate end to learning a language is to enter into the semantic world that its speakers engender and sustain, the appropriate end to logic is to enter into the universe of meaning that our rationality itself, which logic codifies, engenders and sustains.

Consequently, for such a space of discovery to be now opened up logic must therefore stop its task of describing the logical syntax of thought and language. It has to "let go" of the domain over which it has complete control to the extent that it unearths its own internal normative structure and expose itself to a domain over which it cannot foresee what it will find, but which it must instead conceptually survey as an explorer who is ready to be surprised by the discovered terrains that they try to map. In Hegel's system, this means we transition from logic to the autonomous discourses of nature and spirit, from the development of a science of logic to the development of the philosophies of nature and spirit. Their starting point is what real-life discourse has learned about the truth of the world around us and our place in it. But in this transition, we never leave logic behind. The rationality described by logic is, again, what makes the very universe of meaning that we instinctively create and inhabit possible. By passing through logic as the formal outline of the norms of our most fundamental concepts and of conceiving, judging, and inferring, we therefore become better equipped to make sense of how being shows itself in our thinking and talking and hence better equipped to existentially make sense of our own lives, just as in learning more about the language we speak, the rich concepts it has historically developed and the nuances of its grammar, we become linguistic agents better equipped to communicate effectively with one another and respond to a wider array of existential problems more creatively and with greater insight.

Using this last transition from the logical space of reasons to the space of discovery as a guide, in what remains I wish to highlight what I take to be the distinctiveness of Hegel's logic as a unique blend of idealism with a robust realism. I show how Hegel's idealism: (1) is decisively non-metaphysical in the ordinary sense of the word; (2) is of a

different species than that of Kant; (3) is similar yet different from the pragmatist accounts of meaning with which it is sometimes equated; and (4) supplies, as a theory of the irreducibility of the logical space of reasons, a nuanced critique of the reductive and eliminative materialism that characterizes much of contemporary philosophy. In this fashion, I hope to show how Hegel's logic may still be of merit today.

5.1 Why Hegel is not a traditional metaphysician

The fact that in “releasing” or “discharging” nature Hegel's logic proves that the logical space of reasons is a space of discovery demonstrates that Hegel's idealism is not of the kind that the standard picture paints. According to the latter, Hegel is the philosopher who, after establishing the metaphysical identity of being and thinking, then proceeds to articulate an ultra-rationalism that deduces the universal and necessary forms of things and ourselves (the basic “furniture” of the universe) by means of a new “speculative” logic. This logic, once it has exhaustively deduced these forms, next goes on to show how the basic forms of nature and spirit themselves can be, on the basis of this speculative logic, further deduced. In this regard, on the standard picture the transition from logic to the philosophies of nature and spirit is the transition from one type of metaphysical categories to another. Whereas the first set draw up the blueprints for the cosmos at large as structured by Reason (*nous*, *logos*), the second provide, as it were, the more concrete detailing of those blueprints insofar as Reason is not disembodied, but in fact embodied in mechanical matter, physical bodies, chemical reactions, biological life-forms, and the human being and its historical products as that which immanently exists within and hence organizes them by its rational principles. This picture, at least in its extreme versions, makes Hegel into the caricature of the armchair thinker who, detached from experience and aloof in the realm of pure reason, believes himself capable, in principle at least, of deducing everything that is inasmuch as everything has its ontogenetic origin in Reason as the Alpha and Omega of the cosmos.

This is not the view that Hegel himself expresses in the transition from logic to the philosophies of nature and spirit. Here Hegel is distancing himself from all rationalist metaphysics that maintains that, because being is Reason, it is possible to deduce its general and particular structure and perhaps even all individual things that arise from it. To say, as Hegel does, that logic *replaces* metaphysics (*SL*, 42/*GW*, 21: 48) is to say that logic, as a

reflection on the nature of thinking, replaces the latter as first philosophy—not that logic is a new metaphysics. Its position is that unless we have a proper account of thinking that can confirm that thinking itself can issue in objectivity, we cannot be sure that the very activity that underlines our claims to knowledge is capable of attaining what it professes to. Hegel's idealism is therefore decisively post-Kantian in that he upholds that logic cannot be speculative, but only transcendental: what we are concerned with in elaborating logic is not the categories that make up the structure of *being*, but instead the categories that make up the normative structure of our *concept* of being, being understood as that which we can recognize as having an objective, mind-independent status, and how the systematic deployment of these categories in conceiving, judging, and inferring enables such an objectivity to manifest itself.

In other words, Hegel's logic only defines the structure of being *as an object of thought*, as something that *can be* known if we discover something that *conforms* to our concept of it. But this implies that to rationally comprehend what indeed being truly is or ought to be, we have to turn to how it shows itself in experience. The categories merely define objects in general that we are always on the lookout for as we conceptually survey the terrain that we are continually in the process of exploring as we think about it. In this sense, they provide us with the most ideal schematizations of various kinds of objects, ranging from “quality” through “law” to “reciprocity,” that permit us to recognize any real-life instantiations of them *if* we do encounter them. As such, the mere having of such fundamental concepts does not entail either that we will necessarily find such instantiations, nor does it tell us how such instantiations will concretely reveal themselves if they do exist. No category can determine *a priori* what we will find as we conceptualize experience. In a similar vein, the mere having of the concept “tree” or “person” does not entail that we will for sure find trees or persons. Likewise, it will not allow us to predict the specific content of any particular species of tree or someone's unique personality. All they do is permit us to discover trees and people and then fill in whatever they are. As such, what being proves itself as being is a matter of experience and the relevant discourses whose task it is to conceptualize its particular domains. This is the significance of the logical space of reasons as a space of discovery: it is an extreme *openness* to what is in terms of *however* it happens to appear to us. As a consequence, if we desire to know what

nature is, no armchair philosophizing will do. Instead, we must turn to the real-life discourses of natural science as that which systematically deploys the categories to make nature intelligible. As Hegel puts it: “It is not only that philosophy must accord with the experience nature gives rise to; in its formation and in its development, philosophic science presupposes and is conditioned by empirical physics.” (*PN*, vol. 1, 197 §246 Remark/*GW*, 20: 236) And the same applies to spirit. We cannot, say, try to put the historical development of humankind into some logical framework within which one thing follows from another. As Hegel warns us, we must fight against any tendency “to demonstrate to be necessary or, as one is accustomed to say, to construe as a priori, appearances that possess the character of contingency.” (*EL*, 217 §145 Addition/*GW*, 23.3: 918)

In short, Hegel takes Kant’s critique of pure reason, of reason unbridled by experience, to heart. As a result, the very possibility of deducing nature and spirit from logic is, in fact, absurd in his eyes. From the fact that we have certain categories such as “quality,” “law,” and “reciprocity” that we bring to experience in order to make it intelligible does not entail that we can infer what kind of qualities will come and go in the here and now of experience, what kind of laws will be operative in the mechanical, physical, and chemical worlds, or what kind of reciprocal systems may populate the natural and human worlds. In the transition from logic to the philosophies of nature and spirit, Hegel’s logic hereby provides another critique against the standpoint of traditional metaphysics: to even try to deduce the natural and human worlds from purely rational principles would be like trying to deduce a speech act from the lexical and grammatical rules of grammar. Of course, we *must* say this or that in a lexically and grammatically correct way if we want to be understood; nevertheless, what we say is always a creative event that can only be comprehended and assessed if we expose ourselves to the contingent and unpredictable content expressed. For while these formal rules are *finite*, in terms of the content that they make possible there is an *infinite* variety of possible meanings that reflect possible real-life occurrences and states. Correspondingly, while we *must* think and talk about things and ourselves through certain categories only tells us that *if* we encounter entities similar to those formally outlined by said categories, *then* they must have a certain basic structure as defined by them. Furthermore, this structure, as concretely elaborated, will always be a surprise since thought cannot anticipate whether or how it will be

instantiated. This implies an empiricist bent in Hegel's idealism. Nature and spirit become whatever they become due to physical and sociohistorical principles all of their own that must be discovered. To grasp these, we are better to listen to the lessons of studied experience. As a result, philosophy, classically conceived as a metaphysical, speculative enquiry into being, can no longer dictate, on its own, what is.

5.2 Why Hegel is not a Kantian

That Hegel's Subjective Logic, his account of the logical space of reasons navigated by the distinctively human activities of conceiving, judging, and inferring, proves to be a space of discovery through which the truth of being reveals itself also entails another point. It demonstrates Hegel's idealism is not of the Kantian type for two reasons, no matter how much he, like Kant, battles against dogmatic metaphysics and derives the source of all knowledge from the *a priori* categories that we bring to experience.

(1) Kant makes the validity of the categories depend on them being universal and necessary functions of the understanding that we apply *to* the raw data of sensibility in order to *construct* the lawful world of our experience. For Hegel, however, there is no question of applying categories *to* some given, extraneous material onto which they *impose* an external order, just as one, when organizing documents, moves them about based on some principle that enables us to take items that otherwise fall apart and see patterns in their initial chaos. On Hegel's reading, Kant goes wrong as soon as he conceives of the understanding as imposing such external order on sensibility. The categories do not build our experience of the natural and human worlds out of sensory building blocks by forcing stimuli to fit into their mold. Instead of *creating* unity by transcendental synthesis, the categories, by defining our fundamental concepts of objects in general, set up the logical space through which really existing objects can be *discovered*. The change in metaphor is key. Once we see the process of conceptualization as a process of discovery rather than one of creation, we have no need to affirm a distinction between phenomena and noumena because we no longer have to worry that we are introducing organization where they may be none. This is why, for Hegel, the valid application of categories, and hence the universality and necessity of knowledge claims, is not to be construed as merely subjective in the pejorative sense (how *our* cognitive apparatus just happens to function), but is taken as a normatively appropriate response to the objects that we find experientially, that is, as

actually capturing how things truly are or ought to be. As Hegel puts it: “The predicates that arise in judgment are not added to the matter; rather the matter at hand has these predicative determinations in itself” (*LL*, 15; translation modified/*GW*, 23.2: 664). In this regard, while Hegel is indeed a follower of Kant, his own brand of idealism starkly contrasts with that of the latter. For him, the logical space of reasons is not the mere construction site of human experience, as it is for Kant. Insofar as the logical space of reasons is beholden from the beginning to objects on their own terms, our awareness of things, the very domain of human experience, is in principle capable of reflecting how things truly are or ought to be.

(2) Kant is still committed to the classical Western metaphysical thesis that maintains that we can imagine another, non-discursive intellect such as the mind of God that could falsify what we take as true knowledge claims. In Kant’s words: “the concept of an absolutely necessary being is an indispensable idea of reason but an unattainable problematic concept for the human understanding. It is still valid, however, for the use of our cognitive faculties in accordance with their special constitution.”²¹⁰ The very conceivability of such an intellect gives Kant another reason for upholding that there is an insurmountable ontic gap between phenomena and noumena, which renders our universe of meaning merely “for us.” Since we cannot rule out, for instance, that what appears to us as possible and contingent is, from the standpoint of the mind of God, necessary, whereby everything just is what it is due to how His intellect produces it, the categories are demoted to how *we*, in using them to make sense of sensibility, divide up the world of our experience. As such, cognition is restricted to the latter. Hegel’s criticism is that there is just no good reason to assume that the supposition of such a conceivable point of view is epistemologically valid. Because we are bound to the categories, there is no standpoint outside of the logical space of reasons. Further, since that space opens up room for being to validate itself in compliance with our categories by showing itself to conform to them, although this space is a distinctively human space that we navigate, whenever we are rationally satisfied that our knowledge claims do make their subject matters intelligible, we are justified in taking them as capturing reality. In other words, idealism does not lead,

²¹⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 272-273 §76.

as Kant contended, to a merely empirical realism, but an extremely strong realism: “By thinking objects I arrive at their truth” (*LL*, 14/*GW*, 23.2: 663).

5.3 Why Hegel is not a pragmatist

The robust realism central to Hegel’s idealism as elaborated in his logic also demonstrates that Hegel does not ascribe to a pragmatism in the sense of Sellars or Brandom, despite the fact that, for him too, there is also a deep bond between logic and language as well as social practice and the adjudication of truth. This kind of pragmatism argues that the major obstacle to developing an adequate epistemology is the myth of the given. In a nutshell, this famous Sellarsian idea consists in the argument that there is nothing in our conscious experience that is just given and to which we can appeal in order to establish the truth-functional value of our knowledge claims, whether this given data be understood as raw sensations or other data made directly available by some other source of immediate, pre-conceptual intuition (Platonic, mathematical, ethical, or what have you). Rather, what fixes the rational force of our knowledge claims is the place they occupy in the logical space of reasons. Put differently, to be aware of what something objectively is, is fully dependent upon conceptually articulated content. It is when something conforms to what we mean by this or that set of concepts and further when we give good reasons for using it in this or that situation that we are justified in taking our awareness of them as sound. For instance, to know that something in front of me is a human being is to navigate a complex inferential network of meaning that alone can make intelligible the content of what that something is by bringing into play a series of material incompatibilities and material inferential consequences that make it determinate: this inferential network tells us, thanks to what we mean by the concept “human being,” that this objective presence that we have encountered is not a mere means, but an end in itself; that it is an animal different from all others; that it can be, by nature, sexed and gendered in particular ways and may speak one or more of a variety of languages; that it can have a multitude of physical and spiritual qualities, with the former being accidental to its nature in contrast to the latter; and so on. And we only believe we are aware of a human being when we believe we have the right reasons for applying this concept in this or that situation.

A key insight in pragmatism is that such an establishing of the truth-functional value of concept application in a knowledge claim is never the affair of a single, isolated

subject (as it is still, for instance, in Kant and the early Fichte). As Brandom shows in great detail, here expanding upon Sellars, the condition of the possibility of all awareness is language, for it is the medium of thinking. To talk is nothing but to draw conceptual distinctions and back them up tacitly or expressly. In short, language is by nature discursive. However, since language is an intrinsically social practice, something we *do* together, linguistic practice itself as a discursive practice is therefore also necessarily a social practice of giving and asking for reasons. To the extent that we, as participants of this practice, therefore uphold one another to the rationality of our claims according to the logical syntax that structures it (if I claim, “that’s a human being,” inferring from the physical features in front of me and the sentences I hear coming from a mouth, you might counterclaim “no, it’s a new robot,” inferring from a newspaper article you read about a highly advanced machine), we are thus *responsible* for the claims we make: to make a claim is to undertake a doxastic *commitment* in that practice, a commitment to what is true and false, and it is said practice that determines whether our entitlement to it is justified, justifiable, or not. On this epistemological model, an original and compelling notion of objectivity emerges. What is the case is decided solely from within the inner normativity of language as such a discursive and social practice. Nevertheless, this does not mean that anything goes: from within said practice a relativism of truth can be avoided because it is never *I myself* who decides what is true and what is not. Inasmuch as the rationality of my claims are checked by other linguistic agents, and their claims are just as much checked by others, written into the very logical syntax of language as the social practice of giving and asking for reasons is the difference between objectivity and subjectivity: “what is shared by all discursive perspectives is *that* there is a difference between what is objectively correct in the way of concept application and what is merely taken to be so.”²¹¹

So far, Hegel is in agreement. But there is one additional but fundamental premise of pragmatist epistemology that his idealism does not share and that displays the unbridgeable gulf between them. For the pragmatist, the semantic bedrock of what we *mean* by concepts, the system of beliefs that establishes what something is and is not and which makes it determinately intelligible, is their *use*. As Brandom puts it, semantics *must*

²¹¹ Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 600.

*answer to pragmatics.*²¹² This has two primary motivations. The first is the problem of Wittgenstein's spade: "How am I able to obey a rule?"—if this is not a question about causes, then it is about the justification for my following the rule in the way I do. / If I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: 'This is simply what I do.'"²¹³ According to this position, use must be what ultimately determines the meaning of our concepts and even logic itself. This is because if we assume that the formal structure of conceptual and logical norms is the determining factor, this leads to an infinite regress. If rational normativity is composed of explicit rules, to the extent that rules have correct and incorrect applications, then there must be another explicit rule by which we can determine what is indeed a correct or incorrect application; there must be another rule to determine how a rule is applied. But this equally entails that this new rule must also have correct and incorrect applications, leading to the necessity of yet another such rule, and so on indefinitely. Consequently, Wittgenstein concludes that to comprehend how we can tell when we have correctly and incorrectly applied a given rule (for we do draw such a distinction), we must maintain that its normativity is implicit in the practice in which it is embedded. An illustration would be a law that goes to the Supreme Court. What is a correct or incorrect application of said law is not, when push comes to shove, dictated by some explicit rule that the Supreme Court offers. Rather, instead of requiring some other explicit rule to adjudicate the validity of a law in a given case, we simply appeal to what the Court decides. Taking up such a Wittgensteinian position, pragmatism insists that rational normativity is not a function of the "formal structure" of concepts or logic, their explicit rules, but how we happen to use concepts, judgments, and inferences as evinced by the "material structure" of language itself, what we just do in the social practice of giving and asking for reasons.

The second motivation is that pragmatism enables a certain naturalism about the normativity of concept application and logic. To comprehend why we are concept-mongers does not require the postulation of some mysterious substance (say, a thinking "soul") or faculty (the "understanding" or "reason"), as so much of the Western philosophical

²¹² Cf. Brandom, 83–84 & 143.

²¹³ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1986), §217.

tradition from Plato up to the modern era proclaimed. Nor does it require the postulation of objective logical laws or principles somehow inscribed within the universe or some transcendent realm of essences access to which we have in virtue of some “spooky” capacity for non-empirical intuition. Quite to the contrary, a full explanation of the norms by which thinking must abide is now possible by appealing to our practical know-how of the patterns underlying our linguistic practice and how this know-how came to be, just as, in another register, to explain the rules of a natural language does not mandate any other framework besides the intuition we have as a native speaker of a language about what is a correct and incorrect application of any given rule and the process of language acquisition by which such an intuition, itself a form of know-how, arises. Consequently, to account for rationality our starting point should be, so says the pragmatist, the observable patterns of human behaviour in our actual use of discourse, not obtuse philosophical “speculation.”

Hegel is at odds with the pragmatist priority of practical use over theoretical meaning. It has, or so he would accuse it, the disastrous side-effect of issuing in a deflationary and indeed culturally relative notion of the truth of our knowledge claims as products of the social practice of giving and asking for reasons. Yes: in pragmatism we check the rationality of one another’s claims and this permits a distinction between the objective and the subjective of a certain kind. But ultimately, if the inner normativity of the concepts that we apply in discourse is simply set by how we use them, what we are checking is just whether or not their application is appropriate or inappropriate in light of how we typically use them. The precise problem, therefore, lies in determining which of two claims such as “the earth revolves around the sun” and “the earth is the centre of the universe” should have a normative hold over us. For the pragmatist, the story we must tell for what makes one over the other true would be something like this: in discourse, we take “the earth is the centre of the universe” as true because that is how we use these concepts, a use perhaps determined by reference to default authorities of the matter (the Church); and this meaning can shift over time when in discourse we come to mean something else by these concepts, yet this shift can only occur by the emergence of a new use as perhaps set by reference to new default authorities (a scientific committee). Nevertheless, in this shift of meaning there is no “the” truth of the matter: what is rational is determined by recourse to how we socially check the rationality of what is claimed in virtue of the rules of a

culturally specific game of giving and asking for reasons, that is, by recourse to what “material inferences” between concepts are accepted by a community as valid or invalid. This is identical to how what is a valid or invalid move in any game is constituted by whether we adopt to play, say, checkers or chess—and just as in the history of chess and checkers, we do find that the rules of these games have changed from one period of time to the next, it makes no sense to say that there is a “true” way of playing them. Indeed, this presents the further problem that, given cultures who use concepts differently from one another, there is no easy way for them to check the rationality of each other’s claims. To continue our example, this is identical to how one who plays chess cannot fault one for not playing checkers according to the rules of chess because there is no “true” game for which there are universal rules. Each are equally valid as games.

Hegel’s idealism does not imply such a weak notion of truth as culturally conditioned. This is because, in Hegel’s logic, even though the rationality of our claims can only be adjudicated from within discourse, this does not entail that truth is limited to the inferential network of a language qua social practice. The inner normativity of our knowledge claims is not a product of how we “police” one another by following the cultural conventions of *use* that dictate what we mean by concepts, but instead a product of *the truth* that they are taken to capture. In this regard, the truth that we believe ourselves entitled to in making this or that claim is not a mere valid move in *this* game of giving and asking for reasons that we find ourselves playing, but something that all rational creatures ought to recognize in the one and only game of giving and asking for reasons that defines thought in general. As Hegel puts it: “*Truth*, however, is *one*—the instinct of reason has this invincible feeling or belief” (*LHP II*, 171/V, 6: 19). In other terms, since we are, for Hegel, beholden to the objects made recognizable through the logical space of reasons, it is the objects themselves that, as it were, carry the inner normativity of our concepts: what is a valid or invalid application of the categories is adjudicated by whether they succeed in making an object intelligible, an intelligible presence that, once known, *itself* curves the logical space of reasons *as such*, whereby how we all are to navigate it is set by the objects discovered by means of it. Put differently, when we check the rationality of our claims, what we check is whether our concept-mongering and that of others captures what something is: whether it provides a conceptually convincing narrative that brings together

all the various determinations that an object reveals itself as having in its becoming, that is, whether these determinations still fall apart or whether they are a mere chimera that is empty and not merely how we use concepts. On Hegel's model, discourse has an intentional pull from the very start: while in thinking and talking we never exit discourse—we are always saying more and more in the never-ceasing attempt to *take up* (“sublate,” *aufheben*) what has been said, qualifying, building upon, and expanding it such that it makes more and more sense in accordance with its norms—discourse is ultimately about objects. Consequently, it is what we *mean* by concepts, the truth of the objects that they denote and manifest as guided by the categories, that dictate their *use*. In short, for Hegel semantics is not answerable to pragmatics. Quite to the contrary, it is pragmatics that is answerable to semantics.

This has an advantage over pragmatism. Hegel's logic is indeed sensitive to the actual structure of the social practices of giving and asking for reasons as realized in the discourses of science, politics, art, religion, and philosophy. But his logic, as a formal outline of the logical space of reasons that gives rise to such practices, issues in a robust theory of truth. As such, there is no worry of relativism. Although the logical space of reasons that it describes may *de facto* give rise to a diverse array of worldviews and their concomitant ways of life, what orients all these worldviews from the get-go is the attempt to get at *the* truth. We cannot, as Brandom does, therefore recast truth in some deflationary register because truth in a strong sense is part and parcel of the very internal normative structure of language. Put in Hegelian terms, science is with us from the beginning. But Hegel's logic thereby avoids one of the off-putting implications of pragmatism: that, since what is rational is dictated by the culturally accepted conventions of how we should use concepts, its theory of truth prevents a critical dialogue between cultures. Even if there may be a plurality of manners of construing the truth, as evinced in the many cultures spread throughout historical space and time, Hegel's logic sketches a unique kind of optimism in intercultural dialogue between them: insofar as we all are engaged in the search for truth, the competing knowledge claims around us should be able to come into contact with one another so that, rationally, these may converge towards a shared understanding of what truly is and ought to be.

Despite the fact that Hegel's idealism subdues the worry of a deflationary notion of truth, the spectre of Wittgenstein's spade, one of the main motivations for the primacy of use in meaning, still looms over the potential cogency of his model. In the nomenclature of the pragmatists, on Hegel's account discourse is not structured by material inferences, moves in a practice that we just perform; discourse is formal *all the way down*. This is precisely the position that Wittgenstein declares is self-defeating. However, on theory-internal reasons, Hegel has no problem of explaining how we can have knowledge of the formal rules by which we can determine the correct or incorrect application of the categories in this or that situation without an infinite regress of such rules. This is where Hegel's anthropological conception of logic shines. To the extent that the categories themselves are instincts or drives, our formal application of them to define what something is, is just something that we are capable of doing effectively as the kinds of rational creatures that we are: there is a level at which we *just know* what is a formally correct or incorrect application without needing to set it out. For it makes as much sense to ask how we know a fundamental category formally has been or has been not applied appropriately as it would be to ask how a bee knows that this particular dance corresponds to the exact location of a food source in its environment. In both cases, the body just does it because it is a behaviour written into its nature. And in this respect, too, Hegel's approach to logic espouses a certain naturalism about rational normativity. "Spirit" is not a mysterious substance or faculty. But whereas pragmatism naturalizes it by taking it as the implicit structure of our linguistic practice whose patterns we can observe, Hegel naturalizes it by making it a feature of our biology. As such, to say that Hegel is not a pragmatist is to not simply say that he has a more robust theory of truth than pragmatism. It is to also say that his logic is not the formal outline of the logical syntax of social practice of giving and asking for reasons; it is, more primordially, also a formal outline of our ontologically distinctive form of life—a "metaphysics of spirit" that issues in a particular idealist philosophy of meaning.

5.4 Why Hegel is not a materialist

Nevertheless, even if Hegel's anthropological conception of logic defends a certain naturalism about the origins of rational normativity, this should not be taken as signifying that logic is, for Hegel, ultimately describable in natural terms nor that the domain of

human experience made possible by logical thinking is a mere product of natural processes. Hegel would not ascribe to a reductive or eliminative materialism in the philosophy of mind. His point is that while (1) rationality, as an *instinct* or *drive*, is a feature of our biology that can be naturalistically explained, just as much as an organism's survival or reproductive instinct can be (all instincts or drives are, after all, products of nature) and (2) rationality is dependent upon certain *physical* circumstances (a brain with certain neurological processes and psychological mechanisms) that, too, are open to naturalist explanation, our rational thought and behavior *itself* is non-naturalizable. For although the *ontogenetic preconditions* of thinking can be described in terms of a merely natural event in which various types of causes prevail, these terms will always fail to explain why rational thought and behavior *takes itself* as rational, that is, is self-contained and self-justifying *in its own eyes*. Since it is precisely the reasons that we give for seeing this in such-and-such a way or for performing one action over another that internally compel us, human experience is ontologically unique and to be grasped on its own terms.

Let's make the point in a more contemporary fashion. We may be able to naturalistically describe the emergence of rationality as a specific evolutionary adaptation that gave our species an advantage over others and the neurological and psychological mechanisms that support complex cognition (say, the transmission of neurotransmitters and memory and sign recognition). However, although these causal factors may explain the ontogenetic conditions of possibility of rational thought and behavior, none of these can explain why these or those reasons *command* us. This is because our rationality "short-circuits" our immersion in nature's causal system by making what would be otherwise causal forces over which we have no control causal influences: inasmuch as the logical space of reasons animates everything we do, even our "sensing, intuiting, desiring" (*SL*, 12/*GW*, 21: 11), what we think and do cannot be accounted for simply by recourse to our biology, neurology, or psychology as that which somehow directly cause them. We are creatures who instinctively *demand* and hence *respond* to reasons for our beliefs and actions. As such, we never *merely* causally react, say, to animal needs, to neurological sensory stimuli, or to psychologically conditioned states of mind: we *deliberate* about how to truly view the world and how we ought to act in it, whereby human rational thought and behavior is the *spontaneous* product of our deliberations. We give witness to this in how

we can always act against such causal influences (e.g., by rationally deciding that a perception is an illusion or an impulse wrong). This makes our experience, as a product of rationality, free and irreducible to the natural mechanisms from which it emerges and upon which it depends, in consequence of which to grasp what we think about the world and what we do in it, we must reconstruct the course of experience from within the logical space of reasons (by describing why we believe this perception reveals what is and that deed is one we should perform).

From this basis, Hegel's logic sketches a unique solution to the question of how the irreducibility of the logical space of reasons is reconcilable with a naturalist conception of the world. While our rational instinct or drive is *produced by and dependent upon nature*, this instinct or drive in effect sets up a *sui generis* domain of activity that can only be made intelligible by recourse to its inner normativity. By implication, human experience is only possible for Hegel because nature's causal system brings forth, in us, a metaphysical *novum*: a sphere of rational life that stands above the rest of nature because it is self-determining. In other words, Hegel sketches a naturalist account of human exceptionalism, which has the advantage of wedding the natural and human sciences while respecting the autonomy and scientific character of both as genuine, self-standing cognitive projects whose methodology is truth-apt for their respective subject matters as long as their limits are observed. For when the biological preconditions are met for the existence of rationality (a brain with cognitive processes, a being for whom reasons are a need), a universe of freedom unpredictably emerges irreducible to physics, chemistry, or biology, making us *at once* continuous and discontinuous with the rest of nature. Therefore, while materialism can, for Hegel, tell us much about the natural ontogenetic conditions of possibility of human experience, it must fail whenever it overreaches its explanatory power and attempts to exhaustively explain our experience—taken in the broad sense to include not just our conscious experience of the world, but also our self-conscious experience of action and our sociohistorical experience—by reducing it to natural processes. Materialism may be an important act in the drama of spirit, but that act is, as it were, merely the prologue; the story of typically human experience can only be grasped by looking at how us humans have and do understand ourselves and how these understandings determine how we comport ourselves.

Put differently, Hegel's logic is metaphysically committed to a version of emergentism that enables us to make sense of the irreducibility and ontological uniqueness of the human being without violating the principles of naturalism. If we do transcend nature according to Hegel, this is a transcending that testifies to spirit's forever intimate relation to it. For we only transcend nature insofar as we are always a part of it. Nature is not "Other" to us, as, for instance, Descartes and Fichte proclaimed. It is that from which we have come to be and which constitutively gives us life, just as much as it takes it away. In this manner, Hegel's logic is indeed a form of naturalism, but a "good" naturalism in contrast to a "bad" one, to adopt a distinction Charles Taylor makes.²¹⁴ In the latter naturalism, the goal is to explain human experience in purely "scientific" (in our sense of that word, not Hegel's) or observable terms: neurons, biological adaptation, psychological processes, or what have you. But the best explanations of such a naturalism tend to undercut the meaning-generating activities that make our lives significant. At worst, they make these activities blind products of the meat machine that is our brain, rendering experience illusory, or makes them products of psychological, largely irrational forces over which we have no control. At best, it makes them an evolutionary strategy, an adaptation that is no different than an organism gaining the ability to fly or breathe in the open air, which we have contingently developed to increase our own chances at survival and reproduction and which should only be grasped in such a rubric. Hegel, on the other hand, expounds in his logic a "good" naturalism: one whose starting point is to understand what kind of living creatures we are and one that acknowledges that, while the starting point is indeed nature, human nature, the fact that we are rational animals does not entail that there is nothing special about us that deserves scientific investigation on its own distinctively human terms. For Hegel, the fact that we are creatures who, by our nature, take a critical distance towards ourselves and embark upon the quest for meaning, makes us stand out as beings produced by and dependent upon nature. Our nature opens up the only existent place in which being shows itself, while also enabling us to live our own lives on the terms that we set for

²¹⁴ Cf. Charles Taylor and Nigel DeSouza, "Philosophy as Philosophical Anthropology: An Interview with Charles Taylor," in *Herder: Philosophy and Anthropology*, ed. Anik Waldow and Nigel DeSouza (Oxford University Press, 2017), 13–29.

ourselves over and above what we are as mere natural critters. For we are not just living creatures who are subjectively interested in survival and reproduction. We are *Homo sapiens*: beings who embark in the search for wisdom, knowledge, objective truth. This is what defines us, just as survival and reproduction defines other organisms, and this should never be forgotten—even by the naturalist.

5.5 The relevance of Hegel's logic today

As we have seen, Hegel's anthropological conception of logic develops a unique idealism that is not Kantian, pragmatist, nor materialist, even if it has certain family resemblances to them. Like Kant, Hegel does not advance a dogmatic metaphysics in his logic, contrary to what the traditional interpretation of him may say. Indeed, he believes that rationalist "armchair" philosophizing is a non-starter. The proper task of philosophy as first philosophy is to grasp the conditions of possibility of knowledge: how our rationality, by bringing *a priori* categories to experience, can recognize an objective, mind-independent order. While he, in the same vein as Kant, therefore maintains that the best epistemology for grounding knowledge is transcendental idealism, his own variation of this doctrine has the strength of not limiting knowledge to human experience, which, for most, undermines the very goal of our cognitive aspirations by making them merely "for us," never capable of transcending the domain of subjective constitution to attain to what is "in itself." Rationality, by opening up a space of discovery, enables an openness to being.

His idealism also has a pragmatist streak. It takes seriously the function that discourse, as an intrinsically social practice, serves in the adjudication of truth. For Hegel just as much as Brandom, truth is a product of how our collective activity of score-keeping—how we, in playing the game of giving and asking for reasons, always check each other's knowledge claims to make sure we are entitled to the doxastic commitments we undertake in making them. Nevertheless, Hegel denies that the norms of this game are set by how we, as a community, use concepts. Its norms are determined by the truth of their application: whether the objects that they denote are indeed made intelligible by our judgments and the inferences that back them up, in which case we are justified in taking them as actually defining what the object truly is or ought to be and then demand that everyone who plays this game uphold said truth. Objects, objectivity, or truth are what discourse, as a social practice, issues in and which normatively structures said practice. As

such, Hegel is able to navigate between the Charybdis of truth being determined by correspondence to some pre-, non-, or supra-human realm and the Scylla of it amounting to the cultural convention.

Last but not least, Hegel, like certain materialists, does claim that human rationality and behaviour is a naturally occurring phenomenon. The logical space of reasons is the distinctively human space that we, as the biological life-form that we are, inhabit and is an appropriate subject matter of natural science. Despite this naturalizing tendency, Hegel also gives us a sustained argument for why the logical space of reasons, and indeed the entire realm of human experience that emerges from it, cannot be reduced to latter. As soon as our rationality emerges within nature, it gives rise to a *sui generis* universe of meaning, the basic forms of which his logic sets forth.

It is perhaps with regard to these three points that Hegel's logic demonstrates its untimely resonance with our own philosophical times. We are, just as he was, decisively post-Kantian in our rejection of dogmatic metaphysics. We are, again just as he was, concerned with the relation of language to the nature of truth. We are, once again just as he was, first and foremost naturalists. But we struggle to develop an epistemology that does not succumb to the subjectivism of Kant's idealism nor to the problems and failure of dogmatic metaphysics; we struggle to develop a theory of language that, sensitive to its self-referentiality, does not deflate truth; and we struggle to articulate a naturalist framework of the mind that does not risk reducing our experience to a mere by-product of nature, robbing us of our freedom and the meaning-generating activities that make our lives significant. Yet these are all issues that Hegel's logic avoids. In conclusion, given the desire many of us have to no longer give up hard objectivity; the dissatisfaction that many of us feel when everything amounts to the relativism of mere language and social perspective; and our steadfast belief that many of us have that we, though a creation of nature, must be more than the physical, chemical, biological, and psychological mechanisms that make us possible—perhaps for these reasons Hegel's unique anthropological conception of logic, though ignored for the past two hundred years, has new resources for us today.

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